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University of Southampton

Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences

School of Psychology

Looking back: a retrospective study of shared perspectives on gender identity

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor in Educational Psychology

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Abstract

Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences

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Recent studies examine how families assist gender-diverse individuals in exploring their gender identity. Specifically, there is increasing interest in how gender-diverse people leave subtle clues, or 'breadcrumbs', for significant others in their lives to signal their gender identity. Previous research indicates that having a supportive partner can significantly influence the outcomes for a gender-diverse person throughout this process. Chapter One begins by providing personal background, sharing my motivation for completing this research journey, alongside a review of the current research context and ethical considerations. As the gender identity disclosure of a young person within a family impacts all members, Chapter Two presents a systematic literature review of current articles investigating the experiences of close family members - parents, grandparents, and siblings – when a young family member makes a gender disclosure. The review included 17 studies. Four main themes were identified through thematic analysis, capturing the shared experiences of parents, grandparents, and siblings: change and transformation; needing to find your role, pressures of societal influences, obstacles on the path, and acceptance. These themes unfold within the context of an overarching 'emotional

storm', which influences all described experiences. These findings have implications for professionals supporting families as they navigate a young family member's gender disclosure, promoting enhanced support, guidance, and improved communication for all family members. Chapter Three describes an empirical study, exploring the retrospective experiences of a gender-diverse person, alongside a significant other who played an important role following their gender disclosure. Four interviews with dyads (a gender-diverse person and a person of significance to them) were conducted, recorded, and transcribed. Reflexive thematic analysis identified three main themes: 'What binds us', 'What divides us', and 'Meeting in the middle'. The findings demonstrate how gender-diverse people and their allies experience the process of gender disclosure, including the strategies employed by both to enhance the resilience of their relationship and how they mitigate the potential stresses and strains they encounter.

Keywords: gender identity, gender-diverse experience, transgender, relationships, family.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Lucy Beynon

Title of thesis: Looking back: a retrospective study of shared perspectives on gender identity.

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Date: 01.08.25

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Finally, I wish to express a deep debt of gratitude to my participants, who shared their stories to help others gain a better understanding of the gender identity disclosure experience. Without them, none of this would have been possible.

Definitions and Abbreviations

Ally	“A straight and/or cis person who supports members of the LGBTQ+ community. Members of the LGBTQ+ community can also be allies to one another.” (Stonewall, 2024)
Cisgender	“Someone whose gender is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, a cis(gender) woman is someone who was assigned female at birth and continues to live and identify as a woman.” (Stonewall, 2024)
Cisnormativity	“The assumption that all human beings are cisgender, i.e., have a gender identity which matches the sex they were assigned at birth.” (Purple Rain Collective, 2017)
ERGO.....	Ethics and Research Governance Online
Gender	“A person’s innate sense of being a man, woman, non-binary or another gender.” (Stonewall, 2024)
Gender diverse	“Anyone with a non-cis gender identity; an inclusive term covering non-binary as well as trans identities.” (Mermaids, n.d.)
Gender dysphoria.....	“A term used to describe the discomfort or distress that a person experiences when there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity.” (Stonewall, 2024)
Gender expression	“How a person expresses their gender outwardly. This could be through cues such as clothing, haircuts and behaviour.” (Stonewall, 2024)
Gender fluid.....	“Refers to a gender identity or gender expression which varies over time.” (Purple Rain Collective, 2017)
Gender identity	“An individual’s internal, innate sense of their own gender.” (Mermaids, n.d.)
Gender identity disclosure ..	A moment when a person communicates their authentic gender with others (Taube & Mussap, 2024)
Gender norms.....	A system of social and cultural expectations or rules linked to a person’s gender that govern or direct their behaviour (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020)
Gender transition	“The steps a trans person takes to live in their gender. Each person’s transition will involve different things. For some this involves medical

intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this. Transitioning also might involve things such as telling friends and family, using different pronouns, dressing differently and changing official documents.” (Stonewall, 2024)

Misgendering..... “to use the wrong pronouns or other gender-specific words when referring to or speaking to someone” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025)

Non-binary..... “A term for people whose gender doesn’t sit comfortably with ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.” (Stonewall, 2024)

Passing..... “When a trans person is perceived to be the gender with which they identify, based on their appearance.” (Stonewall, 2024)

Sexual orientation Also termed sexuality. “A person’s sexual attraction to other people, or lack thereof. Along with romantic orientation, this forms a person’s orientation identity.” (Stonewall, 2024)

Transgender/Trans “A term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.” (Stonewall, 2024)

Trans-female..... “A term used to describe a woman who was assigned male at birth. This may be shortened to trans woman, or MTF, an abbreviation for male-to-female.” (Stonewall, 2024)

Trans-male..... “A term used to describe a man who was assigned female at birth. This may be shortened to trans man, or FTM, an abbreviation for female-to-male.” (Stonewall, 2024)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When I was at school, I had the privilege of knowing a friend who was gender-diverse, who taught me about the challenges of managing gender dysphoria and the necessity of fitting in, particularly with those outside of school. They also challenged my understanding of gender, what it meant to be female, and how this affected the way others treated me, as well as the way my gender influenced my interactions with others. They helped me to be more open to challenging gender norms and witnessing how they fought for their right to live authentically gave me the courage to confront the behaviour of others (and my own) based on gender.

Drawing on this experience, I was naturally inclined to research the experiences of others who have similarly navigated the process of disclosing their gender identity. Understanding these experiences from both perspectives feels key if we are to support one another during the time after a gender identity disclosure. For the gender-diverse person, sharing how they recognise someone as safe to confide in can aid those around them who aspire to be allies. In turn, allies can demonstrate their safe status, showing that they are trustworthy individuals capable of providing support and compassion during a time of significant upheaval. Furthermore, comprehending the differences and commonalities of the experience from both viewpoints can foster a deeper bond between the two, building bridges and offering the opportunity to appreciate differences and the challenges that accompany this process.

1.1 Ethics and positionality

In conducting this research, I believe it is of central importance to acknowledge that I am approaching this from a position outside the gender-diverse community. Shaw et al. (2020) discuss the need to reflect on one's position, particularly if the researcher intends to conduct research as an outsider looking in, and the focus community for the research is a marginalised and/or vulnerable group. As part of their discussion, they encourage researchers to consider who will benefit from their research and how the researcher's own experiences and perspectives shape what is perceived as 'knowledge'.

As I have conducted this research, I recognise that I am an early millennial, cisgender female, married with no children. I am white and educated at university level. I come from a middle-class background; my father was university educated, and my mother to an equivalent of A-level standard. Both held professional jobs. My parents held liberal views towards gender identity, expression and sexuality. They did not hold strong religious affiliations, but my father came from a Catholic background. They taught me to always be kind, respectful towards others, and to be open to new ways of thinking and being. I attended a single sex (female) grammar school, where, as described above, I had a key friendship with a trans young man, which has shaped my thinking and understanding of gender identity and gender expression. These experiences have shaped the person I am today and have influenced the way that I have conducted this research. However, as a person who has not had to manage the consequences of not fitting with societal gender expectations, while also having the advantages of social status (middle class), a good education, and being a member of the majority ethnic group in the United Kingdom, I must recognise that when listening to and interpreting the experiences of the participants in this study, I cannot truly say that I have fully 'lived' their experience. Therefore, in sharing my interpretations of the data, I recognise my status as being on the 'outside', wishing to be an ally to the gender-diverse community. I aim to share their experiences sensitively and in a way that will lead to increased understanding and better support from those around them.

After reviewing the questions used for the interviews with my supervisors, to ensure participant safety, especially as I would be interviewing on a sensitive topic, we decided to develop the use of 'wonder bundles'. These 'wonder bundles' (see Appendix E) are sets of questions centred around a specific area of interest in relation to the research question, which seek to understand the different perspectives and recollections of the participants before, during and after a gender identity disclosure. The groups of questions were designed to prompt conversation, with participants posing them to one another. This allowed them to select their questions, giving them direct control over the questioning process. This approach was popular with all four dyads, as they could see the questions in advance and, in many cases, agreed amongst themselves on the questions they would ask. This provided the whole process with a sense of safety, especially as the questions covered topics that may

be sensitive to both individuals, such as recognition and response to the dropping of hints about gender identity. However, upon reflection, the use of these wonder bundles may have limited the depth of conversation and exploration, because these questions only invited an initial exploration, a starting point for discussion. As a result, participants may not have gone into such depth with their answers. This will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3.

1.2 Reflexivity

Over the course of this research, my understanding of gender and gender diversity has shifted significantly. At the start, although I had experienced supporting my transgender friend at school and had been witness to their struggles, I do not feel that I had stopped to question my gender and gender expression and how I experienced that on a day-to-day basis. While at the start, I did find myself reflecting far more deeply than at earlier stages in my life on what it meant to be female, to be cisgender and to openly express my female gender identity through my choice of clothing, name and married title (Mrs), it was only as I advanced through the research journey that I can say that I started to fully understand and appreciate the far wider implications of the gender diverse experience.

During this process, by talking to my participants, consulting with my supervisors, and reading more broadly on the topic of gender diversity, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of gender diversity. A key idea that I began to understand was the experience of pre-disclosure and of 'testing the waters', not as a period of 'exploration' for the transgender or gender-diverse person, but rather a period of self-knowledge when they are testing the reactions of others around them to their authentic gender identity. For transgender or gender-diverse individuals, they have always known their authentic gender deeply. When they reach the stage of testing others' reactions through hints or 'breadcrumbs', they are already confident in their gender identity. They are at a stage where they want to share their experience with others, but they must first ensure that the people they wish to share with are safe and trustworthy with this knowledge.

I recognise that during my process of developing understanding, I notice the influences of cisnormative thinking affecting my thoughts and how I interpret and understand data. I acknowledge my assumption as a cisgender person that my way of 'being' and living is the norm. This thinking led me to view the 'testing the waters' behaviour of my participants as similar to exploration – checking if they are correct in their thoughts about their gender identity, questioning their experiences and self-understanding. This cisnormative perspective meant that, at the time of the interviews, I did not fully hear or appreciate my participants' experiences when they described moments of recognising their true gender identity, followed by a period of checking for safety before disclosing their gender identity. As a result, as I will soon explore, this may have caused me to miss or not fully capture the richness of their experiences or those of their allies.

For some of my participants, they did talk about a process of denial in the pre-disclosure stage of their experience as transgender. For my participants, this was a process of recognising their experience of gender discomfort and of being open to their true feelings. My supervisors talked about this process as being described as 'cracking your egg', a time when a transgender or gender diverse person recognises their authentic gender identity. At this stage, they open up to an experience that they have always known on a deeper, often unconscious level, that is now at a level of conscious awareness. At this point, the transgender or gender diverse person recognizes that they must move forwards, towards a stage where they can share their true identity safely and openly with others. It is at this stage that the hints to others are left to check for their safety and to identify allies for the next stage of the process.

My expanding knowledge and understanding influenced my reflexive thematic analysis. At the start of the analytic process, I was quite fixated on the idea of a journey. I believe this originated from reading and analysing the findings for the systematic literature review. Some researchers described participants embarking on a transformative journey, which shaped my interpretation of a 'gender discovery journey'. This concept is apparent in the debriefing and information forms created for participants (see Appendix A). I initially pictured a person being 'gender-questioning' before deciding to disclose their gender identity and then progressing along a path to acceptance with an

ally. Because of this language, I found myself at an impasse in the analysis, as the data did not seem to align with my concept of a journey. After several attempts to guide the analysis in that direction (see Appendix F – F1, F2 and F3), a discussion with my supervisors challenged my thinking and helped me realise that the transgender or gender-diverse experience is not a linear journey but rather a process. I reflected on my own experience with a school friend – it didn't feel like a 'journey', it simply was; an experience, part of my life story. Similarly, when considering participants' stories, they did not describe a journey but rather a process, an experience. For transgender individuals, it involved recognising their authentic gender identities, testing safety, and then disclosing to chosen allies. When I let go of this fixed idea, I was able to analyse the data more genuinely, leading to a more authentic understanding of my participants' experiences.

My shift in understanding of the transgender and gender-diverse experience was profound, allowing me to analyse the data from this study with greater insight and appreciation for that experience. If I were to revisit this research and undertake it a second time, I would adopt a different approach. Firstly, I would move away from pursuing the idea of a journey, of the transgender or gender-diverse participant embarking on a 'journey of exploration', shared with their ally. This shift could broaden the conversation, enabling me to extract richer narratives or experiences from my participants. Similarly, my choice of language would have been different. Instead of phrases like 'gender-questioning', 'exploration' and 'discovery journey', I would have been more deliberate with my wording. I would have used terms such as 'process' and 'experience' to describe the transition from 'testing the waters' with potential allies to gender identity disclosure. The 'wonder bundles' used to develop the topic guide reflect my earlier ideas connected to the concept of a 'journey', and both the language and the formulation of questions demonstrate that initial thinking. Although the 'wonder bundles' provided my participants with safety, as they were shared prior to the interviews, allowing them to select the questions they wished to ask and answer, I wonder if a deeper exploration of the relationship between the two might have been more beneficial. However, it is only through the power of hindsight and having analysed the gathered data that I consider this path might have been more impactful.

As a result of my experience in conducting this research, I have developed a deeper understanding of the complexities of the transgender and gender diverse experience. I have learnt that gender identity is not a fixed binary but a deeply felt, authentic experience that can change over time. I have also begun to appreciate the concept of gender as a spectrum, which is not fixed and does not require people to be confined to a binary understanding. I understand that those who experience gender discomfort, through their subtle hints, are not trying to explore their gender but rather communicate their true gender identity to the people around them. They are seeking to find allies—people who are safe to disclose to, and those they can rely on for support and understanding.

1.3 Epistemology and methodology

This qualitative study adopts a social constructionist approach, recognising that each person constructs their own meanings based on their personal historical and cultural contexts (Burr, 2015). Cultural, historical, and social agreements of understanding shape the realities individuals create through their use of language. It is through language that participants in this research can share their experiences of their constructed reality (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Willig, 2022). Through semi-structured interviews, in which participants could select their questions and steer the discussion, they employed language to convey their personal interpretations of the experiences with the gender disclosure journey, as relevant to their contexts.

1.4 Research context

While completing this research, the political and societal backdrop has continued to shift. Recent rulings from the UK Supreme Court about the definition of a female for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 and the EHRC's proposed exclusion of transgender people from single sex spaces, as well as the general discourse around gender diversity, have changed. In the UK, it is estimated that 0.54% of the population over the age of 16 is transgender, which is in line with findings for other countries and is a likely accurate estimate of the size of the transgender population (ONS, 2021). The number of people identifying as transgender has increased significantly, from 1.45/100,000 persons in 2000 to 7.81/100,000 persons in 2018, with the greatest increase within the 16-17 year-old age range

(McKechnie et al., 2023). Despite the small, yet increasing numbers of people identifying as gender-diverse, politicians and the media are pushing an increasingly anti-trans agenda, especially in the USA (Atwood et al., 2024).

This toxic and challenging societal landscape has made conducting this research far more challenging. As already highlighted, my 'outsider' status has potentially made it harder to connect with members of the trans and gender diverse community, especially in a time when staying safe is a top priority for many. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explore the complexities and challenges researchers face when occupying the position of either an 'insider' or an 'outsider' in relation to the community being studied. They acknowledge examples whereby being an insider of a specific community (e.g., women who have left heterosexuality at mid-life) can support access to community members due to a higher level of safety and comfort. However, in contrast, they highlight that community membership does not necessarily mean that the research will be better, as they say that sometimes drawing from a different perspective, that of the outsider, can push thinking and ideas about an experience forward in unexpected ways.

In light of this political and societal context, this research project offers significant insights about how gender-diverse people and allies can support each other. While recognising the positives of the relationship between gender-diverse people and their allies, this study acknowledges the challenges and difficulties associated with the process of gender disclosure. It also aims to demonstrate how these obstacles can be addressed and overcome. With this information, I aim to develop a deeper understanding of the experiences related to gender identity disclosure, which can support professionals working with gender-diverse people and their allies.

Chapter 2: Understanding gender identity: a systematic review of family experiences following a disclosure

2.1 Abstract

Recent studies show that family members' responses significantly impact the experiences of individuals exploring their gender identity, affecting long-term outcomes such as mental health. Most of this research focuses on the experiences of gender-diverse young people and how they experience the response from family members. However, some studies highlight that the disclosure of gender identity influences all close family members, including parents, siblings, and grandparents. This systematic literature review investigates existing studies that explore the perspectives and experiences of family members close to a gender-diverse young person. A systematic search of seven databases highlighted 17 articles which met the inclusion criteria. Five main themes were identified through thematic analysis, capturing the shared experiences of parents, grandparents, and siblings: change and transformation, needing to find your role, pressures of societal influences, obstacles on the path, and acceptance. These themes unfold within the context of an overarching 'emotional storm', which influences all experiences described. These themes are discussed in relation to building a better understanding of the experiences of parents, grandparents and siblings in relation to a young family member's gender identity disclosure. These findings will support greater understanding from professionals working with this group, such as improved communication and support for families as they navigate the shared experience of gender identity disclosure.

2.2 Introduction

In recent years, there has been an explosion in debate and rhetoric linked to gender diversity within the media and politics (Atwood et al., 2024); this has been especially noticeable in the USA (e.g. Donegan, 2025). However, similar polarising debates are appearing within the UK media and law courts (e.g. Brooks, 2025). In parallel to this increased interest within the public sphere, the body of research available to professionals wishing to better understand the often complex and emotionally charged experiences of gender diverse people, their families, and communities has also grown (Westwater et al., 2019). There has been much research on the medical experiences of transgender and non-binary individuals (e.g., Heng et al., 2018; Holland et al., 2024), including examining how gender diversity has a relationship with mental health, particularly regarding heightened rates of depression and suicide (e.g., Klinger et al., 2024; Wittlin et al., 2023). These researchers have aimed to comprehend the nature of these challenges and identify potential supportive factors that might alleviate the distress experienced by gender-diverse people. In recent years, however, greater attention has been paid towards understanding the experiences of parents and siblings of gender-diverse young people within the family context (e.g., Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021; Westwater et al., 2023; Wheeler et al., 2019). This includes exploring how these dynamics may influence the well-being, social relationships, and perceptions of gender-diverse young people. The positive influences that siblings (Bosse et al., 2022) and parents (Simons et al., 2013) may have on these outcomes for gender-diverse young people is gaining research interest, as both professionals and families seek effective strategies to enhance the experiences of these young individuals.

Family members have an important role to play in supporting the well-being of a gender-diverse young person, as they can provide emotional support and comfort, which fosters resilience and better mental health (McGregor et al., 2024). Without support, such as a lack of validation for gender diversity, exclusion or abuse from close family, an increase in negative mental health outcomes has been noted, leading to increased risks of self-harm, suicidal ideation, and other mental health

challenges (Valentine & Shipherd, 2018). Therefore, as gender-diverse young people benefit enormously from the support of family members, professionals working with families of gender diverse youth must understand more deeply the experience of family members so that appropriate support and guidance can be offered.

In considering the experiences of family members, it is important to first recognise the challenges inherent in the experiences of gender-diverse young people. For these young individuals, they may be facing mental health challenges, which may include gender dysphoria, alongside anxieties about how, when, and where to disclose their gender identity (von Doussa et al., 2020). In addition to these challenges, gender diverse young people must consider the societal context, which may include gender stereotyping, such as gendered roles and behavioural expectations, which have often been developed in early childhood (King et al., 2021). They may also have to manage religious beliefs and practices, which may be held personally or by family or community members, that may conflict with their developing feelings about gender, negatively impacting their mental health (e.g., Bernards et al., 2024; Rabasco & Andover, 2023)

Current research highlights the benefits for gender-diverse individuals when they have supportive families and communities, including strong support from professionals, such as improvements in mental health (e.g. McGregor et al., 2024; Treharne et al., 2022; Valentine & Shipherd, 2018). However, for families, understanding their perspective and experiences is critical not only for comprehending the contextual mechanisms that underpin familial support for gender diversity but also for determining how professionals can guide and support families as they navigate this journey. For parents, grandparents, and siblings, acquiring this knowledge, shared by understanding professionals, can assist in managing the challenges that may arise during the gender identity disclosure process.

A systematic literature review was conducted in response to the question: how do parents, grandparents and siblings experience the gender identity disclosure of a young family member? A

process of thematic synthesis was employed to develop an analytic theme that answers this question. This not only enhances the understanding of the familial experience of gender identity disclosure but also provides implications for professionals supporting gender-diverse young people and their families.

2.3 Methods

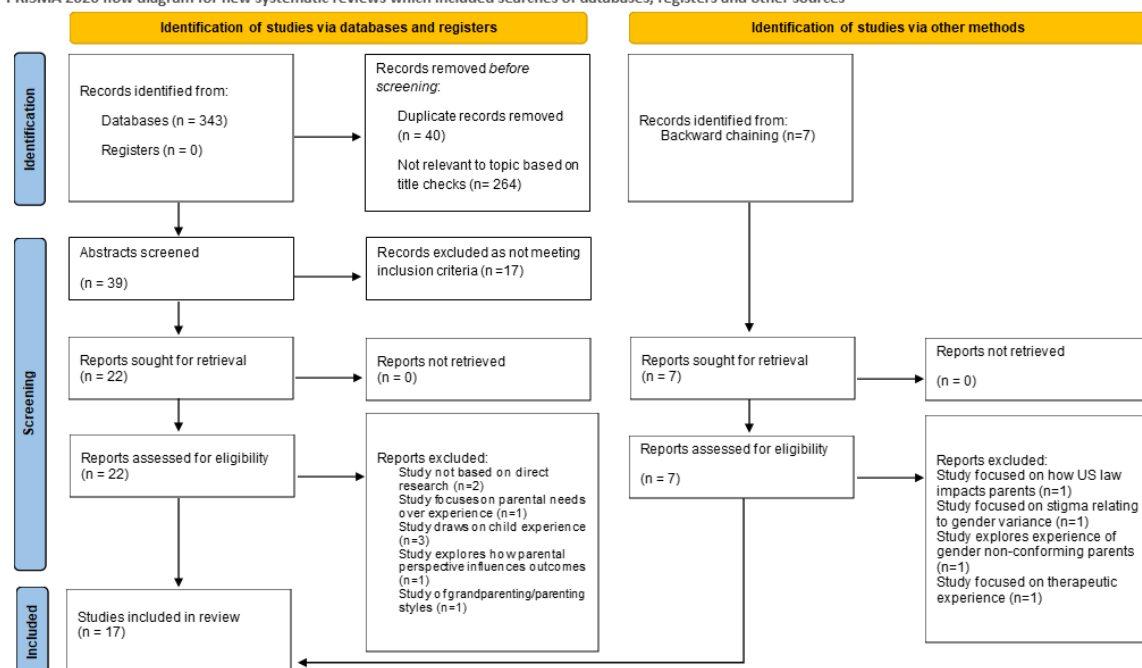
2.3.1 Selection and search strategy

A systematic literature review was conducted to identify published research literature relating to the experiences of parents, siblings and grandparents of a gender-diverse young person. A systematic search strategy was applied using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses (PRISMA) approach (Page et al., 2021) as shown in Figure 1.

Seven databases were searched: CINAHL, Medline, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global, PsycINFO, ScienceDirect, Taylor and Francis Journals and Wiley Online Library. At this stage, search terms (Table 1) and inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 2) were developed with the aid of the PICO (Population, phenomenon of Interest, Context) model (Boland et al., 2017). An initial scoping search further supported the identification and refinement of search terms, including synonyms and the Boolean technique was applied with AND/OR operators (Table 1). The final search was conducted on 4th November 2024.

Figure 1 . PRISMA literature review flowchart

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and other sources



From: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ* 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71. For more information, visit: <http://www.prisma-statement.org/>

Table 1. Search items

Gender transition	“gender questioning” Transgender Transexual “gender curious” “gender dysphoria” “gender divers*” “gender identity disorder” “gender nonconforming” “gender varian*”
Family	Sibling* Brother Sister Parent* Grand* “family system”
Other terms	Experience*

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Written in English	Written in language other than English
Focus on familial experience – sibling, parent or grandparent	Focus on the gender exploring person's experience of family
Relates to experience of having a gender curious family member	Exploration of peers', or other family members' (e.g. aunt, cousin, etc.) experience of the young person's gender exploration
Family members consulted are cisgender	
Qualitative research	Non-qualitative research/Quantitative research
Research covers individual family members experience (parents, siblings or grandparents) or whole family unit, to include: • Emotional impact • General well-being • Understanding of gender • Friendships, relationships	Experiences not covered include: • Management of gender transition, e.g. use of hormone blockers, input of health service professionals, etc. • Interactions with health services • Influencing legal/health policies • Changes to health services • Relates to therapeutic interventions • Exploration of gender questioning of any other family member

The PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1) details the search process. The initial search across the seven databases yielded 343 articles, of which 40 were removed due to duplication and 264 were removed after checking titles and confirming that they were not of relevance to the review question. From this point, 39 articles were checked more closely, with abstracts checked for relevance. Seventeen articles were excluded due to not being of relevance or not meeting the inclusion criteria (Table 2). Finally, 22 articles were read to consider inclusion within the review, of which 14 were found to be relevant and fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Backward citation chaining was undertaken by checking the references of the 14 included articles to check for missing records. Seven articles were checked for eligibility, with three progressing to the final review.

Once relevant articles had been identified, a quality assurance was completed using the CASP quality checklist (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2024). Following the CASP (2024) protocol, articles were included in the review if they fulfilled the criteria required of the initial two questions, which asked if the research aims were clearly stated and if a qualitative method was used appropriately. Beyond this, the questions were answered to identify any significant problems within the processes or data analysis. If issues had been identified, exclusion of the article would have been considered. However, all articles were deemed to be of sound methodological quality, as they not only fulfilled the initial criteria questions but also displayed strengths across the other criteria, such as design, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations (Table 3). Data extraction was completed, identifying main findings and themes for the literature review.

The final search identified seventeen relevant studies (Figure 1) from the USA (7), Australia (3), USA and Canada combined (1), Canada (1), UK (2), Italy (1), Israel (1) and Japan (1). Papers were not excluded on geographical grounds, as this review sought to draw in the broadest range of experiences across countries and cultures. Details for each article can be found in Table 3 (see Appendix B for full data extraction). The articles cover a relatively broad geographic area, with the USA being the most commonly represented population.

2.3.2 Data extraction and synthesis

Following Thomas and Harden's (2008) approach to thematic synthesis, line-by-line coding was applied to the results/findings sections of the included studies. Each meaningful unit, typically a phrase or sentence, was coded. The resultant codes and phrases were recorded in a Microsoft Word document alongside page number references. The quotes gathered were also colour-coded to allow for quick referencing and identification of codes and how these were experienced (or not) by different members of the family. After initial coding was complete, the researcher reviewed the codes, placing the one hundred and one initial codes under seven initial broad descriptive themes (see Appendix D). Again, these were checked to consider the common experiences for all family members. These were

further refined by returning to quotes drawn from the text and revisiting the codes, to identify central themes relating to the experiences of family members when a young person makes a gender identity disclosure. Five main themes (Figure 2) were identified and one over-arching theme of an ‘emotional storm’ was considered integral to the five main themes. An overview of the studies from which the analytic themes and sub-themes were drawn can be found in Table 4.

The majority of the papers (11) explored the experiences of parents in supporting their children after a gender disclosure, three papers focused on the sibling experience, and one paper examined the experience of grandparents. One paper explored the experience of the whole family, interviewing parents, siblings and the gender diverse young person themselves individually. In total, 309 participants were involved across the 17 research papers. The articles selected cover a range of gender-diverse experiences, including gender dysphoria (2), gender expression/diversity, e.g. non-binary (6) and transgender experiences (10).

Table 3 . Data extraction table

Study Number	Author and date	Country	Design	Participant information as reported by authors	Quality assurance
1	Allen & Leslie, 2024	USA	Qualitative study from a constructivist paradigm. Reflexive thematic analysis.	14 parents (12F; 2M) Children aged 18-31 (9 nonbinary; 2 transmasculine; 1 gender fluid)	Sound
2	Aramburu Alegría, 2018	USA	Longitudinal study (reporting first wave of interviews) coded using constant comparative method.	14 parents (12F; 2M) including 2 couples. Children aged 6-17 (5 transfeminine; 7 transmasculine)	Sound
3	Bernards et al., 2024	USA Canada	Qualitative study based on constructivist grounded theory (CGT).	27 participants (parents) were interviewed. All identified as Latter-day Saints (LDS) at the time of	Sound

				their child coming out as transgender.	
4	Frigerio et al., 2021	Italy	Qualitative study using inductive thematic analysis.	15 parents (10F; 5M)	Sound
5	Godwin et al., 2024	USA	Qualitative study, interview transcripts drawn from a previous study. Thematic analysis used to identify themes.	15 cisgender siblings (8F; 7M) – 11 older siblings, 3 younger and 1 twin.	Sound
6	Gray et al., 2016	USA	Qualitative, grounded theory analysis.	11 parents (8F; 3M), including 3 married couples.	Sound
7	Horton, 2023	UK	Part of a wider study exploring experience of trans children, qualitative study using reflexive thematic analysis.	30 parents – children identified as 15F; 12M; 3 non-binary. All children had socially transitioned.	Sound
8	Ishii, 2018	Japan	Qualitative study drawing on grounded theory for analysis.	12 parents (9F; 3M) – 3 couples with transgender child aged between 18 and 33.	Sound
9	Kuvalanka et al., 2020	USA	A participatory, longitudinal study. Interviews were coded using inductive thematic analysis.	2 paternal grandmothers (part of a wider cohort of primary caregiver participants)	Sound
10	Nadan, 2022	Israel	Qualitative study drawing on modified constructivist grounded theory (CGT)	18 Jewish-Israeli parents with trans child (15F; 3M)	Sound
11	Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021	Australia	Qualitative study using thematic analysis.	17 participants (11F; 7M) aged 14-26.	Sound

12	Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015	Canada	Drawing on participatory approach, study uses grounded theory for analysis of written notes from focus group discussions.	14 parents of gender variant children.	Sound
13	Tarantino et al., 2024	USA	Participatory study drawing on reflexive thematic analysis to identify themes.	14 caregivers of trans or gender diverse youth (13 parents; 1 grandparent).	Sound
14	Wagner & Armstrong, 2020	USA	Phenomenological approach	16 parents (12F; 4M) – children female to male (11), male to female (4), non-binary (1).	Sound
15	Wells et al., 2022	Australia	Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)	12 parents including 2 sets of parents. Children aged 6-17 – 5 trans girls/girls; 5 trans boys/boys; 1 non-binary.	Sound
16	Westwater et al., 2020	Australia	Circular questioning technique used with inductive thematic analysis.	35 family members (10 family units) - 9 young people aged 12-17 experiencing gender dysphoria - 10 mothers - 8 fathers - 8 siblings aged 11-17	Sound
17	Wheeler et al., 2019	UK	Qualitative design using an abductive approach to thematic analysis.	8 siblings (6F; 2M)	Sound

Table 4. Analytic themes and sub-themes identified in each study

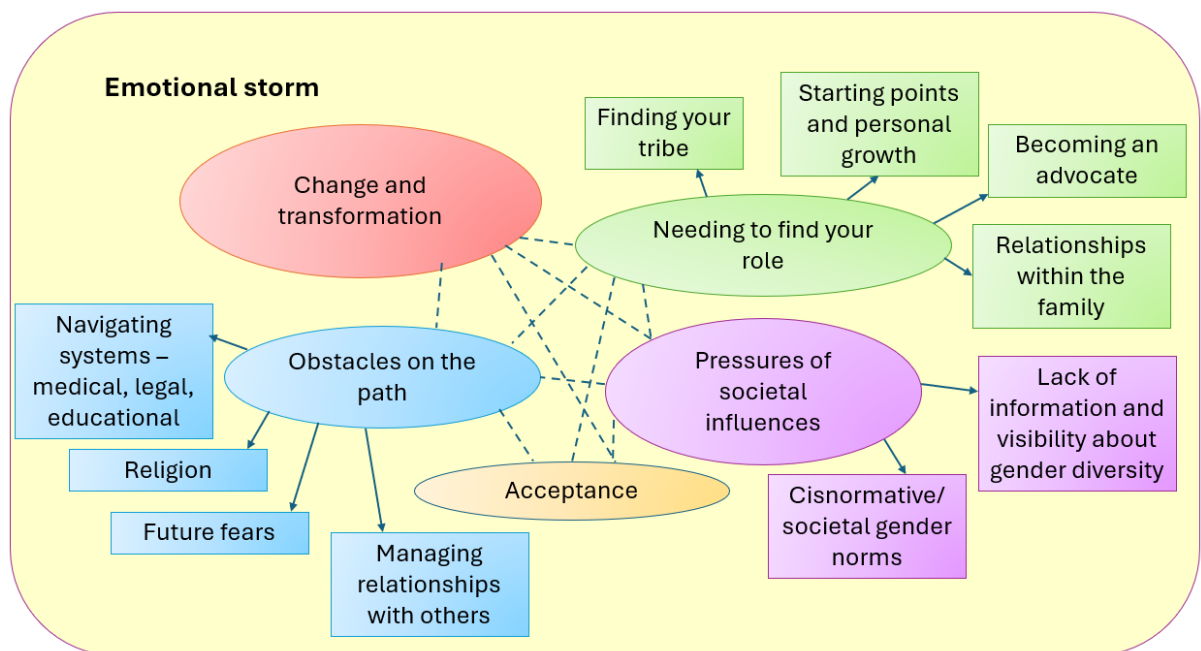
[illegible]

Note: N indicates that the theme was not evident within the study; Y indicates that the theme was evident in the study. Themes in bold refer to analytic themes. Themes in italics are sub-themes. Where an analytic theme has sub-themes, they have not been included, as if the sub-theme is evident, it is considered that the main theme is also present.

2.4 Results

“I just feel like I'm drowning in my confusion and hurt and pain... broken and unsure” (Bernards et al., 2024)

Figure 2. Thematic map



Note: Ovals show the main analytic themes. Oblongs relate to sub-themes. Colours show related themes.

The themes presented in this systematic literature review are depictions of the researchers’ interpretations of the experiences of parents, grandparents, and siblings as they navigate the process of a young person's gender identity disclosure within their family. The overarching theme, as represented by the opening quote from a parent above, was that of an ‘emotional storm.’ It was evident that for all family members, their experiences were consistently marked by a storm of powerful and ever-changing emotions. For many, strong, rapidly changing and turbulent emotions were the norm, especially after the initial gender disclosure. Powerful imagery was often used to describe the roiling emotions, such as one parent saying they were “crying hysterically” (Tarantino et al., 2024, p.

4), while another described managing the emotions as akin to a “battle” (Westwater et al., 2020, p. 327). There was also an overwhelming sense of uncertainty permeating all aspects of the gender identity disclosure experience.

2.4.1 Emotional storm

For parents, siblings, and grandparents, the emotional aspect of the experience was interwoven with every aspect of caring for and supporting their gender-diverse family member. It was consistently described as a driver for change and transformation in the lives of participants, as they recognised that their lives would be forever altered. For example, one parent said,

Obviously, that was a life-changing moment. That day that he told me, “I think I’m actually a guy,” we were standing in the kitchen That was the first moment when he expressed something to me, and I think that it hit me like a bowling ball, really. It was like, “What, where is that coming from?” There was that initial shock. (Wagner & Armstrong, 2020, p. 340).

From this initial starting place of shock, recognising irrevocable change, family members had to navigate barriers and obstacles on the way, establishing their new roles and places within the family structure and managing the challenges of external pressures from their unique social and cultural contexts. For parents and grandparents, managing the reactions of extended family and the wider community, including religious communities, was a significant challenge. This was particularly notable when they had to question their continued allegiance with a specific group, either religious or community-based, due to, for example, rejection from religious leaders (Bernards et al., 2024; Ishii, 2018). For siblings, it was navigating the school and classroom environment, worrying about how their friends and peers would react to their sibling’s gender disclosure. In addition, all family members worried about the safety of the whole family, both in the present and the future. Fears of stigma, discrimination and the unknown future weighed heavily on the minds of many participants.

Amid the emotional ups and downs of finding their individual paths through the storm, each family member ultimately reached a point of acceptance. As family members assimilated their experiences and moved towards a point of acceptance, their emotions became more positively

focused. Reports of increased happiness, as their gender-diverse family member was able to live with authenticity, were commonplace and extended beyond the gender-diverse young person, as one parent said,

“I guess he’s put me in that situation where I have to look into myself...and maybe be the true and authentic person I need to be. Like I say, that’s how profound this has been. So, it’s changed me in a big way.” (Wells et al., 2022, p. 505)

As a result of the consistent and ever-present descriptions of emotional experiences within the recollections of family members, the ‘Emotional storm’ is the overarching theme that influences every other theme identified and cannot be viewed as separate from the experience of the gender identity disclosure process, from exploration to disclosure to acceptance. The links between the overarching theme and main analytic themes are shown in Figure 2.

2.4.2 Change and transformation

The experience of change and transformation was common, particularly for parents. Strong emotions were evident in many of the parents' descriptions of their experiences, such as shock and confusion after the child's initial gender disclosure (Bernards et al., 2024; Frigerio et al., 2021; Ishii, 2018; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2022; Wagner & Armstrong, 2020). One participant described it as “excruciatingly painful, because it challenges every aspect of your life.” (Bernards et al., 2024 Core theme), while another parent said that it was a “considerable trauma” (Frigerio et al., 2021, p. 438).

After the initial shock, parents found that they needed to adapt, starting the process of acceptance. As part of this experience, parents shifted their thinking and their lives to fit with their new family experience, with some describing a transformation in the way they viewed gender diversity and their child (Bernards et al., 2024; Ishii, 2018; Wagner & Armstrong, 2020).

Although many participants described feelings of surprise or shock, a prevailing sense emerged that, upon reflection, the gender disclosure was less surprising than initially perceived. Parents and siblings noted behaviours of their child or sibling that now made sense, because their child could be

themselves, and their mental health improved; one parent described it as “a 180-degree difference” (Wagner & Armstrong, 2020, p. 342).

Siblings did not necessarily experience change in the same way as their parents. While some described feeling initial confusion, after adapting to changes, such as altered pronoun use, many considered it usual or a part of life (Godwin et al., 2024; Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021; Westwater et al., 2019; Wheeler et al., 2019). For siblings, changes in family dynamics and parental focus and attention (towards their gender diverse sibling), were of greater significance.

Changes for grandparents were described differently from those for parents or siblings. While there was less emphasis on the emotional changes, there were reflections on changes to their living circumstances, such as unexpectedly taking on the primary caregiver role or navigating legal and medical systems in unfamiliar ways (Kupalanka et al., 2020).

Discussions of grief or loss were commonplace (Aramburu Alegría, 2018; Bernards et al., 2024; Frigerio et al., 2021; Wheeler et al., 2019). For parents, adapting to the perceived change in their child’s gender identity was necessary, as it impacted both their child’s future and their own. Consequently, they experienced a sense of loss regarding expected or planned futures that could no longer occur. For siblings, some similarly felt a sense of loss, but this was more focused on the losses of experiences for their sibling, such as a loss of opportunity to travel freely (Wheeler et al., 2019).

Finally, parents had to change their thinking about gender diversity and their perceptions of their child’s gender identity. Some parents described thinking of their child’s gender disclosure as being temporary or a phase that they would grow out of (Allen & Leslie, 2024; Frigerio et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2016). Therefore, for some parents, understanding the changes their child expressed involved recognising that the changes to gender expression and identity were permanent.

2.4.3 Needing to find your role

The theme of family members needing to find their new roles was evident within the stories of many participants (Godwin et al., 2024; Kupalanka et al., 2020; Tarantino et al., 2024; Wells et al., 2022). For parents, this linked especially to taking on advocacy roles to support their own well-being,

as a coping strategy, and as a way to build deeper purpose in their lives (Allen & Leslie, 2024; Aramburu Alegría, 2018; Bernards et al., 2024; Gray et al., 2016; Ishii, 2018; Nadan, 2022; Westwater et al., 2020). For brothers and sisters, they were keen to support their sibling through their gender diverse travels, they were more focused on offering relational support, such as listening to their sibling and connecting more openly with them (Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021; Westwater et al., 2020; Wheeler et al., 2019). Siblings, as well as parents and grandparents, felt the need to take on the role of protector, as they defended their gender diverse young person, such as, “I have a responsibility now to support, always” (Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021, p. 192).

Throughout, it was evident that all participants had different starting points. For some, the gender disclosure was not a huge surprise, and they were able to adapt with relative speed (especially in the case of siblings; Aramburu Alegría, 2018; Westwater et al., 2020), while for others, there was a need to educate themselves on the topic of gender diversity, as they had little or no familiarity with the concept (Allen & Leslie, 2024; Frigerio et al., 2021; Godwin et al., 2024; Ishii, 2018; Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021). From this point, the idea of personal growth was common, as participants in all studies developed their thinking around gender and what this meant for them, their family and broader society.

For participants in many studies, the idea of connecting with others with similar experiences, who were able to support and give advice, was of great importance (S. Allen & Leslie, 2024; Aramburu Alegría, 2018; Bernards et al., 2024; Frigerio et al., 2021; Ishii, 2018; Kivalanka et al., 2020; Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021; Wells et al., 2022; Westwater et al., 2020; Wheeler et al., 2019). Generally, siblings turned to the internet for information, particularly through connecting with the LGBTQ+ community in chat rooms. While parents and grandparents tended to rely more on meeting with people within their local communities. Some parents found that drawing from medical professionals not only built their understanding of their child’s gender diversity, but also gave them support in accepting their new identity (Frigerio et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2016; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2022). Building new connections and finding your tribe was vital to supporting the mental well-being of family

members, as they gained validation and affirmation of their experience, while also getting advice on managing the many complexities of the gender transition process.

Shifting family relationships was a common theme for participants. For parents and grandparents, balancing the needs of other family members, with those of their gender diverse child or grandchild was a challenge (Frigerio et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2016; Kuvalanka et al., 2020; Tarantino et al., 2024; Wells et al., 2022). These participants described the challenges of managing relationships with more distant family members, such as how and when to communicate about the gender diverse disclosure of their child. Parents had to manage their time and attention given to siblings, who sometimes expressed resentment at the time and financial cost of having a gender diverse sibling (Godwin et al., 2024; Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021). Grandparents also needed to manage contact with birth parents, who were not always supportive of their child's gender diversity (Kuvalanka et al., 2020). While tensions in familial relationships were commonly reported, there was also an overwhelming sense of positive change in relationships. Despite the stresses and strains on relationships, participants in all studies reported positive changes, such as improved, more open communication and closer connections within the family.

2.4.4 Obstacles on the path

Grandparents faced specific challenges with the legal system, as in the study by Kuvalanka et al. (2020), the grandparents had to obtain guardianship so that they could direct appropriate care and education for their grandchild. Navigating laws and courts complicated their experience, especially when they faced "belittling" (Kuvalanka et al., 2020, p. 320) behaviour from a judge. However, negative experiences were not universal, and it was highly dependent on the area and the individual judge, as one grandparent described their judge for a guardianship case as "a gem" (Kuvalanka et al., 2020, p. 321).

For parents and grandparents, managing interactions with schools and medical professionals had the potential to be problematic (Frigerio et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2016; Ishii, 2018; Kuvalanka et al., 2020; Nadan, 2022; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015; Tarantino et al., 2024; Wagner & Armstrong,

2020; Westwater et al., 2020). Parents and grandparents found it challenging to manage the financial costs, access affirming care, and find educators who were affirming for their child and family. Siblings, in particular, expressed concerns about a lack of information or guidance around the possible side effects or impacts of medical transition (Godwin et al., 2024; Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021; Wheeler et al., 2019). While generally navigating the medical and educational fields was filled with challenges, there were still reports of positive and affirming experiences, which demonstrated that, like in the legal system, interactions with understanding individuals or organisations could make a huge difference to the experience of family members (Allen & Leslie, 2024; Aramburu Alegría, 2018; Frigerio et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2016; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015; Westwater et al., 2020).

Parents, siblings and grandparents all described the complexities of managing relationships beyond the family. For siblings, concerns mainly centred around friendships and the experience at school were consistently reported throughout the literature reviewed. Parents and grandparents, while also concerned about treatment in school settings, had added concerns about how their child would be received within the broader community, especially by religious groups to which they were already connected (Aramburu Alegría, 2018; Bernards et al., 2024; Ishii, 2018; Westwater et al., 2020). For many, direct experiences of discrimination were common, and if not directly experienced, it was feared by all as a potential future experience. While grandparents had concerns about how others outside the family would receive their gender diverse grandchild, they had the benefit of established community connections and a social 'cache' that they could draw on, which was viewed as an advantage in securing support for their grandchild from the community and from local institutions, such as schools.

Religion, where cited, played a particularly important role in the experiences of parents; it generally gave rise to personal conflicts, as parents had to assimilate their child's gender disclosure with that of non-affirming beliefs or teachings from religious leaders. However, while the picture was generally a challenging one, some found their beliefs, after a period of adjustment, to be affirmative or supportive (Bernards et al., 2024; Tarantino et al., 2024; Wells et al., 2022). For siblings, challenges

around religion focused on the way that friends with strong religious beliefs would respond to their sibling's gender disclosure (Godwin et al., 2024).

Finally, as previously mentioned, fear for the future was a consistent emotional experience for participants. Parents, grandparents, and siblings all had concerns about how the future would be for their gender-diverse child. These varied from concerns about how others would treat their child or sibling to how their gender disclosure and transition may impact their future plans and life choices. In some cases, parents reported concerns about their child's future relationships and whether they would have children (Aramburu Alegría, 2018; Frigerio et al., 2021; Nadan, 2022). Grandparents cited specific concerns that related to their mortality, as they worried that advanced age and illness may mean that they would not be able to look after their grandchild in the longer term (Kovalanka et al., 2020).

2.4.5 Pressures of societal influences

All participant groups described experiences of managing societal pressures in some capacity. The main challenge came from the prevalence of cisnormative (the assumption cisgender identities are typical or the norm; Stonewall, 2024) and societal gender norms, which influenced the way others outside the family reacted to the gender diversity of their family member. Parents, grandparents, and siblings found themselves taking on advocacy or protective roles, as previously described, as they sought to defend and keep their gender-diverse family member safe. Within societal systems, such as legal, educational and health, participants in the studies described facing cisnormative challenges, often due to a lack of understanding or visibility of gender diversity. The lack of visibility and general knowledge about the topic of gender diversity was also cited by parents, as they sought information about the topic after their child's gender disclosure (S. Allen & Leslie, 2024). Siblings reported that a lack of visible public figures or media representations related to gender diversity made conversations with others, especially peers, around the topic more challenging (Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021). This lack of accessible and accurate information around gender diversity and transition led to confusion and misunderstandings, both within the participant groups and the wider public. Siblings, in particular, found the lack of reliable, accessible information difficult, as they tended to rely more heavily on the

internet for information. At the same time, parents and grandparents were generally able to seek information from their community and professionals.

Closely linked to concerns about the future, parents and siblings raised concerns about how cisnormative bias within society would impact the life choices and eventual outcomes for their gender diverse family member. This concern was not isolated to the challenges of being transgender, as one sibling expressed concerns that their trans-sister would be heavily disadvantaged due to transitioning from male to female, due to the sexual inequalities prevalent within British society (Wheeler et al., 2019).

2.4.6 Acceptance

All participant groups discussed acceptance, with many describing it as an ongoing process or a journey. For parents, the experience of acceptance was generally a gradual one, with self-education, building new connections, and adjusting their views on gender being central to that process. For siblings, the path to acceptance was more nuanced, with some reaching a point of acceptance relatively quickly. In contrast, others took more time as they adjusted their thinking and behaviour to assimilate their gender diverse sibling's new identity. Kuvalanka et al. (2020) make no mention of the acceptance process for grandparents. However, they do discuss it within the broader context of grandparents seeking acceptance from the child's parents or others in the community.

2.5 Discussion

The current review examined how parents, grandparents, and siblings experience the process of a young person's gender identity disclosure within the family. Central to their experience was a powerful emotional storm, as they all took time to process and adapt to their family member's gender disclosure. Family members went through a period of change and transformation, facing varying and unique obstacles depending on their role and place within the family that they had to manage on the path to acceptance. The findings in this review closely align with the framework offered by Family Systems Theory (Miller et al., 2000). This theory has assumptions central to its understanding, such as the idea that all family members are interrelated and that the behaviours, actions, and experiences of

one family member cannot be viewed in isolation. Drawing on the findings from the data synthesis in this review, in combination with family systems theory, it is argued that when considering the experience of family members with a gender-diverse young person, they cannot be understood as independent of each other. The actions and behaviours of one will impact the behaviours and experiences of all others. For example, in the findings, one family member's gender disclosure led all other members of the family to worry about the safety of the entire unit. This resulted in a shift in interactions and connections with others within the community, such as moving jobs, schools, or social connections.

Linked to this idea that the actions of one family member impacting the experiences of all, de Bel (2020) demonstrates in their research the 'ripple effect' experienced within families, whereby the actions of one member impact the relationship dynamic within the family unit. If relationships within the family are strong, they will offer resilience to the unit, as they can support each other through the gender identity disclosure process. If the relationship is already strained or is pushed too hard at the point of disclosure, then the gender diverse young person, as well as others within the family, may look beyond the key relationships, shifting their focus to others within the family, e.g. siblings, or more broadly to support within the community, e.g. friends. As a result, when familial relationships are strained in such a way, they can stop offering resilience and assistance for family members, as they seek support elsewhere.

2.5.1 Strengths and Limitations

The studies included within this review have been drawn from a relatively wide geographic area, which includes areas not often represented within the literature, for example, Japan (Ishii, 2018). It also includes the experiences of parents with strong religious beliefs (Bernards et al., 2024). However, while this review does start to draw in literature from a broader range of areas and contexts, some geographical areas and socio-cultural experiences are notable by their absence, for example, families from Africa, South and Central America and parts of South-East Asia. In addition, religious backgrounds covered within this review are limited to those from Christian backgrounds. As a result, further

research could explore the experiences of families with gender-diverse young people from a more diverse range of backgrounds and global locations.

It is important to recognise, as highlighted in the literature, that although acceptance was a common experience for participants in the studies discussed, it was not necessarily a shared experience among all family members of a gender-diverse young person. It is vital to acknowledge that in all of the studies reviewed, participants were self-selecting and felt ready to discuss their experiences with researchers. Therefore, while the participants in these studies describe arriving at a point of acceptance, this should not necessarily be viewed as a common experience for all (e.g., Aramburu Alegría, 2018; Tarantino et al., 2024; Westwater et al., 2020).

2.5.2 Implications and future research

Considering the findings closely linked to the family systems framework, there are implications for professionals, including those working in health, education, and family-based social services. When supporting a young person as they disclose their gender identity, it is essential to recognise the experiences of other family members. All family members will have unique challenges due to the young person's gender disclosure. For example, for siblings, managing peer relationships and relationships at school, while parents will be managing the relationships with extended family and the local community. Recognising the complexity of the inter-related impacts and how they will have the ripple effect on all members, being greater the closer the relationship, will allow for more targeted and appropriate support to be offered to different family members.

When carrying out this review, the voices of grandparents were limited within the research. Examples of research that are solely focused on the grandparents' experiences of looking after gender-diverse grandchildren are limited (Kualanka et al., 2020). This study highlights the significant gap in the research, which may help to build an understanding of the unique challenges experienced by grandparents. For example, through the lens of family systems theory and the ripple effect, consideration of how much grandparents, who are not in a direct caring role (as in the research of Kualanka et al., 2020) are impacted by a grandchild's gender disclosure would be a valuable insight.

Kuvalanka et al. (2020), discussed the unique position of grandparents, termed the 'grandparenting edge', which meant that the gender diverse young person felt closer to them, more able to confide in them, while the grandparents themselves could draw on their social kudos within the local community to gather support for their grandchild. Gaining a better understanding of how these dynamics within the family can be put to greater use in supporting the gender-diverse young person, as well as their parents and siblings—especially when grandparents are not required to take on a primary caring role—could be immensely valuable for professionals and families as they care for and support their gender-diverse young person.

2.6 Conclusion

The need to understand the experiences of family members so that appropriate support and guidance can be offered to families has never been more vital. The current social and political context for those travelling the gender diverse path is changing rapidly, with increased anti-trans rhetoric becoming the norm, particularly within the media (Atwood et al., 2024). Therefore, having a full understanding of the implications of having a gender-diverse family member for the unit as a whole and how this will impact the experiences of parents, siblings, and grandparents is of utmost importance.

Central to understanding the experience of parents, grandparents, and siblings with a gender-diverse family member is the recognition that powerful and ever-changing emotions heavily influence the process. All start at different points of knowledge and understanding, with their own biases and influences (societal and potentially religious) impacting the path followed. Drawing on the understanding given by family systems theory, it is important for professionals working with families, but also families themselves to appreciate the impact that the experience of gender disclosure of one family member can have on everyone in the unit. Providing accurate and timely information about gender diversity that is tailored to the needs of each family member is extremely useful in supporting the development of understanding and harmony within familial relationships. For close family members, recognising that the road to acceptance will not strictly be linear, smooth or without strong emotion is important when offering support and validation. Overall, despite the many difficulties and

challenges along the path, the overwhelming message is that family members experience positive growth, building a deeper understanding of gender and closer, more meaningful family relationships.

Chapter 3: Looking back: a retrospective study of shared perspectives on gender identity

3.1 Abstract

Recent studies examine how families assist gender-diverse individuals in exploring their gender identity. Specifically, there is growing interest in how gender-diverse people leave subtle clues, or 'breadcrumbs', for significant people in their lives to signal their gender exploration. Previous research indicates that having a supportive companion can significantly influence the outcomes for a gender-diverse person throughout their experience of exploration and eventual disclosure. This research aims to examine the shared perspectives of gender identity disclosure from the perspectives of a gender-diverse person and an individual of importance to them who has supported them through this process. As part of this experience, their relationship, the lead-up to the initial disclosure, their experiences of the disclosure of gender diversity, and how this has impacted both participants' views on gender are explored. Four interviews with dyads (a gender-diverse person and a person of importance to them) were conducted, recorded and transcribed. Reflexive thematic analysis identified three main themes: What binds us; What divides us; Meeting in the middle. The findings demonstrate how gender-diverse people and their allies experience this process, including strategies used by both that increase the resilience of their relationship and ways in which they mitigate the potential stresses and strains they experience.

3.2 Introduction

Gender diversity, as defined by the American Psychological Association (APA), is “the extent to which a person’s gender identity, role or expression differs from the cultural norms prescribed for people of a particular sex” (American Psychological Association, 2015, p. 20). While the term ‘gender-diverse’ is increasingly used by researchers and charities (Thorne et al., 2019), it is important to recognise that the community's preferences and the use of specific terms are not universally agreed upon. For instance, Zwickl et al. (2024) found in their research conducted in Australia that there was limited consensus on preferred terms, with only 15.1% of the community stating a preference for the term ‘gender-diverse’. The term ‘gender-diverse’ is used here because it is recognised within the academic literature as positive and inclusive of the wide range of gender identities, including non-binary, binary, and transgender identities (Thorne et al., 2019).

More recently, gender diversity has become more visible in public discourse, with younger generations advocating for a deeper understanding of gender diversity and its representation in society (Allen et al., 2022). However, while younger people may be more accepting of gender diversity, their understanding remains influenced by binary understandings of gender (Allen et al., 2022). How society construes and expresses gender is generally drawn from historical understandings of gender passed down through generations (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016; Wang & Cheung, 2023). These prevailing societal constructions of gender have been shown to influence how and when gender diverse young people decide to leave hints or clues about their gender status, where it may differ from societal expectations (Grishow-Schade et al., 2023). As a consequence of these prevailing binary constructs and the limited acceptance of gender-fluid experiences or identities, gender-diverse youth may face poorer mental health outcomes (e.g., Blakemore, 2019; Valentine & Shipherd, 2018).

Research has explored how gender diverse young people leave hints or clues, termed ‘breadcrumbs’ by Grishow-Schade et al. (2023) as they seek to identify those to whom may be ‘safe’ to disclose. Grishow-Schade et al. (2023) reported that participants looked at the clothes worn by parents to consider if they were non-binary in style or parental responses to LGBTQ+ people on television. These displays, whether of acceptance, rejection, or ambivalence (e.g., a parent wearing

androgynous clothes, i.e., gender neutral style) from key family members, provide young people with indications about what is 'acceptable' regarding gender expression, leading to either a sense that expressing their gender diversity will be accepted or a recognition that they will need to suppress their feelings to avoid censure from their family. If gender diverse young people sense openness to gender diversity, there is a greater likelihood that they will 'test the waters' (Heiden-Rootes et al., 2023) or leave 'breadcrumbs' (Grishow-Schade et al., 2023) for key adults to pick up.

Participants in Rosenberg's (2023) study point to the emotional experiences of family members following a gender identity disclosure from a young family member. The parents in this study described feelings of shock, denial, and a sense of grief, which were later followed by acceptance, strongly paralleling Kubler-Ross's 'Five Stages of Grief', to the extent that one parent described it as "like everything died" (Rosenberg, 2023, p. 66). Powerful emotions, including loss, grief, fear, and helplessness, consistently feature in research focused on familial experiences of gender identity disclosure (e.g. Coolhart et al., 2018; Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Wagner & Armstrong, 2020). For parents in Wagner and Armstrong's (2020) study, prioritising their child's needs and safety served as a coping strategy for these intense emotions.

The "rollercoaster of emotions" (Westwater et al., 2020, p. 327) described above makes the path to acceptance for parents a difficult one. This is not the sole obstacle to acceptance for family members. Moeller (2023) in his research with primary caregivers (those who had taken on the care of a child in their family or a friend's family) in Black American communities showed that, due to misinformation shared on social media about the gender-diverse community, participants might reject their child's hypothetical gender disclosure. The reasons for taking a hypothetical stance were not clearly stated, but Moeller (2023) did reference a lack of previous research exploring the acceptance of transgender and non-binary gender identities within the Black community. In a study conducted by Pullen Sansfaçon et al. (2015), Canadian parents found that having medical labels offered them legitimacy in explaining their child's gender diversity, aiding their own and others' acceptance of their child's gender identity. Acceptance of a gender-diverse child in the family, as described in the research, is generally portrayed as an ongoing process or journey (e.g. Bernards et

al., 2024; Frigerio et al., 2021). For example, in the work of Bernards et al. (2024), US-based parents from the Church of the Latter-Day Saints community described needing to work through the implications of accepting their child's gender diversity in relation to their personal religious beliefs. Frigerio et al. (2021) interviewed Italian parents, who described the acceptance as stemming from their love for their child, with one participant stating, "you must get over it sooner or later if you love them" (p. 439).

While it may take time for family members to accept the gender diversity of a sibling, child or grandchild, the support of family was consistently found to be profoundly protective because accepting relationships can foster resilience for gender-diverse individuals (e.g. Horton, 2023; McGregor et al., 2024). Horton (2023) found that UK parents described feeling that supporting their child's decision to transition socially was the only option, as not to do so risked increasing their distress. Central to this ability to support their child was the need to allow the child to lead the way and respect the child's decision to transition socially. McGregor et al. (2024) demonstrated through their research with parents of gender-diverse children in the USA that explicit familial support for gender diversity, such as supporting access to gender-affirming healthcare, led to improvements in mental health outcomes of the gender-diverse young people involved. Support from family following a gender identity disclosure and positive outcomes related to this support are well-researched, including how family members can demonstrate their support, such as through the use of preferred pronouns and support for gender-affirming healthcare.

There has also been research exploring the experiences of gender-diverse people with peer relationships and the important role these can play in supporting their gender identity disclosure. Kia et al. (2023) found that gender-diverse people in Canada actively seek out positive and supportive peer relationships, which can contribute to their overall thriving. This study emphasises the importance of using peer relationships to support the process of gender identity disclosure and transition positively. While this research explores the experiences of gender-diverse people and their significant relationships, including the benefits they can bring, there is less research emphasis on exploring the experiences of cisgender allies, especially the joint narratives developed during the

disclosure process and how these narratives impact the ally's understanding of gender (Grishow-Schade et al., 2023).

This study will examine the gender identity disclosure experience of a gender-diverse person in connection with someone significant, such as a friend, teacher, work colleague, or family member. It will facilitate an exploration of the confidence the gender-diverse person felt when revealing their gender identity, and how well their disclosure was received. The focus will include how the experience influenced the ally's understanding of gender and whether it altered their perspective. Finally, it will allow for an exploration of the impact their experience had on their relationship, highlighting factors that both strengthened and strained it. To explore this experience in greater depth, a qualitative study was conducted to answer the question: What is the experience of the gender identity disclosure process for a gender-diverse person, alongside someone of personal significance or importance?

3.2 Methods

This study employs a qualitative design to explore the joint, retrospective experiences of the gender identity disclosure process for a gender-diverse person and an individual of personal significance to them, such as a family member, friend, or work colleague. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcripts analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This approach draws on social constructionism, emphasising how individuals use language to create and reinforce their gender identity (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Each participant's experiences were shaped by their context, including age and location. Consequently, the findings are not transferable to a wider population, as they reflect unique experiences of the participants and the researcher's interpretation of the narratives shared. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the University of Southampton (ERGO: 090949).

Throughout this research, I have reflected on my personal perspective on gender, including my gender identity and its meaning to me on a personal level and for the participants in this study. As a white, cisgender, heterosexual woman from a middle-class background, these characteristics have

shaped my life experiences and, consequently, my interpretations of the participants’ experiences presented in the findings. The findings from this study were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) from a social constructionist epistemology. By using a social constructionist approach, I recognise that each person constructs their meanings based on their personal historical and cultural contexts (Burr, 2015).

3.2.1 Participants and recruitment

Four dyads (eight participants in total) were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted between August 2024 and February 2025 and each lasted between one hour and one and a half hours. While a range of demographic data was gathered about the participants, including ethnicity, only basic information is shared below to protect the participants' identities (see Table 5). The participants’ ethnicities are not included here, as it was felt that they do not add significantly to the understanding of the data analysed and the results. All participants were given pseudonyms, and all were adults (over 18), with one person in each pair having disclosed their gender identity (different from that assigned at birth) followed by a gender transition. The time since transition varied from less than one year to almost 20 years ago. Participants were recruited through different routes, including through social media, (e.g., X and BlueSky) and contacts from previous University of Southampton studies. When potential participants contacted the lead researcher, information about the study was shared, along with the consent form and interview questions. Participants were offered the opportunity to complete the interview in-person or remotely via Teams. All participants were given a £20 Amazon voucher in recognition of the time taken to participate.

Table 5. Basic demographic information about participants

Interview number	Name	Relationship	Location	Gender identification
1	Rebecca	Friends	USA	Trans woman
	Jon			Cis man

2	Jessica	Friends and work colleagues	UK	Trans woman
	Dan			Cis man
3	Vincent	Mother and child	UK	Trans man
	Rachael			Cis woman
4	Olivia	Partners	UK	Trans woman
	Charlotte			Cis woman

3.2.2 Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a series of questions, named ‘wonder bundles’ (see Appendix E), which participants were invited to pose to each other. The aim was to build a dialogue between the pair with minimal input from the researcher. The interview questions were shared at the time of gathering consent to improve transparency for the participants. As a result, they were able to control the direction of the interview dialogue, increasing their sense of safety.

Three interviews were conducted virtually using Teams, while one was held in-person. All interviews were recorded using the auto-transcript function on Teams. Once the interview transcripts had been checked against the recording, the video and audio were deleted. During the checking process, all references to people and places that may lead to participant identification were removed.

Reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was used to analyse the transcripts. I followed the six phases—familiarisation, coding, generating initial themes, developing and reviewing themes, refining and naming themes, and write-up—as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2022). After thoroughly reviewing the transcripts to understand the content of each interview, I began coding. The codes were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet and then organised into broader descriptive themes. This process was followed by further refinement of those themes. Finally, I synthesised the descriptive themes into richer, more interpretative analytical themes, ensuring the final themes answered the research

question whilst staying grounded in participants' voices. The results of each stage of this analytic process are presented in Appendix F.

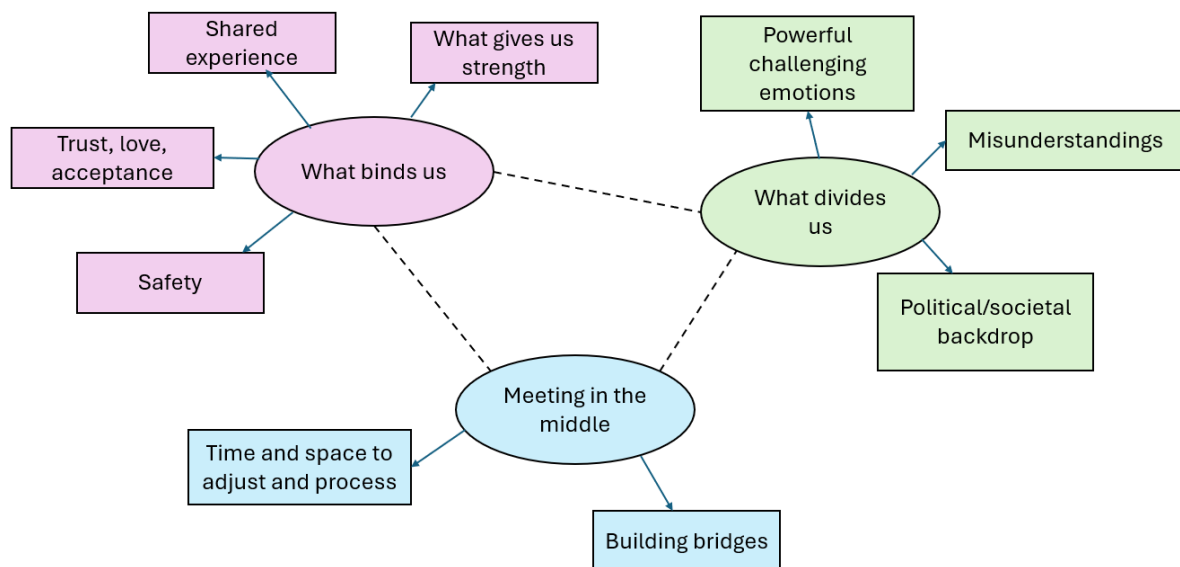
3.3 Results

Three main themes were identified: 'What binds us', 'What divides us', and 'Meeting in the middle'. Within each of these themes, sub-themes were identified as shown in the thematic map (Figure 3). Together, these themes represent the changing dynamics during the gender disclosure process. What Binds us captures the participants' descriptions of various factors that support their relationship and maintain their bond, such as shared interests and experiences. What divides us speaks to the challenges faced by the participants in sustaining their relationship or the difficulties they had to overcome, such as managing the views of others in their workplace. Finally, meeting in the middle reflects the efforts made to build bridges between each other, such as through fostering an understanding of their differing perspectives so that greater empathy can be established between the two, ultimately highlighting the need for time and space to be given to the participant in the ally role to adjust to the gender identity disclosure.

The first theme of 'What binds us' draws on the descriptions of aspects of the relationship that helped to give the participants strength, supported their relationship and aided their communication. This included having shared interests, which fostered a sense of safety and security, allowing them to share their experiences openly with each other, supported by an underlying sense of love, trust, and acceptance. The love described here is not necessarily romantic love; rather, it is more about having care and compassion for the other, and the ally's wish for the gender-diverse person to live authentically. Participants across all four interviews agreed that acceptance was critical to the relationship, past, present, and future. Participants in the ally role described aspects of their experience that strengthened their relationship, including previous experiences of supporting gender-diverse people after a gender identity disclosure and recognising the continuity in the personality and interests of the gender-diverse person.

In direct opposition to these supportive factors, all eight participants described aspects of their experience that gave rise to potential stresses and strains within the relationship. Factors included powerful emotions, ranging from exploration to disclosure at the beginning, to then managing the reactions and behaviours of others, driven by either misunderstandings or societal and political factors, or both, that were beyond the control of the pair. Participants discussed the need to manage these different elements to maintain balance and open dialogue within their relationships, which required them to compromise, often referred to as 'meeting in the middle'. Without compromise from both sides, an awareness of the need to give time and space to process the gender disclosure was vital. There was also a need to navigate conversations about gender and gender identity, both in allowing for open communication and for striking a balance so that the pair discussed topics of joint interest (to maintain the relationship) and not just gender-based topics.

Figure 3. Thematic map showing main themes and sub-themes identified



3.3.1 What binds us

This theme relates to the participants' experiences of being drawn together by their shared experience of the gender disclosure, with an emphasis on connection and emotional security. The four sub-themes identified were 'safety', 'trust, love, acceptance', 'shared experiences' and 'what gives us strength'. These sub-themes capture the elements of the participants' experiences that pulled them together, offering resilience and joint support.

Trust, love, acceptance. Feelings of trust, love, and acceptance were central to the participants' experience. Trust was a two-way process, as Jon described the experience of receiving his friend's gender disclosure as, "that's nice. I'm in this circle of trust.". Likewise, Jessica said, "I think because I have a lot of trust in Dan,.". This trust came from a place of love and care between the pairs, for example, Vincent said, "you love me" when commenting on the importance of his relationship with his mum. Vincent's mum reiterated this by saying, "because we have such a good bond, such a good relationship, obviously you know there's. I don't want to do anything to sort of jeopardise that.". Olivia and Charlotte also expressed that love had been vital to holding their relationship together, as Charlotte said, "but I think we were lucky that we both knew that the caring kind of love was there". These feelings underpinned the acceptance that Charlotte, Rachael, Dan and Jon demonstrated for the gender identity disclosure and transition of their partner, child or friend. The time taken to reach a point of acceptance varied between pairs, but the trust and love within the relationships were there from the early stages, which supported the acceptance process.

Safety. Closely linked to trust and love, was safety. For all of the participants, safety was key to supporting and maintaining their bond, especially for Rebecca, Jessica, Vincent and Olivia. In the early stages of the process, prior to disclosure, for example, Vincent and Rebecca referenced "testing the waters", to check for the reactions with their important other. Through testing with small hints, they were able to identify that these people were safe to disclose to. Although Vincent said, "so I knew I was, like, physically safe, it's just not safe from the awkwardness.". Olivia and Charlotte agreed that at the point of disclosure, there was a sense of physical safety, but not necessarily emotional safety.

Shared experiences. Shared experiences played an important role in supporting the bond between the pairs, in the past, present and future. Jon and Rebecca described shared educational experiences, common interests and taking on joint challenges, such as, "one day, Jon called me up and was like, hey, would you run a marathon with me? And I said sure.". Dan and Jessica talked about their friendship starting at work, which was strengthened by not only working together but also being in a small office, which allowed for deeper, more relaxed conversations. Olivia and Charlotte "met each

other at university over 50 years ago.”. They shared that their “children are hugely part of it, or I can't separate them out.”.

An important part of the shared experience for the pairs was the narrative around the initial experiences of testing the waters and disclosure. For the trans participants, these moments had played a crucial role in helping them to identify who was safe and could be trusted, but it also gave the pairs a joint narrative. For Dan and Jessica, the disclosure was particularly memorable due to an uncomfortable meeting at work when Jessica's manager shared her plans to transition with colleagues. The language chosen by the manager meant Dan said, “I can still remember the point where people were understanding, they were all well done, that congratulations, I thought, what are we congratulating? I don't understand.”. The shared discomfort supports their bond and forms a part of their shared narrative.

Planning for the future was also an important part of the shared experiences. Dan and Jessica shared their concerns about moving to a new office, as Dan said, “I am going to miss that as of this week, losing our office.”, but he followed by saying “but obviously there's obviously we'll get out and drinks and out the office and restaurants and stuff.”. Vincent and Rachael talked about the next steps in Vincent's transition, including planning top surgery. These discussions demonstrate the importance for these participants of having plans for shared future experiences, as these will continue their joint narrative, cementing their bond.

What gives us strength. All participants discussed different aspects of their experiences that gave them strength. For Jon, his previous experience of supporting gender-diverse friends meant that “I was already able to go through some of those a few years ago as I was like challenging my own perceptions of gender norms.”. This experience enabled him to approach Rebecca's gender disclosure with “curiosity”, despite initially being “a bit shocked”.

An altered understanding of gender, such as developing an appreciation for gender fluidity, also supported the pairs as they navigated the process together. For example, Olivia found that “it impacted my understanding of gender in that gender is a much, much more of a spectrum.”. Charlotte

said, “I mean, I'd never questioned my own gender, and I could see how you might question your sexuality.”. Rachael also reported that “it has changed my understanding of gender”. For these participants, supporting one another through the gender disclosure process has given them a deeper understanding of what gender means to them. But the change in societal attitudes towards gender was also seen as supportive, as Charlotte talked about how it was possible to transition now, “and still be able to have a relatively sort of normal mainstream kind of life.”. Olivia also recognised that positive shifts in societal attitudes towards gender diversity had allowed her to recognise and accept her own need to transition. These societal shifts have helped Charlotte and Olivia to maintain their relationship, while also allowing Olivia to live as her authentic gender.

3.3.2 What divides us

Participants described various challenges to their relationships throughout the interviews. Three sub-themes were identified: ‘powerful, challenging emotions’, ‘misunderstandings’, and ‘political/societal backdrop’. Participants described several aspects of their experiences together that could add stress or strain to their relationship and create division. In all of the conversations, there was strong evidence of powerful and complex emotional experiences that both people needed to manage. Whether it was worrying about how and when to disclose, how to respond to the gender disclosure, or managing the reactions of others in the community or workplace, all participants discussed the necessity of containing and communicating these emotional experiences with care and consideration for each other. The potential for misunderstandings due to these strong emotions, combined with a lack of prior knowledge or experience of gender diversity, and the need to manage the curiosity of others, could further strain the relationship. Finally, the participants were all managing their gender identity disclosures against unique social and political contexts, which influenced how others treated them, either with curiosity (Jessica and Dan) or with the risk of hostility (Rebecca and Jon). The combination of these differing factors highlights the potential tensions that can arise within the relationship, which the participants indicated had to be managed.

Powerful, challenging emotions. For all eight participants, managing tricky emotions had the potential to strain their relationships. Vincent described the challenge of not being able to necessarily

read the emotional processing of others, which made him feel uncomfortable, “I was like I need to change the conversation like now because I need to know that you're not mad and you weren't mad. It was just very awkward.”. For others, it was more about managing their own emotional reaction, so that they could demonstrate their support and acceptance. For example, Jon described the initial shock, but then wondered, “How can I be supportive?”. The descriptions given here by the participants demonstrate that emotional discomfort, to some extent, was a common experience and one that required the love and care within the relationship to counteract the uncomfortable emotions, as described in the previous theme of trust, love and acceptance.

Olivia and Charlotte had the added challenge, as Charlotte said that they had to do “an awful, a lot of kind of exploring and talking about while we both decided - did we want to stay together and what would that be like?”. Charlotte described having to manage her resentment and a hope that Olivia may change her mind and remain either male or non-binary. Olivia recognised the emotional challenge presented to Charlotte, as after disclosure, Olivia said, “at last I’m feeling right about this”, “while Charlotte just got the pain and the nastiness and the loss,”. This feeling of relief for Olivia came after suppressing her feelings about her authentic gender identity, which she had done as she recognised that her previous experimentation wearing women’s clothing had caused emotional discomfort for Charlotte. In addition to managing their own emotions, Olivia and Charlotte described managing those of their children, who Charlotte said felt “angry and upset and betrayed”, which Olivia said, “and again, I suspect. Well, I know that I got comparatively little of their confusion, anger because Charlotte acted as a mediator,”. This highlights the emotional challenges faced by a couple, while one found relief and authenticity, the other struggled with loss, resentment, and the hope for a different outcome. Both had to navigate complex emotions within their relationship and manage their children’s feelings of anger and confusion, burdens shouldered mainly by the non-transitioning partner.

Misunderstandings. Misunderstandings were a common challenge faced by participants, with some being rooted within cisnormative beliefs that were held by their allies or people around them.

Misunderstandings about the gender-diverse participants’ hints, stemming from cisnormative beliefs about gender expression, were common between the gender-diverse

participants and their allies, especially before they disclosed their gender identities. For example, Rachael explained that she saw Vincent's masculine clothing choices as a reflection of his "individuality," which she admired. Therefore, she did not interpret this as a hint about Vincent's gender identity. Jon mentioned that much of Rebecca's testing of the waters "fit well within the parameters of what other folks in my life are doing." For instance, he said that Rebecca's decision to shave her beard after two years was a typical male behaviour. He viewed Rebecca's painting of her nails as an experiment, which he attributed to her living in an otherwise all-female household and exploring her feminine side. As a result, he was shocked when Rebecca made her gender disclosure. Likewise, Jessica noted that "no one ever really picked anything up" from her hints. She said that she wore female clothing and read books on gender diversity at work, but colleagues rarely commented. These examples demonstrate how hints about gender identity can be misinterpreted or missed by significant others. For Jon, Dan, and Rachael, overlooking these hints led to varying degrees of surprise upon disclosure. At the point of disclosure, these participants described a moment when everything suddenly made sense, and in hindsight, they recognised the hints for what they truly signified. They saw how their cisnormative beliefs about what they considered to be so-called 'normal behaviour' for a particular gender influenced their thinking, causing them to miss their gender-diverse friends' hints.

Misunderstandings about language use concerning gender diversity and gender transition were also reported. Dan and Jessica discussed managing people's confusion around the meanings of gender and sexuality. As Jessica reported, "they would ask about sexuality, and I'm like it's a completely different issue." This example highlights the challenge faced by gender-diverse participants and their allies in addressing misunderstandings, including a lack of knowledge about terminology and vocabulary used when discussing gender diversity and transition. As pointed out by Dan and Jessica, cisgender people may not understand the differences in key terms, as they make assumptions about their knowledge of gender-based topics, including gender diversity and transitioning. This can lead to misunderstandings about the gender-diverse person's transition, or to questions that use

inappropriate or incorrect language, such as using 'sexuality', when the person actually means to refer to 'gender'.

Questions from others, such as those referred to above, were a further area for misunderstanding, with some participants finding managing others' curiosity and questions about gender identity or transition to be emotionally draining. They spoke about the persistence of inquiries, ranging from doubts about the decision to transition to personal details about planned medical procedures, which often felt intrusive or repetitive, with many based within cisnormative assumptions about 'the norm' and a lack of awareness about how a person may experience gender transition. This ongoing questioning not only burdened the gender-diverse person but also became exhausting for those close to them, who were frequently expected to explain or discuss the experience on their behalf. Rachael described the challenge of managing questions about her son's gender identity and transition. At the same time, Jessica commented on the difficulties of managing, sometimes, awkward questions, including those openly asking about her decision to transition. For the gender-diverse person and their allies, managing the curiosity of others had the potential to be tiring and frustrating.

For Jessica, sharing her decision to transition with her work colleagues became a further point of misunderstanding. She described her colleague's misunderstanding of the purpose of the meeting, called to share her gender transition, as "one of the guys we worked with on nights actually thought I'd been grassing on people because I'd left a sealed envelope on my manager's desk." For Jessica, too, the misunderstanding caused by the manager's wording at this meeting and Dan's difficulty in understanding increased her emotional discomfort, as she said, "at one point, I was like, Dan, just get this, please." Dan said he misunderstood the language used by the manager, as he thought it suggested that someone had died. He stated that he had not expected the announcement of a gender transition, having missed Jessica's hints about her authentic gender identity, as previously described. This misunderstanding from both her ally and her colleagues caused significant distress for Jessica and had the potential to strain the relationship with Dan considerably. The resiliency factors, such as acceptance, shared experiences, and a deep care for each other, as seen in the example of Jessica and

Dan, were essential to maintaining their relationship in the face of potential conflicts or discomfort caused by misunderstandings such as these.

Passing, seen by participants as being perceived and treated according to their authentic, felt gender identity and not their assigned gender at birth, and misgendering, whereby a person uses the incorrect pronouns or gender-specific language when referring to or speaking with someone, were consistent topics within all the interviews. This highlights another area of potential misunderstanding that also encompasses strong emotions. In particular, Vincent described the challenges of being misgendered by others, especially in front of his mum. He described how his mum, Rachael, would not correct people, as he felt that she didn't want to make a fuss about it and cause embarrassment for the other person. He said that while being misgendered was painful, he did not expect his mum to correct others' mistakes. He said that he knew that his mum recognised and respected his gender identity and the use of his preferred 'he/him' pronouns, and for him, this was more important than other people getting his gender pronouns correct. Rachael agreed, saying she had worked hard to make sure she used Vincent's preferred pronouns, but she could see the pain and discomfort caused by the misgendering. This experience highlights an area for potential misunderstanding, but also conflict between the gender-diverse person and their ally. If pronouns or gender identity are incorrectly applied without correction over time, the failure to adjust and recognise the gender-diverse person's preferred gender identity will cause conflict and rupture within the relationship.

Finally, for the trans participants, understanding and communicating their gender identity was a challenge. Vincent described a lengthy process of exploration before his disclosure as trans, which was marked by constant shifts and a fluidity in his gender identity. He acknowledged that managing these ongoing changes during the exploration process could be difficult, as "I know I looked a bit wishy washy." Vincent expressed confusion and distress, fearing that he might not find a clear and settled gender identity. This example illustrates the potential for misunderstandings to arise between the gender-diverse person and their ally, as the fluid and evolving nature of gender identity can lead to mutual confusion, emotional strain, and uncertainty about how best to support one another. For

instance, this could occur through the incorrect use of pronouns on a given day or during intense emotional periods that are challenging for both individuals to navigate and contain.

Political/societal backdrop. A further difficulty experienced by participants was that of the political and societal backdrop. For Jon and Rebecca, they talked about “certain political affiliations are less accepting of some of these notions and have been violent in the past. And I was like, oh, this is now something you need to be concerned about.”. Their worries about the political climate in the USA meant that Jon reported “talking about having back-up plans, go bags.”. In the UK, the political and societal backdrop was not conveyed as such a challenge by the participants, however, Jessica highlighted the challenges in sport, for example,

“we haven't even got, barely even got to the point where gay men are accepted in football well and like anything to do with trans issues, I do think that on a subject to gender that one of the last one of the few sports that hasn't touched it, with a barge pole.”

She felt that this made managing conversations around gender diversity with some a challenge, as the lack of open conversation in important areas of public life, such as in football, meant that others would rather avoid or shut-down conversations on the topic.

Another dividing factor was that of generational differences, which formed part of the discussion between Vincent and Rachael. Vincent said he found his mum’s perspective “hard to understand because I've always been in my generation's mindset.”. He said that understanding gender and gender transition was tricky, especially the emotional aspects of it for older generations, as “it's the same with Dad. He just, you know, he's very much an old white guy. Don't talk about your feelings kinda guy”. Rachael acknowledged, “our generation put up with stuff that your generation aren't prepared to”. Again, while participants recognised changes over the past two generations in the political and societal perspectives on gender diversity, they still acknowledged ongoing challenges in their personal societal contexts that required careful management. For Rachael and Vincent, that meant not allowing differing generational viewpoints from pulling them apart.

3.3.3 Meeting in the middle

Evident in all the interviews was the idea of compromise. Two sub-themes were identified: 'time and space to adjust and process' and 'building bridges'. The participants in this study expressed a need to recognise the needs of the other person, allowing them the time and space to adjust to the process of gender disclosure and transition. For those making the gender disclosure, they mentioned having already explored their gender identity and having reached a point of acceptance. Therefore, they understood that they had already had time to process and that they needed to give the other person time to catch up with them. For example, Vincent described having to compromise on the speed of his gender transition to ensure that his mum, Rachael, had time to process the changes and be ready to stay with him. In addition to allowing time to process and adjust, participants expressed the need to build bridges between each other to ensure that support within the relationship continued. This meant having opportunities for open communication, as seen in the case of Olivia and Charlotte, who discussed seeking counselling to support their dialogue. While Vincent and Rachael discussed needing to find a balance in their conversations, the potential for the gender transition to become the main and only topic could strain the relationship.

Time and space to adjust and process. For the participants supporting the gender-diverse person after disclosure, being given time and space to adjust to and process it was critical. Vincent highlighted the need to give others time to reach a point of understanding, as he said, "and it's not that you don't accept, it's just that you don't . . . you need time to process and catch up.". He pointed out that his priority was to take his mum with him, as he felt that he was

"not like I don't feel like I'm doing myself a disservice by slowing down for your sake, because I'm not stopping for you. But I will slow down for you because I want you to come with, you know, like having your support is more important to me than transitioning as fast as possible."

Taking his mum with him was "worth it . . . 'cause you're the most comforting person I know, rather than someone who knows all of the lingo and won't say anything wrong, but their hugs aren't as cosy.". This example shows how compromising on the time and pace of transition served to strengthen the

relationship, as it ensured that important people got on the same “train” (Vincent) and were able to travel the journey together.

Olivia described the headteacher of her school giving the staff time to go away and process the sharing of her decision to transition, “he said right, I think we'll stop now and we won't go ahead with the rest of the staff meeting. Everybody had a chance to go and think about it,”. She felt that this played an important part in giving all a chance to process, adjust and be accepting of her transition. She said that she had “been exceptionally lucky in the colleagues the school. Everybody who's had everything to do with it.”.

Convergence, or meeting in the middle, was often achieved through metaphor, which deepened mutual understanding between both parties. Charlotte illustrated this to Olivia using a metaphor about their gender journey, stating,

"It was as if we were setting off from where we live in _____(place) to go North. And that I could maybe come as far as Northumberland. But if she needed to, actually cross the border into Scotland, I wouldn't be able to come with her."

To help her family understand gender, Rebecca used the analogy of a buffet, highlighting how everyone picks items that reflect their perception of gender. This method helped her aunt grasp the concept of gender fluidity and Rebecca's transition. Vincent likened his gender transition to a train journey, taking others along for the ride. These expressive illustrations of complex emotions and experiences foster a shared understanding among gender-diverse individuals, their supporters, and others within their families or communities. These examples reveal that the individuals transitioning recognised that not everyone they met would understand the concept of gender fluidity or transition, and utilising metaphors or analogies served to build connections between navigating the process directly and others around them.

For Rachael and Vincent, giving time and space was important, especially as Rachael adjusted to the physical changes of Vincent's gender transition. Vincent recognised that “the idea of being medically transitional kind of upsets you.”. Rachael recognised that this was something she worried

about, but she said that this related more to worrying about Vincent's safety. This conversation supported the building of understanding, and they both recognised that time was needed to build towards the full medical transition.

For some participants, it was not just about managing the conversations or questions from beyond their pair, as Vincent said, "I know I used to annoy you lot. [Rachael: Oh, yeah.] I was like trans, trans, trans. And you were like, can we talk about something else?". Finding a middle ground in conversations about gender issues was important, especially for Rachael, as she said, "you want to just find other things you know. . . intersperse it with,". Sometimes it needed support from friends to shift the topic of conversation, "I think it was one of our friends . . . and she would say, right enough for tonight. Like she would have a kind of cut-off point" (Jessica). Managing conversations about gender and taking conversations beyond this topic appeared to be a tricky balance to strike, especially for the gender-diverse person after disclosure, as they were able to talk openly about their experience and wanted to chat about it. For example, Dan said that Jessica looked visibly relieved after her disclosure, as she was able to talk openly about her plans and live authentically as her true gender. However, Vincent spoke about his upcoming physical changes, saying, "I'll be like, I'm so excited that my voice is strapping and I'm growing hair," and therefore he felt that while he couldn't promise not to bring up his experience in conversation, it would now have a more positive feel. For both, finding the balance between talking about gender and transition, while also maintaining conversations that drew on wider, shared interests was of importance to maintaining the relationship.

3.4 Discussion

The participants' descriptions of their experiences navigating the process of gender identity disclosure underscore the importance of having an ally, where support is deeply shaped by trust, shared experiences, and meaningful connection. The finding of the importance of having a supportive ally alongside the gender-diverse person, as they establish their new gender identity, builds on the work of Herry et al. (2025). They showed that similar factors, such as meaningful connections, especially with family, were supportive for the gender-diverse person as they disclosed and established their gender identity in their social contexts. This study builds on this work by demonstrating the

mechanisms at play that can support and potentially hinder the relationship and its continuation after a gender identity disclosure. For example, the participants in this study emphasise the importance of open discussions, building understanding, and the need to allocate time and space for processing a gender disclosure.

Having a supportive ally during the gender identity disclosure process may also reduce the potential impacts of minority stress, whereby a minority group, such as members of the transgender community, face potentially daily discrimination and negative social attitudes from broader society (Balsam et al., 2013). A range of studies have shown that high levels of perceived support, either from peers or family members, can offset the potential negative impacts to mental health experienced by gender diverse people as they go through the gender identity disclosure process (e.g. Bockting et al., 2013; Rimmer et al., 2023; Scandurra et al., 2017). In the case of the participants in this study, they all described the importance of having the support from their allies, especially in managing the questions and misunderstandings of others, as described previously. This study highlights how allies can and do offer support to their gender-diverse friends and family, whether that be through offering support when their gender-diverse friend is facing questions about the decision to transition (Dan and Jessica) or is being misgendered by others (Vincent and Rachael).

Rebecca and Jon discussed the unique challenges of living in the USA, especially with the increasingly hostile political climate, which led them to have a “go-bag” plan. The social and cultural context for the participants in this study did influence their experiences of the gender disclosure process, which is in-line with the findings of Herry et al. (2025), who point to the centrality of the gender-diverse person’s social and cultural context, because it plays a key role in influencing the experience of gender disclosure. In their study, some of their participants were from conservative areas in the USA, who described similarly negative influences on the experience of gender disclosure as Rebecca and Jon. The UK-based participants in this study did not experience such open hostility. While they still recognised that support for gender diversity was not universal, with some parts of society being closed to conversations on this topic, there was a general recognition that society was

more open and accepting towards gender diversity, which led to positive experiences in the workplace and with disclosure to the broader community.

With hindsight, the allies in this study were able to recognise the hints about their gender-diverse person's gender identity prior to disclosure. For the gender-diverse person, each hint, such as cutting hair, painting nails, or wearing gendered clothing, was carefully considered. In contrast, the ally reflected that they had failed to recognise these hints. While they noted them, they rationalised behaviours like cutting off the beard as 'normal' male behaviour. Even when behaviours like painting nails were deemed outside gendered norms, they were seen by the allies as experimentation and exploration. Grishow-Schade et al. (2023) describe the experiences of gender-diverse young people, who leave 'breadcrumbs' for significant others, a phenomenon also observed among the gender-diverse participants in this study. The allies in this study neither explicitly rejected nor accepted these hints; instead, by being authentic, such as allowing their gender-diverse son to dress in his preferred style or noticing painted nails without deep questioning, they signalled support for their gender-diverse person's initial exploration of their gender identity and indicated their safety status ahead of a gender disclosure.

The participants in this study consistently described the experience of questioning their understanding of gender, which led to the development of a new understanding based on their experiences. This mirrors previous research that shows that for both the gender-diverse person and their ally, questioning gender concepts and norms and restructuring understanding is a common experience after a gender identity disclosure (Lewis et al., 2021).

In the case of Vincent, he discussed slowing his transition to ensure the preservation of his relationship with his mother, Rachael. At the same time, Rachael had to reach a point of acceptance that Vincent would soon be fully transitioned. Olivia described holding back on expressing her authentic gender identity, suppressing her feelings about her gender identity, especially as she said that she loved Charlotte and wanted the relationship to continue. For these participants, these examples of compromise are reflected within other research looking at how gender-diverse participants manage family relationships through slowing or even halting their gender transitions (von

Doussa et al., 2020). All 13 participants in this Australian study had halted their transitions for varying lengths of time as they sought to protect their familial relationships, which led to significant distress for some of the participants. One participant in von Doussa et al.'s (2020) study described the relief of finally disclosing their gender identity, which pushed their pain over to their partner. In this study, Olivia described having feelings of immense relief at finally disclosing and being able to live openly as her authentic gender, while acknowledging that she had passed on the pain to her partner, Charlotte. For participants whose allies were friends in this study, the delay in the transition process or disclosure was not mentioned in the interviews, suggesting that this type of relationship did not affect the timing and pace of disclosure and transition.

3.4.1 Strengths and limitations

A key strength of this study lies in inviting participants to engage in dialogue during the interviews, allowing them to collaboratively reflect on their shared experiences. Questions were provided to prompt conversation and were offered as starters and guides. The questions or 'wonder bundles' were shared in advance, and participants were informed that they could choose which questions to ask, thereby directing the course of the interview. This gave participants control over the interview process, fostering a sense of safety, allowing them to guide the dialogue and explore topics of personal importance or significance. However, on reflection, this approach may have meant that the conversations stayed in safer areas, as participants did not wish to cause a rupture or disagreement in their relationship. Having further probing questions may have supported a deeper exploration during the conversation. If there had been more time, holding a second or follow-up interview, may have allowed participants to develop a greater sense of safety and trust regarding the topics and the researcher, which could have facilitated a deeper exploration of their experiences, potentially yielding richer data. Therefore, if future researchers chose to utilise this approach, it is recommended that they consider using 'wonder bundles' in an initial interview to support building of rapport, ahead of a follow-up interview, which would allow for a deeper exploration of themes raised in the first interview.

During the development of the topic guide and 'wonder bundle' questions, a reference was often made to gender-diverse people leaving 'breadcrumbs' for their allies, hinting about their gender

identity to those around them. This terminology was developed by Grishow-Schade and colleagues (2023). It describes the initial process of gender-diverse people hinting to others about their true gender identity. As a result, this term was adopted in the questions for the topic guide and explanations within the participant information form (see Appendices A and E). However, in reviewing participant responses, it was observed that while participants initially used this language, they quickly changed to using their preferred terminology or phrases, such as ‘testing the waters’ (Vincent and Rebecca). Consequently, because participants did not use the term ‘breadcrumbs’ to describe this process, it was discontinued in the final write-up, and instead, the language preferred by participants was adopted.

A challenge during this study was recruitment, with several factors potentially contributing to this issue. For example, the main researcher is a cisgender female, which may have led to some potential gender diverse participants feeling vulnerable or concerned about their safety. In addition, throughout the study (started in June 2023), the media and political narratives around gender diversity and particularly transgender people have changed significantly. In the USA and UK, politicians, law courts and the media are building an increasingly hostile culture towards transgender people (e.g. Atwood et al., 2024), which can make recruitment more of a challenge, as participants, especially young people, may not wish to be exposed as trans or gender-diverse (Servais et al., 2024). Furthermore, the participants in this study are all from the UK or the USA and self-selected, having chosen to participate in this research. As a result, the narratives described are more likely to reflect those who have experienced a positive gender disclosure process together and have reached a point of acceptance regarding their own or each other’s gender diversity, enabling them to discuss it with the researcher.

3.4.2 Implications and further research

The findings of this study can be used by professionals working in services or charities that support gender-diverse people and their allies. It highlights ways in which supporters can alleviate the stresses of the gender disclosure process, such as making the gender-diverse person feel safe in sharing their discoveries and experiences, while building a shared narrative that strengthens the relationship, providing emotional resilience for both parties. Likewise, it demonstrates how gender-diverse people

can ensure that their loved ones are able to travel the path with them, by giving them time and space to process the gender disclosure. Additionally, the findings from this study enable those with gender-diverse people in their family, community, or workplace to consider ways to offer support that validates and accepts their gender diversity, fostering safety, trust, and a happier, more inclusive community.

Future research should prioritise the experiences of people of colour, those with disabilities, and individuals from various geographical locations beyond Western developed countries, to better understand how they navigate the process of gender identity disclosure. This would identify experiences and narratives unique to these individuals and highlight ways allies to the trans community, whether family, friends, colleagues, or professionals, can facilitate the disclosure process and recognise the distinct challenges within each person's context.

A further point of research could also explore the impact of the type of relationship on the pace of transition and the timing of disclosure. This study starts to suggest that when gender-diverse people choose to disclose to friends over family, the pace of their transition is quicker and less impeded by familial concerns or distress. Considerations of how the strength of familial relationships, dependency on family, and geographical proximity of family may impact the speed of transition, and how this compares to the speed of transition when the gender-diverse person chooses a friend to disclose to instead of family.

3.5 Conclusion

The stories shared by the participants in this study demonstrate the central importance of having a key person, an ally, alongside when navigating the process of gender identity disclosure. Importantly, this research shows that it is not just family members who can offer this support; friends and work colleagues can also play this critical support role. The person of importance for each of the gender-diverse participants offered emotional and practical support. The narratives described here were each unique, but all had common themes. Themes of love, trust, safety, and acceptance emerged across the narratives—each story was unique, yet all reflected these common threads. At the same

time, each story contained examples of participants meeting in the middle when faced with differences. The stories shared by participants in this study highlight the central importance of having a key person—an ally—present during the process of gender identity disclosure, offering both emotional and practical support throughout the experience.

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Appendix A: Ethical approval

A.1: Participant information form

Study Title: Looking back: a retrospective exploration of the shared perspectives of the gender-questioning journey.

Researcher: Lucy Beynon, doctoral student on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

ERGO number: 90949

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

This research project is a thesis for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

The aim of this research is to fully examine how, when and why a gender-questioning person showed a specific person that they were wondering about their gender. In previous research, these hints at their gender-questioning have been termed 'breadcrumbs' as the person is trying to check and guide a specific person to their gender-questioning status. The response of the chosen person is really important, as this may guide the gender-questioning person's next steps. This research seeks to find out about the journey of the gender-questioning person and their chosen important person. Did they feel confident to fully reveal their gender-questioning and how was this received? How did this impact the important person's understanding of gender, and has this altered their perspectives on gender more widely? How did this impact their relationship? What challenges did they encounter, and how did they overcome them?

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this research as you have been on the gender-questioning journey personally or you have a friend, colleague, or family member who you have travelled alongside on the gender-questioning journey.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to participate, if you are the participant who has been on the gender-questioning journey, I will invite you to invite a person important to you, who travelled on the journey with you to join us for a semi-structured interview. The interview can take place in person or online at a time

to suit. The interviews conducted online will be on Teams and will be recorded. The recording will include the use of the automatic transcription service. Interviews in person will be recorded using Teams. From here, interviews will be transcribed to allow for a thematic analysis to take place.

The interview topic guide will be shared with you ahead of participating in the interview.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

It is expected that this research will give professionals working in psychology and gender research a better understanding of how gender-questioning people share their wonderings with people around them, how these people react and what difference these reactions made to the gender-questioning journey. Your data will help our understanding of how people in society can better support individuals embarking on their own gender-questioning journey and how everyone's ideas and conceptualisations of gender can be developed and enriched by being a part of another's journey.

As an expression of thanks for your time, a £20 shopping voucher will be given to each participant.

Are there any risks involved?

As this study involves discussing personal and sensitive issues (gender identity, the gender-questioning journey and gender transition), it is important that you recognise that there may be some psychological discomfort. It is important that you consider whether you feel confident in discussing these issues with the other chosen person as part of the interview and with the interviewer. The topic guide is shared with you so that you can understand the general direction of questioning. However, questions and the direction of conversation will not be limited to the questions presented. If you become distressed by the questions or conversation during the interview, you can request a pause or a halt to the interview. At this point, you are also free to withdraw your consent for the interview to form part of the research analysis. At this point the researcher conducting the interview can offer support with identifying appropriate next steps, such as contacting other support agencies. If you become distressed after the interview, direction to agencies and charities who can offer support are provided in the de-brief form.

What data will be collected?

Consent forms will be collected by the lead researcher and stored securely on the University of Southampton OneDrive system, separately from interview and demographic data.

Basic demographic data will be gathered, including age, gender identity and ethnicity. This basic data will support the analytic process, such as understanding the time elapsed since participants went on their gender-questioning journey.

Contact details, e.g. your e-mail address and your name, will also be stored for the duration of the study in case, for example, researchers wish to contact participants to verify interview transcripts.

This information will be stored separately from the interview and demographic data. This information will be deleted at the end of the study, which is currently expected to be August 2025.

All participants will be given pseudonyms during the transcription process. All identifying features discussed in interviews will be redacted to protect the anonymity of all participants.

This data will be collected in a secure form by the lead researcher on the University of Southampton's OneDrive system.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation and the information we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

Only members of the research team and responsible members of the University of Southampton may be given access to data about you for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your data. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

All data shared, such as consent forms, demographic data and interview transcripts, will be held electronically on the University of Southampton's OneDrive system.

All recordings, either video and/or audio, will be destroyed once transcription has taken place. During the transcription process, all recordings will remain on the University of Southampton OneDrive system, where they have been initially recorded. They will not be transferred to other systems.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

If you wish to take part in the study, please complete the consent form, checking each of the boxes carefully. An electronic signature (typed) is allowed. This must be returned to the researcher, who will then contact you to make arrangements for the interview and to answer any further questions you may have about the process.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without your participant rights being affected.

If you wish to withdraw during the interview, you can ask the researcher to stop recording and state your wish to withdraw the data already gathered. The recording taken to this point will be destroyed immediately after the call is ended.

If you wish to withdraw your data after the interview, you may do so within 3 months of the interview date. If you wish to withdraw your data, please get in touch with the lead researcher, Lucy Beynon, at l.hanham@soton.ac.uk. If you withdraw your data, the transcripts relating to your interview will be destroyed.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent.

It is important to be aware that this research project may form part of a published research paper in the future. At the consent process, you will be asked if you consent to the anonymised interview data being open to sharing with other researchers, when requested for secondary research purposes. No other personal data will be shared, such as demographic data.

Anonymised data (interview transcripts) will be held on the University of Southampton's data repository. This data will be held securely for 10 years, with an agreed access arrangement with the research project supervisors (Dr Sarah Wright and Dr Cora Sargeant). In giving your consent, you allow other researchers the right to request copies of the anonymised transcripts for secondary research purposes. This data will only be released with the consent of the research supervisors. This data will not be available for commercial purposes.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions relating to the study, please contact Lucy Beynon at l.hanham@soton.ac.uk

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researchers (details below) who will do their best to answer your questions.

- Lucy Beynon l.hanham@soton.ac.uk
- Dr Sarah Wright s.f.wright@soton.ac.uk
- Dr Cora Sargeant c.c.sargeant@soton.ac.uk

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Head of Research Ethics and Clinical Governance (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website

(<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page>).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/Is/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf>

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for 10 years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed. Data considered to be 'identifiable' under GDPR laws includes anonymised interview data,

such as transcripts. The University of Southampton will hold the anonymised transcripts securely in the research repository for the agreed 10-year period.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information - may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage (<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page>) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk).

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

A.2 Consent form

Study Title: Looking back: a retrospective exploration of the shared perspectives of the gender-questioning journey.

Ethics/ERGO number: 90949

IRAS number: N/A

Version and date: V1; 15/03/2024

Thank you for your interest in this study. It is very important to us to conduct our studies in line with ethics principles, and this Consent Form asks you to confirm if you agree to take part in the above study. Please carefully consider the statements below and add your initials and signature only if you agree to participate in this research and understand what this will mean for you.

Please add your initials to the boxes below if you agree with the statements:

Mandatory Consent Statements	Participant Initials
I confirm that I read the Participant Information Sheet version 1, dated 15/032024 explaining the study above and I understand what is expected of me.	
I was given the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions about the study, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	
I agree to take part in this study and understand that data collected during this research project will be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason.	

Additional Statements - please add your initials in the boxes below you to agree to:

Additional Consent Statements	Participant Initials
I understand that taking part in this study involves taking an audio recording. I am happy for my interview to be audio recorded and understand that the audio recording will be deleted immediately once transcription is completed.	

I understand that taking part in this study may involve audio and video recording via Microsoft Teams and that the recording will be deleted immediately once the final transcription has been checked and completed. (This will be dependent on whether you choose to participate in a Teams interview or face-to-face interview)	
I understand that my confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in paired interviews but that any information collected by the researcher will be kept confidential (unless it needs to be disclosed by law), and that participants will be asked to keep the discussions confidential.	
I understand that I must keep the information discussed during the paired interview confidential.	
I understand that if I withdraw from the study, it may not be possible to remove my data once my personal information is no longer linked to the study data. I understand that I can withdraw my data from the use in this study within three months following my participation.	
I understand that all personal information collected about me (e.g., my name and contact details) will be kept confidential (i.e., will not be shared beyond the study team) unless required by law or relevant regulations (e.g., for the purpose of monitoring the safety of this study).	
I understand that my anonymised data collected during this study will be shared with research partners collaborating on this research.	
I understand that my anonymised data collected during this study will be archived in a data repository so that it can be used for future research and learning.	

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
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Name of person taking consent

Signature

Date

*Once this Consent Form has been signed by all parties, a copy of the signed and dated form should be provided to the study participant. Original signed copy should be stored in the study site file (If applicable).

A.3 De-briefing form

Study Title: Looking back: a retrospective exploration of the shared perspectives of the gender-questioning journey.

Ethics/ERGO number: 90949

Researcher(s): Lucy Beynon

University email(s): L.Hanham@soton.ac.uk

Version and date: V1; 15/03/24

Thank you for taking part in our research project. Your contribution is very valuable and greatly appreciated.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this research was to allow a full examination of how, when and why a gender-questioning person showed a specific person that they were wondering about their gender. In turn, the response of the important person was also highlighted. As part of this exploration, the impact on the important person's understanding and perspectives of gender have been examined. Finally, a greater understanding of the challenges faced by both the gender-questioning person and their important person have been discussed, alongside the protective factors that have protected and strengthened the relationship.

It is expected that this research will give professionals working in psychology and gender research a better understanding of how gender-questioning people share their wonderings with people around them, how these people react and what difference these reactions made to the gender-questioning journey. Your data will help our understanding of how people in society can better support individuals embarking on their own gender-questioning journey and how everyone's ideas and conceptualisations of gender can be developed and enriched by being a part of another's journey.

Confidentiality

Results of this study will not include your name or any other identifying characteristics.

As this study involved a paired interview your confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. We kindly ask you to respect the privacy of other participants and not to disclose what was said and by whom during the discussion.

Study results

If you would like to receive a copy of the summary of the research findings when it is completed, please let us know by using the contact details provided on this form.

Further support

If taking part in this study has caused you discomfort or distress, you can contact the following organisations for support:

- Your GP
- MindLine Trans+ <https://bristolmind.org.uk/help-and-support/mindline-transplus/>
- Beaumont <https://www.beaumontsociety.org.uk/contact.html>
- MermaidsUK <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/>
- Gendered Intelligence <https://genderedintelligence.co.uk/>
- Samaritans <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Further reading

If you would like to learn more about this area of research, you can refer to the following resources:

Grishow-Schade, L., Hillier, A., Gzesh, A. S., & Thompson, M. G. (2023). Breadcrumbs for Family: How Gender Nonconforming, Non-Binary, and Transgender Adults Give and Receive Gender Messages.

LGBTQ+ Family: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 19(4), 310–326.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/27703371.2023.2208046>

Heiden-Rootes, K., Meyer, D., Levine, S., Dalton, M., & Rich, Q. (2023). “Testing the Waters” in a “World That Refuses to Make Space: Development and Coming Out with Transgender and Non-Binary Adults. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 35(2), 134–154.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08952833.2023.2210344>

Further information

If you have any concerns or questions about this study, please contact Lucy Beynon at

L.Hanham@soton.ac.uk who will do their best to help.

If you remain unhappy or would like to make a formal complaint, please contact the Head of Research Integrity and Governance, University of Southampton, by emailing: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk, or calling: + 44 2380 595058. Please quote the Ethics/ERGO number which can be found at the top of this form. Please note that if you participated in an anonymous survey, by making a complaint, you might be no longer anonymous.

Thank you again for your participation in this research.

Appendix B Data extraction for studies in systematic review

Study Number	Author and date	Country	Design	Participants	Themes and findings	Quality assurance
1	Allen & Leslie, 2024	USA	Qualitative study from a constructivist paradigm. Reflexive thematic analysis.	14 parents (12F; 2M) Children aged 18-31 (9 nonbinary; 2 transmasculine; 1 gender fluid)	Themes: - Understanding non-binary - Benefits and challenges of identifying as non-binary - Challenges within the family Findings: Parents must navigate complex new world of non-binary gender, educating themselves. Results of disclosure mean new challenges, but a recognition of unconditional love for the child.	Sound
2	Aramburu Alegría, 2018	USA	Longitudinal study (reporting first wave of interviews) coded using constant comparative method.	14 parents (12F; 2M) including 2 couples. Children aged 6-17 (5 transfeminine; 7 transmasculine)	Themes: - Transgender issues as the family's focus. - Proactivity, child-focused, pre-emptive actions to prevent adverse consequences. - Self-care	Sound

					- Changes to parental identity - Impacts on the future Findings The transgender identity of one family member impacts the whole household. Parents may experience guilt and self-doubt, benefitting from expressing their worries and gaining support. Becoming an advocate for transgender youth has a positive impact on parents.	
3	Bernards et al., 2024	USA Canada	Qualitative study based on constructivist grounded theory (CGT).	27 participants (parents) were interviewed. 130 Facebook posts made by 11 individuals. All identified as Latter-day Saints (LDS) at the time of their child coming out as transgender.	Themes: - Transformation (core theme) was identified in the following key areas: cognitive, emotional, social, spiritual, motivation. Findings LDS parents follow a pathway to acceptance, which requires assimilating new perspectives and managing significant discomfort as they challenge core beliefs. A process of reconstruction is required, before a new point of acceptance can be reached.	Sound

4	Frigerio et al., 2021	Italy	Qualitative study using inductive thematic analysis.	15 parents (10F; 5M)	Themes: - Gender dysphoria: something impossible to understand - Resigned acceptance - Strategies of social acceptance in a complex context - The limits of healthcare services Findings Due to parental challenge of understanding their child's experience, parents relied on medical models for understanding and legitimising their position. Parents wanted a quick solution to the 'problem', expecting swift medical treatment. Acceptance of their child's experience did not make parent trans rights advocates or change their views on trans issues.	Sound
5	Godwin et al., 2024	USA	Qualitative study, interview transcripts drawn from a previous study. Thematic	15 cisgender siblings (8F; 7M) – 11 older siblings, 3 younger and 1 twin.	Themes: - Impact on participant's beliefs and knowledge about gender and the impact on their response.	Sound

			analysis used to identify themes.		- Impact on family dynamics and relationships during and after disclosure. - Concern for the self and sibling. Findings: Generally, most siblings had already anticipated a disclosure and were not surprised. Family relationships changed, with some reporting a closer relationship, while others shared a shift in parental focus towards their sibling. Many were concerned about how they and their sibling would be treated in the wider community.	
6	Gray et al., 2016	USA	Qualitative, grounded theory analysis.	11 parents (8F; 3M), including 3 married couples.	Themes: - Parents journey to rescue or accept - Child's GV impacts parenting self-efficacy and parental worry - Having a GV child changes relationships in the whole family - Parents of GV children struggle to create a 'normal' childhood	Sound

					- Social tolerance and child factors amplify stressors of raising a GV child - Future uncertainty Findings The core category reflecting the central theme was “Seeking a nonstigmatized childhood for a GV child: Pathways include either rescuing a child from fear of stigma and hurt or accepting and advocating for a more tolerant world.”	
7	Horton, 2023	UK	Part of a wider study exploring experience of trans children, qualitative study using reflexive thematic analysis.	30 parents – children identified as 15F; 12M; 3 non-binary. All children had socially transitioned.	Themes: - loss of control, and loss of security - feeling support for social transition was their only viable option - evaluating affirmation - the risks of transition, and the risks of rejection - advice for other families to support their child Findings Highlights the need for support and information for parents. Parents recommend affirming their trans	Sound

					child and focusing on happiness. Overall, social transitioning was viewed as a positive experience.	
8	Ishii, 2018	Japan	Qualitative study drawing on grounded theory for analysis.	12 parents (9F; 3M) – 3 couples with transgender child aged between 18 and 33.	Themes: - Loss of relationship with the child – ‘crisis’ in the relationship - Need to gather information, educate the self about gender issues - The need to re-write the life story after disclosure - Reconstruction of the child-parent relationship - Impact on mothers’ gender identity - Lack of support (generally) from fathers Findings Little information or understanding of transgender issues in Japan and the majority of the support and management of challenges rests on the mother. There is a journey of understanding and acceptance that is aided by the mothers’ learning and a questioning of traditional gender roles. Generally, fathers struggle with disclosures as they fear questioning social norms.	Sound

9	Kuvalanka et al., 2020	USA	A participatory, longitudinal study. Interviews were coded using inductive thematic analysis.	2 paternal grandmothers (part of a wider cohort of primary caregiver participants)	Themes: - Challenges - unexpected/unplanned role, mortality, financial issues. - Navigating the legal system - Necessity of guardianship and its limitations, cisnormative bias (actual and anticipated) in the system. - Impact of family situation on child - negotiating parents' involvement. - Advantages: 'The grandparent edge' - internal grandparent edge: experience, confidence, maturity and external grandparent edge: community connections, credibility, respect.	Sound
10	Nadan, 2022	Israel	Qualitative study drawing on modified constructivist grounded theory (CGT)	18 Jewish-Israeli parents with trans child (15F; 3M)	Themes: - Parental worries, e.g. threats to the child, becoming independent, mental health - Parental support practices, e.g. accompanying children to medical procedures, economic support (e.g. private medical treatment), managing military service, encouraging independence.	Sound

					- Parental coping skills, e.g. therapy as a necessity, belonging to a support group, improved family relationships, activism.	
11	Parker & Davis-McCabe, 2021	Australia	Qualitative study using thematic analysis.	17 participants (11F; 7M) aged 14-26.	Themes: Umbrella theme: The responsibility to support and protect. - Societal issues - lack of access to accurate information, trans visibility matters, sense of isolation, lack of formal targeted support. - Relationship with their trans sibling - negotiating changes, holding the knowledge, witnessing trans sibling's negative experiences, building authenticity. - Family and social relationships - gender transition impacts the whole family, acting as an intermediary, relationships as a source of support, relational strain and cut-off.	Sound
12	Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015	Canada	Drawing on participatory approach, study uses grounded theory for analysis of written notes from	14 parents of gender variant children.	Themes: - Recognizing and accepting gender variance of the child - Use of positive terminology and labels	Sound

			focus group discussions.		- Managing misunderstandings about gender variance of others outside family - Emotional challenges - Challenges of accessing support at school and in medical settings. Findings: Parents face wide ranging challenges when their child discloses as gender variant. The lack of understanding and support from services, e.g. education, health, add further challenge, especially around obtaining accurate information about possible future pathways. Many viewed medical diagnosis as the way to access support.	
13	Tarantino et al., 2024	USA	Participatory study drawing on reflexive thematic analysis to identify themes.	14 caregivers of trans or gender diverse youth (13 parents; 1 grandparent).	Themes: - Reflecting on change (subthemes: ambiguous loss, wrestling with worry). - Renegotiating interpersonal relationships (subthemes: caregiver-child relationships, wider familial relationships, social networks).	Sound

					- Educating through relationships (subthemes: power of personal narratives, parents supporting parents).	
14	Wagner & Armstrong, 2020	USA	Phenomenological approach	16 parents (12F; 4M) – children female to male (11), male to female (4), non-binary (1).	Themes: - Emotional response to disclosure - Adjustment - Accepting your child for who they are - Worries about the future - Transformational Findings Parents describe the emotional rollercoaster after disclosure including shock, surprise, anger and loss. Parents also reported feeling guilt that they hadn't spotted their child's gender identity sooner. Many parents wanted to be supportive, but worried about making a mistake and causing harm. Education and support for parents from reliable professional bodies is key. While the disclosure left many worried for the future, parents felt a sense of hope, as their child	Sound

					transformed from depressed and distressed to happy and confident.	
15	Wells et al., 2022	Australia	Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)	12 parents including 2 sets of parents. Children aged 6-17 – 5 trans girls/girls; 5 trans boys/boys; 1 non-binary.	Themes: - Dyadic factors - empathy, parent as protector, unconditional love - Threats to mental health - relationships rupture, isolation, grief and loss, anxiety, internal struggles - Personal growth - caregiver/advocacy stress, open-mindedness, self-reflection and authenticity - Support and acceptance - purpose and meaning, social support, professional support - Coping – both problem and emotion focused.	Sound
16	Westwater et al., 2020	Australia	Circular questioning technique used with inductive thematic analysis.	35 family members (10 family units) - 9 young people aged 12-17 experiencing gender dysphoria - 10 mothers	Common themes: (all participants) - Change (adjustment) vs no change - Emotional experiences (including loss) - Support. Themes common to all young people and siblings: - Improved communication	Sound

				- 8 fathers - 8 siblings aged 11-17	- Improved insight and knowledge - Spending time together - Misunderstandings and discrimination - Fear/anxiety and conflict. Themes common to parents: - Religious faith - Legislative/political issues - Isolation - Conflict - External pressures Findings Overall, changing relationships and the ‘rollercoaster of emotions’ were common across all family members. Many experienced improved connections within the family and a process of validation and affirmation for those experiencing gender dysphoria. Many described an experience of collective and personal growth.	
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17	Wheeler et al., 2019	UK	Qualitative design using an abductive approach to thematic analysis.	8 siblings (6F; 2M)	Themes: - Confusion and Initial Upset. - Adjusting to New Names and Pronouns - Managing Two Identities - Developing Empathy and Supportive Roles - Ongoing Fears and Concerns - Benefits of Shared Experience Findings Overall, this research suggests that siblings of gender-diverse young people undergo a significant process of adjustment. While this process presents certain challenges, it can also lead to personal growth, increased empathy, and strengthened sibling bonds.	Sound
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Appendix C CASP Quality Assurance Checklist

NAME ARTICLE	Q1 Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?		Q2 Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?		IS WORTH TO CONTINUING?	Q3 Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?		Q4 Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?		Q5 Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?		Q6 Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?		Q7 Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?		Q8 Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?		Q9 Is there a clear statement of findings?		Q10 How valuable is the research?		TOTAL
	Score	Description	Score	Description		Score	Description	Score	Description	Score	Description	Score	Description	Score	Description	Score	Description	Score	Description	Score	Description	
Alegria (2018)	2	Stated in abstract	2	Constant comparative theory (grounded theory)	y	2	The clear description allows replication; however, there's limited justification for why this method is superior. This may be due to word restrictions.	2	Families recruited at USA conference with full consent. Demographic info provided. This longitudinal study is in its first stage. No withdrawals yet. Ethics mentioned briefly.	2	Data collected from semi-structured interviews of the whole family to explore how family dynamics are affected.	2	The author and second coder advocate for the transgender community, mentioning this as an 'aside' for the reader to consider its impact on the analysis.	1	Ethical approval has been highlighted, however specific issues relating to ethics have not been discussed at length.	2	The process is detailed in the method section. Participants checked the coded data to ensure their views were accurately reflected.	2	Within the abstract	2	Enhances understanding of family dynamics impacted by a member's gender transition, focusing on the white population in the US.	19

Frigerio et al. (2021)	2	Stated in abstract	1	Exploration of experiences. Unstructured interview, covering 6 key areas.	y	1	Little concerned about lack of possible consistency between interviews, as there was not interview schedule	2	Clear recruitment process that gave space between researchers and potential participants.	2	Interviews were expected to cover specific areas. No set questions though.	2	Clear positional statement.	1	Elements of the write up hint that this has been considered, but there are no direct references to ethical concerns	2	Detailed description of thematic analysis process. Could be replicated /	2	Within the abstract	2	Describes parents' experiences from an Italian perspective, highlighting its importance as a view from a European, conservative country.	17
Gray et al. (2016)	2	Stated within the 'present study' section	2	Grounded theory	y	2	Clear reasoning shared	2	Emphasis that no pressure to participate. Cash payment given to participants.	2	Described within the methods	1	Limited reference to recruitment; no mention of participant sources.	1	Ethical approval is cited, but only hints of ethical considerations	2	Analysis details include participant agreement with findings.	2	Within the abstract	2	Conducted nearly a decade ago, little research existed in the field at that time.	18

Horton (2022)	2	Clear statement of research question and reasons for conducting the research.	2	Exploring the experiences of parents and advice they would give to other parents similarly placed.	y	2	Use of Braun and Clarke RTA. Much explanation about recruitment and sensitivity of researchers in approaching a sensitive topic.	2	See previous comment	2		1	The researcher openly shares their experience, which has aided recruitment, but may not acknowledge potential bias in analysis due to their position.	2	Given much consideration	2	Detailed description of thematic analysis process. Could be replicated /	2	Within the abstract	2	This is stated clearly at the start of the article.	19
Ishii (2018)	2	Within abstract	2	Exploring parents' experiences and their evolving understanding of gender identity.	y	1	Challenges in seeking participants and a brief explanation of methodology without strong justification for using GT.	2	Challenges of recruitment were described.	2		0	No mention of how the author's positioning	1	In-depth discussion around access to participants. All participants anonymised.	2	Detailed explanation of how this was managed	2	Within the abstract	2	Clearly stated	16

Kuvalanka et al. (2020)	2	Stated within the introduction of the study	2	Exploration of experiences	y	2	Explanation of how it fits within the broader research (longitudinal study)	1	Recruitment came from a previous study, so no details about how they were originally recruited.	2	Semi structured interviews	0	While the Recruitment stems from a prior study, with little reference to the positioning of researchers and participants.	2		2	Detailed and follows B+C	2	Within the abstract	2	Limited participants highlight challenges of researching family impact beyond parents.	17
Nadan (2022)	2	Within abstract - understanding parenting experiences of Israeli parents with a transgender child.	2	Aim to gather in-depth information and experiences and views of parents	y	2	Description of modified Constructivist Grounded Theory focusing on participants' worldviews, social contexts, and perceptions.	2	Detailed information about the recruitment process and participants is given.	2	Semi structured interviews	1	The methodology mentions a reflexive log to 'reduce the asymmetry between researchers and participants' but lacks further details.	2	Ethical approval is highlighted, alongside details of efforts to maintain confidentiality of participants.	2	Detailed description of use of CGT, with many checks put in place throughout, e.g. returning to participants to ensure that data has been accurately interpreted.	2	Within the abstract	2	Focus on a lesser researched societal group.	19

Wagner and Armstrong (2020)	2	Research questions are clearly stated, highlighting limited research in the field. Not entirely sure if there is 'No research', but it is limited.	2	Clearly states that the intention is to gather data about parental experience.	y	2	Interview schedule is shared and clear description of the methodology is provided.	1	Very small pool of possible participants due to reliance on snowballing, word of mouth and social worker from local support group.	2		0	No mention of how the author's positioning	2	Section describes the ethical considerations and how they have been managed.	2	Following of protocols and checking back with participants.	2	Within the abstract	2	Research on parents with transgender children is limited. However, existing studies increasingly align with other findings in the field.	17
Wells et al (2022)	2	Clearly stated in the abstract, exploring impact on parental well-being of having a trans child.	2	Clearly stated that IPA used to allow for in-depth exploration of parental experience	Y	2	Detailed description of the methodology. The authors repeatedly refer back to IPA and how this is supporting the investigation.	2	Detailed description of recruitment process, with participants from across Australia.	2	Reference IPA for participant sharing; use interview schedule.	2	Stated that there was no prior relationship	2	Ethical considerations are described alongside statement of ethical approval.	1	The data analysis process is described, however, it is not certain how many researchers reviewed each step.	2	Set out in results and within the abstract	2	Clearly stated within the discussion, with several implications for clinicians working with this group.	19

Westwater et al (2020)	2	Within the abstract - aim to explore the experiences of all family members when a family member is gender exploring. Specific focus on siblings.	2	Use circular questioning to enhance understanding between family members and uncover assumptions. This is a therapeutic technique	y	2	Justification of use of circular technique.	2	Description of recruitment process. Advertising done in multiple locations and different mediums. Family members could choose not to participate.	2	As described previously.	1	Reflexivity was part of the analysis. Participants were from a wide area, likely unknown to researchers.	2	Described alongside the recruitment process.	2	Description of following the B+C RTA process.	2	Within the abstract	2	Little research explores the whole family experience.	19
Wheeler et al (2019)	2	Evident need for focus on impact on sibling relationship of a gender questioning sibling.	2	Exploration of experience. Interviews allow for sharing of in depth experience and feelings.	y	2	Developed with the aid of charity and NHS - participatory approach.	2	Described, including changes made due to challenges with recruitment in specific age range.	2	In-depth open-ended interviews were used, with participants developing the schedule.	2	Use of participatory research is discussed. Use of expertise of clinicians.	2	Discussed, with reference to changes made during the research process.	2	A different approach using an abductive method and an adapted version of RTA.	2	Within the abstract	2	Limited research on siblings' experiences.	20

Allen and Leslie (2024)	2	Clearly states this within abstract and within introduction citing gaps in research	2	Interviews used to explore how parents understand and support their non-binary child	y	2		2	Detailed information about the recruitment process and participants is given.	2	Interviews covering areas relating to answering of research question. Use of B+C RTA to identify themes.	2	Reflexivity is managed throughout, and they comment on their positionality.	1	Much discussion addresses the integrity of the analytic process.	2		2	Within the abstract	2	The abstract and introduction clearly highlight the significant gap in understanding parental experiences of raising a non-binary child.	19
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Bernards et al (2024)	1	Not stated as clearly as in some. Does appear within the research questions but this is half way through the article.	2	Yes, detailed justification for research stance given	y	2	Detailed justification for approach taken using Grounded Theory from a constructivist perspective	1	Recruitment through social media forums (mainly). No mention that the participants will only be people who have navigated the journey with some success. Wonder at the ethics of drawing from social media posts in forums - consent gathered??	1	Data was gathered from interviews and social media, and podcasts were transcribed. Researchers aim to collect diverse data. Can different data sources be compared fairly? Podcast participants may have different goals than those in anonymous interviews.	2	Clear positional statement.	2	Section describes the ethical considerations and how they have been managed.	2	Use of different types of data allow for triangulation. Also, in interviews, participants have interpretations checked back.	2	stated within the discussion	2	Little research explores experiences of parents from conservative religious backgrounds, which gives this research importance in helping people from this group navigate gender diversity.	17
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Godwin et al (2024)	2	Within the abstract - aim is to explore experience of cisgender siblings with siblings going through a gender exploration journey	2	This study is the next step in a longitudinal mixed methods study	y	1	The original interviews were conducted for a different study, so the recordings were from 2016 and the questions were not written by the researchers directly.	1	The researchers did not directly recruit the participants and were drawing on interviews conducted for a different study.	1	While the researchers were able to identify suitable data, this was drawing on secondary data, so the interviews were not written for this study specifically.	2	Reflexivity statement included. The relationships will be very distant, as the data was collected in 2016.	1	No direct reference to ethics, however, they do cite the support of the participants in covering this research area.	2	A detailed description of the analytic methods was included.	2	Within the abstract	2	Research covering sibling experience is rare, which is helpful highlighted by reference to just 3 other studies known of across the world.	16
Parker and Davis-McCabe (2021)	2	Clear statement of research question and reasons for conducting the research.	2		y	2		2	Clear evidence of exclusion/inclusion criteria and reasons for this given.	2	Use of semi structured interviews			2	Statement given within the research	2	A detailed description of the analytic methods was included.	2	Within the abstract	2	Very little research covering sibling experience of another siblings gender transition journey	18

Pullen Sansfacon et al (2015)	2	Within abstract	2	exploration of experience of parents	y	2		1	Participants were heavily involved in co-production of the research. We have little information about how the participants were recruited. No real demographic information.	2	Co-production with participants to reduce power imbalances	2	Detailed discussion around power and the need to work with the participants to empower them	2	Significant consideration been given to power, the gathering (or not) of demographic data.	2	Deatiled description	2	Presented both in a table and discussed within the discussion	1	This research was some of the earlier work exploring the experience of parents with a gender diverse child.	18
Tarantino et al (2022)	2	Exploration of gender affirming parents of trans youth.	2		y	2		2	Explanation given for shift in geographical area	2		1	Not heavily discussed , however, recruitment strategy does describe the link with researchers. Discussion of positionalities	1	No direct reference to this, however, reflexivity etc are considered	1	Brief description of analytic process.	2	Within the abstract	2	Covers a grandparent experience hence 'caregivers'.	17

Appendix D Final themes for systematic review

How do parents, grandparents, and siblings experience the gender questioning journey of a YP in their family?

Initial descriptive themes

Acceptance and change	Return to 'normal'	Societal influence on journey	Challenges 'Obstacles on the path'	Personal growth	Advocacy	Coping
'The earth moves' and 'finding your feet'	'The earth moves' and 'finding your feet'					
Journey to acceptance	Gender identity change as a transient/going phase	child's gender journey shaped by cisnormative society	Learning more about gender and their child's suffering = trauma	Self-education	Advocacy as a support/opening mechanism	Drawing on internal resources to guide decisions
Every family member's journey is unique	Parental hopes for return to 'normal'	Gender stereotypes/norms informing understanding/interpretation of gender disclosures	Confusion about past, present and future	Altered understanding of gender identity	Advocacy as a way to build community	Altered wider social networks
Parental attempts to understand child's gender expression		Religion impacting path of parental acceptance	Concerns about impact of medical interventions	Changing environment/life to fit with new understanding of gender	Advocacy as a way to set expectations with others beyond family	Building support/social networks
Different approaches to building understanding of child's gender		Easier to understand binary trans gender identity against non-binary prevalence of cisnormative societal norms	Challenges accessing medical/professional services	Trying to understand their child's new gender identity	Change of career to enable advocacy support in growing career	Following direction from child/parental ceding of control
Different parental views impacting ability to understand gender expression		Parental duty to look after well being of child	Need for support services aimed at specific groups	Personal growth on the journey to acceptance	Advocacy support in growing career	Professional support for child
Fathers struggling with acceptance		Impacts of wider political/societal environment	Gender disclosure making and reducing problems		Advocacy as personal growth	Self-care as a coping mechanism (parental)
Identifying evidence to		Discrimination directly experienced	Challenges linked to use of pronouns		Family members	Encouraging child's

support child's GV status	Parental reactions guiding sibling behaviour/reaction/	Challenge of helping others understand child's gender identity	protecting independ gender ence diverse family member
Despite best efforts parents may not come to fully understand child's gender	Acceptance 'The grandparent edge'	Grief or loss of child's previous identity	
Difficulty in understanding gender identity due to unfamiliarity.	Lack of accurate information about gender issues	Need to support child to avoid suicide	
Difficult journey to acceptance		Concerns for the future	
Powerless so have to accept change		Different future / future implications for the parent and their child	
Medical model offering understanding		Uncertainty	
Parents supporting children with medical treatment		Concerns for safety of child Concern for own safety/self	
Finding common understanding		Worry/anxiety	
Parents drawing on own experiences to understand child's gender identity		Trans identity impacting family choices Decisions about disclosure beyond immediate family	
Continuity			
Unconditional love/support for child		Feeling left out or apart from family decisions	
Preservation of relationship			

with child motivator for acceptance	Child distressed pre- transition/disc losure
Changing family structure/relati onship	Other challenges exacerbated by gender variance
Positive change to family relationships	Emotional experience of disclosure 'rollercoaster of emotions'
Hope for the future	
Teachers positively impacting acceptance	Parental mental health negatively impacted
Altered relationship with child	Sibling mental health negatively impacted
Rebuilding bond with their child	'Unexpected/ unplanned role'
Child happier post transition	
Non- acceptance would lead to more suffering for child	Managing family relationships
	Financial cost/strain
Feeling happy for gender diverse family member	Legal challenges
Experience of change and transformation for parents	
Supporting the child's gender choice	

Social
transition as a
positive

Transgender as
positive

Special bond
between
grandparent
and grandchild

Final themes

How do parents, grandparents, and siblings experience the gender questioning journey of a YP in their family?

Emotional storm				
Change and transformation	Needing to Find your role	Pressure of Societal influences	Obstacles on the path	Acceptance
	Finding your tribe	Cisnormative/societal gender norms	Navigating systems – medical, legal and education	
	Becoming an advocate	Lack of information and visibility about gender diversity	Future fears	
	Starting points and personal growth		Managing relationships with others	
	Relationships within the family		Religion	

‘Grandparent edge’- will be incorporated into the relevant themes and developed in the discussion.

Appendix E Topic guide

Housekeeping:

Things I need to check first:

- Whereabouts are you based? UK? US? Etc?
- How would you describe your ethnicity?
- Which pronouns do you prefer I use?

I would also like to check that you are happy for me to record this interview. Once the interview has been accurately transcribed, I will delete the video recording. I would like to remind you that you can request that the interview stops at any point and withdraw your consent for the recording to be used in my research. Consent can be withdrawn to use the transcript until the write up has started, which will be in roughly 3 months time. Do you have any questions before I begin the recording?

PRESS RECORD and check transcribing.

Research aims:

This research seeks to look back and explore the perspectives of a gender-curious person and a person of importance to them, examining the gender journey for the two people.

Interview schedule

To begin, I will ask a couple of questions:

- Tell me a bit about your relationship – what is your connection with each other?
- Why have you chosen X* to participate in this interview with you?
- Can you give me a brief overview of your gender journey?

Now, I will share questions in ‘bundles’, and you will take turns asking each other a question of your choosing from each ‘wonder bundle’. You can choose to ask the same question or a different question.

Wonder bundle 1

Thinking back to the start of the gender-questioning journey

- How did you first decide to share your gender-curious explorations?

- Did you knowingly leave hints or 'breadcrumbs' for others to pick up?
- When did you start to pick up on the hints or 'breadcrumbs' left by me?
- Do you think that you knew that I was gender-questioning before I told you directly?

Wonder bundle 2

Thinking about your relationship

- How did you select the people to share your gender-questioning thoughts or 'breadcrumbs' with?
- Did you knowingly select someone to share your hints or 'breadcrumbs' with?
- How did you recognize who was 'safe' to share your gender exploration journey with?
- Can you remember how you responded to my breadcrumbs? Was your reaction conscious or unconscious?

Wonder bundle 3

Thinking about the journey

- How did you feel when I shared my gender exploration with you?
- How did it feel for you to share your gender exploration with me openly? Did something prompt that decision?
- How did my reaction to your revealing your gender curiosity help you in your journey?

Wonder bundle 4

Wondering about gender

- How has this journey impacted your understanding of gender?
- How did you think about gender before the journey? And now?
- What do you understand by the word 'gender' now that you have travelled this journey?
- And now for one final question:
- What has been important to you both during this journey?

STOP recording

Thank you for your time and your story. I will send through £20 Amazon voucher shortly as a thank you for your time. I ask that you send a reply acknowledging receipt for auditing.

If you are happy for me to do so, once the research is complete, I will send a summary of my findings to you, so you can see what I have discovered.

Any final questions?

Appendix F Thematic analysis

F.1 Combined codes

Codes were combined under initial themes, with colours linked to the interviews from which the codes were identified.

Interview 1; interview 2; interview 3; interview 4.

Common experiences supporting connection			Thinking about the future			Frequent/regular contact
Attended university together. Studied the same subject	Friend also experienced similar issues but around sexuality	Common interest/focus - supporting each other to complete a challenge.	Understanding that prepping for disaster is normal, but worries about GD friend being targeted is within awareness of friend	Supporting GD friend to stay safe	Recognition wants the cis-male experience	Maintaining regular contact using video chats
Attended university in a small city	Recognition of similar issues and worries	Completion of a shared challenge	Fears for the future for friend	Future plans	Trans son excited about the future and this is a one off event	Maintaining regular contact over many years
Both attended the same study program at university.	Both the first person they told about their gender transition Creating a powerful initial bond	Working together for many years Work colleagues	Challenges to be faced	Recognition of political situation being a threat to GD friend	One off event = exciting	Long term friendship with regular contact

Shared interests – attending same leisure activities	Creating a powerful initial bond Bonding through similar experiences	Training GD colleague - get to know each other over a two week period.	Understanding what transition will mean for friend	Not expecting any issues about sexuality disclosure as people already know	Not going to be talking about top surgery once done and changes = excitement	Working together for many years Work colleagues
Key points in relationship aligned with other important life events.	Attended university together. Studied the same subject	Common educational experience	Worrying for friend's future happiness	Changes = working with new people, feels like a completely fresh start	Fears for GD friend's safety	Maintaining regular contact using video chats
Desire to share life experiences and challenges.	Attended university in a small city		Clear statement from GD person of plan to medically transition			Maintaining regular contact over many years
						Further time training = working closely together
						See each other a lot = unusual
						Been together for very long time (44 years)

Relational factors						
Jon has been on the gender journey with Rebecca from her point of view	Realising that forgotten about a male colleague	Further opportunities to know each other as continued to work together.	Chances of being together throughout working is unusual and unexpected	Highlighting that GD friend was known to be safe to disclose sexuality	Safe and trusted relationship	Suggesting that LGBTQ colleagues watch each other closely and police each other
Highlighting importance of Jon's friendship.	Sharing information / details about lives	Working anti-social hours/shift work	Boss also close friend - worked with over long period	Mutual friendship - trust	Continuity in personality despite physical changes	Working in a smaller office area = away from the fighting, but means not used to that atmosphere
Stating importance of this friendship	Small office = more intimate = sharing/trusting	Still working in same office but different roles	Highlighting Rebecca's commitment to friendships	Idea that naturally find people who are similar	Highlighting friendship, high level of communication	Changing their working area, needing to get used to new area and new people
Working closely together = getting to know each other	Experiencing 'busy' personal lives at the same time = bonding over challenging times	Time training together at time of surgery (great change for GD person.	Likely choosing people who are judged safe to form friendships	The two friends are away from the main office - creating more intimacy and safety	Response to lovely team and good relationship	Double challenge of managing work relations as also quality checking others' work
Different feel in main office - not as safe	Safe and trusted friend to support when upset or angry	Highlighting mainly female team	Friend needing support of GD friend with	Having to maintain professional relationship due to nature of work	GD person more concerned about keeping professional	Worried about move back to main floor as one colleague who may

			sexuality based problems		distance due to nature of the work	disagree with trans people
Lack of contact/communication from hostile colleague making GD person worried/unsure about their behaviour or thoughts	Team is a mix of people, not necessarily ones who would normally go together	Indicating close working relationships and friendships	Conversations at work = strange. Provide interest away from the job	Close relationship due to coming out about trans/sexuality to each other - shared confidences	Experiencing 'busy' personal lives at the same time = bonding over challenging times	Don't have to tell people about trans status
Highlighting that GD friend was known to be safe to disclose sexuality	Bigger office = more careful about chat. Not as safe	Dad not likely to talk at length about his experience of son's gender transition	Mum easier than dad to persuade to buy or allow things Mum more permissive than dad	Sudden disclosure + fast transition = break in relationship	Talks about farm game to annoy family	Relationship started as a traditional boyfriend/girlfriend
Mutual friendship - trust	Hvaing debate can be misunderstood by colleagues as aggressive argument	Stating importance of this friendship	Parents didn't set strict rules on him when growing up	Break in relationship would be bad/not wanted	Working in a smaller office area = away from the fighting, but means not used to that atmosphere	Recognition of parental experience
Idea that naturally find people who are similar	Social context = arguments viewed as sectarian (religious)	Working closely together = getting to know each other	Parent says didn't need to set boundaries	Friend needing support of GD friend with sexuality based problems	Sharing information / details about lives	Continuity in personality despite physical changes
The two friends are away from the main office - creating more intimacy and safety	Unlikely to be arguing about religion as CC	Further opportunities to know each other as	Would have setn boundaries if trans	Time training together at time of surgery (great	Response to lovely team and good relationship	Highlighting Rebecca's

	not supporting of LGBT people	continued to work together.	son had been more 'rebellious'	change for GD person.		commitment to friendships
Different feel in main office - not as safe	Mum not wanting to jeopardise relationship with son over gender disclosure	Working anti-social hours/shift work	Highlighting could 'break' the rules	Chances of being together throughout working is unusual and unexpected	Highlighting mainly female team	Likely choosing people who are judged safe to form friendships
Suggesting that LGBTQ colleagues watch each other closely and police each other	Most of trans son's friends are same generation	Still working in same office but different roles	Living together in house = natural choice to select to disclose to mum	Boss also close friend - worked with over long period	Realising that forgotten about a male colleague	Safe and trusted relationship
Initial disclosure experiences						
Gender disclosure made to dad when he is watching favoured sport	Friend felt that announcement should have been more direct and clear	Post-disclosure = other difficulties to manage	Rebecca's perspective of Jon's surprise at her gender disclosure	Unwittingly first person to tell is also trans	Mum can't recall disclosure	Initial surprise for friend
Response from person being disclosed to states lack of surprise = acceptable	Language used by manager suggests 'loss'	Gender disclosure = paperwork	Despite perceived Jon's surprise, he is seen as supportive by Rebecca.	GD person not present at time of negative view sharing.	Mum did not react to disclosure in way wanted by trans son	GD person came out at an organised work meeting
Feeling that lack of surprise at disclosure takes away from	Friend wondering if it is them and they're fault that they didn't	Unexpected changes/experiences during transition	Relief at acceptance after full disclosure	Having to make being trans obvious	Trans son needing to change conversation away from disclosure	Inconsistency from managers in

trans person's disclosure moment = annoyance	understand announcement			to others can't hide it	due to emotional discomfort	sharing trans persons coming out
Trans son pleased that mum had not guessed at trans identity in advance of disclosure	Manager agreed to do the 'speaking' at announcement meeting	Post-disclosure = unexpected experiences	Open gender exploration	Medical transition requires patients to be 'out' and disclose fully	Trying to see if mum is angry about disclosure	Trans person present for some of the meetings
Person making gender disclosure can't control reaction of receiver	Worrying after feeling others in team are not supportive or worried about reaction	Not wishing to correct or react to gender normed behaviours of others	Rebecca assumption that Jon will be confused but ok with change.	No gentle start to transition - forced to go fast	Mum wasn't angry about disclosure	Friend felt announcement at work poorly handled
Trans son didn't expect mum to guess gender identity before disclosure	A person thought of as a friend reacts in outspoken manner towards planned announcement.	Adjusting to new language relating to gender identities	Surprise at gender disclosure due to not spotting breadcrumbs	Only some parts of transition can be hidden	Needed mum to know gender identity	Family needing time to understand/accept
Dad last to be told about gender identity	Sense that Jessica already shared plans with friend who is now not supporting her at the announcement	People misgendering are not doing it from place of hate	Wondering if had missed something	Experience of transition not easy	Difficult to manage dad's reaction as had a good relationship before disclosure	Family asking questions after gender disclosure
Disclosed to friends after mum	Struggling to understand while others appear to have understood	Wondering if mum remembered first disclosure	Not sharing gender exploration with closest relations	Being first to transition is risky	Trans son made disclosure in public place	Managing questions from other people, follow easiest route, least

						questions, least unusual
Trans son made disclosure in public place	Sudden understanding	Mum does not recall initial disclosure	Once feeling more certain, ready to share gender exploration experience	Small number of colleagues on shift when disclosure made at work	Struggling to understand while others appear to have understood	Friend realising that that have assumed sexuality
Mum can't recall disclosure	Gradually steps towards full disclosure	GD person is not surprised that mum doesn't recall disclosure	Looking for opportunity to disclose gender identity.	Colleague asking a lot of intense questions directly after disclosure	Sudden understanding	Gender disclosure made to dad when he is watching favoured sport
Mum did not react to disclosure in way wanted by trans son	Managing questions from other people, follow easiest route, least questions, least unusual	GD person seeing a sudden opportunity/opening to disclose gender identity	Unsure of how to deliver disclosure	After initial questions, colleagues calmed with questions. All settles	Gradually steps towards full disclosure	Response from person being disclosed to states lack of surprise = acceptable
Trans son needing to change conversation away from disclosure due to emotional discomfort	Friend realising that that have assumed sexuality	Disclosing initial gender feelings of fluidity	Using general topic to begin disclosure conversation	Colleagues generally have lots of questions	Not sharing gender exploration with closest relations	Feeling that lack of surprise at disclosure takes away from trans person's disclosure moment = annoyance
Trying to see if mum is angry about disclosure	Unwittingly first person to tell is also trans	Asking mum for her thoughts about disclosing gender fluid status	Spotting opportunity to disclose gender	Colleagues apologising when misgendering or using wrong name	Once feeling more certain, ready to share gender exploration experience	Trans son pleased that mum had not guessed at trans

						identity in advance of disclosure
Mum wasn't angry about disclosure	GD person not present at time of negative view sharing.	Mum does not appear bothered and says not about her feelings	Expressing some surprise, but ok to hear disclosure.	Laugh off misgendering or wrong name mistakes of colleagues	Looking for opportunity to disclose gender identity.	Person making gender disclosure can't control reaction of receiver
Needed mum to know gender identity	Having to make being trans obvious to others can't hide it	Disappointed by mum's neutral reaction	Initial surprise at disclosure	While jokes were inappropriate, aim from colleagues was to reassure, coping mechanism	Unsure of how to deliver disclosure	Trans son didn't expect mum to guess gender identity before disclosure
Difficult to manage dad's reaction as had a good relationship before disclosure	Medical transition requires patients to be 'out' and disclose fully	Sensed that mum's reaction indicated that gender disclosure was 'bad news' for her	Had not spotted breadcrumbs which added to sense of surprise	Relief after disclosure	Using general topic to begin disclosure conversation	Dad last to be told about gender identity
Disclosure did impact relationship with dad slightly	No gentle start to transition - forced to go fast	Generally, mum doesn't normally make big fuss over things	Recognition of impact this disclosure will have	Uncomfortable as everyone looking at trans person after disclosure announcement	Spotting opportunity to disclose gender	Disclosed to friends after mum
Conversations on non-trans issues still have good relationship	Only some parts of transition can be hidden	Internal thought process more complex than what may show externally to others	Wishing to be seen as supportive	Needs friend to understand so can get away from staring and discomfort	Expressing some surprise, but ok to hear disclosure.	Only disclosed to partner until agreed to discuss openly with others

Trans son worried that disclosure has impacted ways his parents view him	Experience of transition not easy	Mum feels that her thoughts are not important	Describing trying out gender disclosure before disclosing to all	Friend felt that announcement should have been more direct and clear	Initial surprise at disclosure	Need support from counselling to explore transgender disclosure
Didn't find it tiring to tell trans story initially	Being first to transition is risky	friends accept gender transition more easily than parents	Stepped disclosure, gradually adding in more people, then workplace, then family.	Language used by manager suggests 'loss'	Had not spotted breadcrumbs which added to sense of surprise	Exploration of the future = lots of discussion
Glad that he made the gender disclosure to mum	Small number of colleagues on shift when disclosure made at work	Post-disclosure = other difficulties to manage	After testing safe friends' reaction, moved on to full disclosure.	Friend wondering if it is them and they're fault that they didn't understand announcement	Recognition of impact this disclosure will have	Impossible for trans partner to not go through with transition
Gender disclosure = difficult conversations	Colleague asking a lot of intense questions directly after disclosure	Gender disclosure = paperwork	Use of important personal event to frame disclosure.	Manager agreed to do the 'speaking' at announcement meeting	Wishing to be seen as supportive	Gender disclosure = paperwork
Only disclosed to partner until agreed to discuss openly with others	After initial questions, colleagues calmed with questions. All settles	Unexpected changes/experiences during transition	Discussing when to disclose with friend	Worrying after feeling others in team are not supportive or worried about reaction	Describing trying out gender disclosure before disclosing to all	Unexpected changes/experiences during transition

Need support from counselling to explore transgender disclosure	Colleagues generally have lots of questions	Post-disclosure = unexpected experiences	Different ways/language for disclosure for different family members	A person thought of as a friend reacts in outspoken manner towards planned announcement.	Disclosing initial gender feelings of fluidity	Post-disclosure = unexpected experiences
Exploration of the future = lots of discussion	Colleagues apologising when misgendering or using wrong name	Not wishing to correct or react to gender normed behaviours of others	Framing positively decision to transition to family members.	Sense that Jessica already shared plans with friend who is now not supporting her at the announcement	Asking mum for her thoughts about disclosing gender fluid status	Not wishing to correct or react to gender normed behaviours of others
Impossible for trans partner to not go through with transition	Laugh off misgendering or wrong name mistakes of colleagues	Adjusting to new language relating to gender identities	Family needing time to understand/accept	Difficult to manage dad's reaction as had a good relationship before disclosure	Mum does not appear bothered and says not about her feelings	Adjusting to new language relating to gender identities
Gender disclosure made to dad when he is watching favoured sport	While jokes were inappropriate, aim from colleagues was to reassure, coping mechanism	People misgendering are not doing it from place of hate	Family asking questions after gender disclosure	Disclosure did impact relationship with dad slightly	Disappointed by mum's neutral reaction	People misgendering are not doing it from place of hate
Response from person being disclosed to states lack of surprise = acceptable	Relief after disclosure	Wondering if mum remembered first disclosure	Initial surprise for friend	Conversations on non-trans issues still have good relationship	Sensed that mum's reaction indicated that gender disclosure was 'bad news' for her	Wondering if mum remembered first disclosure

Feeling that lack of surprise at disclosure takes away from trans person's disclosure moment = annoyance	Uncomfortable as everyone looking at trans person after disclosure announcement	Mum does not recall initial disclosure	GD person came out at an organised work meeting	Trans son worried that disclosure has impacted ways his parents view him	Generally, mum doesn't normally make big fuss over things	friends accept gender transition more easily than parents
Trans son pleased that mum had not guessed at trans identity in advance of disclosure	Needs friend to understand so can get away from staring and discomfort	GD person is not surprised that mum doesn't recall disclosure	Inconsistency from managers in sharing trans persons coming out	Didn't find it tiring to tell trans story initially	Internal thought process more complex than what may show externally to others	Post-disclosure = other difficulties to manage
Person making gender disclosure can't control reaction of receiver	Post-disclosure = other difficulties to manage	GD person seeing a sudden opportunity/opening to disclose gender identity	Trans person present for some of the meetings	Glad that he made the gender disclosure to mum	Mum feels that her thoughts are not important	Open gender exploration
Trans son didn't expect mum to guess gender identity before disclosure	Gender disclosure = paperwork	Disclosing initial gender feelings of fluidity	Friend felt announcement at work poorly handled	Gender disclosure = difficult conversations	friends accept gender transition more easily than parents	Rebecca assumption that Jon will be confused but ok with change.
Dad last to be told about gender identity	Unexpected changes/experiences during transition	Asking mum for her thoughts about disclosing gender fluid status	Friend trying to understand and make sense of what is happening	GD person is not surprised that mum doesn't recall disclosure	Wondering if had missed something	Surprise at gender disclosure due to not spotting breadcrumbs

Disclosed to friends after mum	Post-disclosure = unexpected experiences	Mum does not appear bothered and says not about her feelings	Rebecca's perspective of Jon's surprise at her gender disclosure	GD person seeing a sudden opportunity/opening to disclosure gender identity	Mum wasn't angry about disclosure	Mum feels that her thoughts are not important
Trans son made disclosure in public place	Not wishing to correct or react to gender normed behaviours of others	Disappointed by mum's neutral reaction	Despite perceived Jon's surprise, he is seen as supportive by Rebecca.	Mum does not recall initial disclosure	Needed mum to know gender identity	Trying to see if mum is angry about disclosure
Mum can't recall disclosure	Adjusting to new language relating to gender identities	Sensed that mum's reaction indicated that gender disclosure was 'bad news' for her	Relief at acceptance after full disclosure	Trans son needing to change conversation away from disclosure due to emotional discomfort	Wondering if mum remembered first disclosure	Internal thought process more complex than what may show externally to others
Mum did not react to disclosure in way wanted by trans son	People misgendering are not doing it from place of hate	Generally, mum doesn't normally make big fuss over things				
Uncertainty of picking up hints of gender exploration						
Wondering about whether he had said anything or had Rebecca said anything that would hint at gender	Legitimate behaviours = missing breadcrumbs	How to draw Jon's attention to painted nails	Assumption that living in shared house with other women =	Did not recognise it as a breadcrumb	Suggests that he noticed but it took him some time	Assumption that living in shared house with other women =

exploration. Had he missed clues.			exploration of feminine side of character.			exploration of feminine side of character.
Wondering if friend spotted breadcrumbs	Curious about how Jon will receive the hint/breadcrumb	Concerned about Jon's reaction	With hindsight can recognise the breadcrumbs	From Jon's perspective shaving beard fits with his own narrative and expectations.	Curious about how Jon will receive the hint/breadcrumb	With hindsight can recognise the breadcrumbs
Breadcrumbs being misinterpreted or missed	Rebecca assumption of Jon's verbal response will be positive and he will notice.	Worry about how judgement will be passed.	Hadn't recognised the extent of Rebecca's gender exploration or that it would lead to a full transition	Recognises that he did not recognise this as a breadcrumb at the time	Rebecca assumption of Jon's verbal response will be positive and he will notice.	Hadn't recognised the extent of Rebecca's gender exploration or that it would lead to a full transition
Friend completely missed breadcrumbs	Not picking up on the breadcrumbs	Suggests that he noticed but it took him some time	Due to regularity of contact, not expecting the breadcrumb to be picked up.	Seeing painted nails as gender exploration	Did not recognise it as a breadcrumb	Due to regularity of contact, not expecting the breadcrumb to be picked up.
Having to check that have the right person/gender due to sound of a person's voice	Not wanting to assume/assign meaning of breadcrumbs	Worry about how judgement will be passed.	Recognition that breadcrumbs left were potentially very subtle	Jon did not give too much thought or concern about Rebecca's exploration	From Jon's perspective shaving beard fits with his own narrative and expectations.	Recognition that breadcrumbs left were potentially very subtle
Mum describing breadcrumbs left by trans son	Not fair/right to assume/assign		Recognition that breadcrumbs may		Recognises that he did not recognise this as a	Recognition that breadcrumbs may not be easy to spot.

	another's gender identity		not be easy to spot.		breadcrumb at the time	
Wondering about the reasons for clothing preferences - is it just a practical reason?	Clothing choices were actually driven by practical reasons		Jon did not give too much thought or concern about Rebecca's exploration	Concerned about Jon's reaction	Seeing painted nails as gender exploration	How to draw Jon's attention to painted nails
Dropping hints for self and others/testing the waters						
Recognition that not self-aware of own feelings about their gender. Breadcrumbs to the self.	Testing mum's reaction by talking about experience of friends trans coming out	Different hints that trans woman wanted to experience life as a female/cross dressing	Feeling appearance was too masculine	Telling mum about a friend coming out as trans	Recognising that they are trying to hint to others about their trans thoughts	Subconscious experience - denial?
Hints that were consciously and clearly given	Stages to revealing gender identity	Risky to be open about wish to x-dress	GD person saying they left breadcrumbs	Not sure about own gender identity	Hair growth as a breadcrumb	Too much/difficult to think about
Clear, intentional hint related to perceived show of female behaviour/decoration	Not conscious of leaving breadcrumbs for family	Kept wish to x-dress quiet from everyone	Highlighting that friend has commented on the leaving of breadcrumbs	Thinking about own motivations for leaving breadcrumbs	Reading a book on trans issues openly to leave a breadcrumb	Time to recognise true feelings about gender
Experimenting with reactions to painted nails	Experience of taking an interest in trans community but not	Important to keep x-dressing wishes quiet as had 'happy' relationship	Leaving breadcrumbs related to sexuality	Hidden trans self from everyone, including themselves	Seating/reading book in a position that is out of the way, but still in a public location	Growing hair as a breadcrumb

	realising that you are trans yourself					
Recognition that this was a moment of experimenting, testing for reactions from Jon.	Talking constantly about trans issues to family	Repression of true feelings about x-crossing	Leaving a breadcrumb relating to a first step towards full trans disclosure	Jon affirms Rebecca saying that her 'lie' appeared legitimate	Realising that GD friend didn't pick up on the friend's own breadcrumbs	Change to use of pronouns
Feeling 'good' leading to feeling safe to test the waters.	Wondering if parents were purposely selected for breadcrumbs	Admitting to wife that wanted to x-dress and enjoyed it	Using comments about where seen friends/colleagues to start chat about sexuality - breadcrumb	Different hints that trans woman wanted to experience life as a female/cross dressing	Not necessarily conscious of leaving breadcrumbs	Using pronouns as a breadcrumb
Feeling safe and secure to experiment and see Jon's reaction to gender breadcrumbs.	Large part of gender journey = struggle to recognise or accept being female	After admitting x-dressing to wife showed herself dressed as female	Leaving multiple types of breadcrumbs	Some deliberate leaving of breadcrumbs	Wishing that some breadcrumbs were picked up by others	Wondering about gender initially an internal process.
Claimed to wish to see how she had aged.	Later point in life realised got to admit to feelings of being female	Went to a transgender club with wife	Laser hair removal leaving visible traces on skin	Partner did enjoy x=dressing	Recognition that he was elsewhere on the gender journey to those in argument	Wanting to find out about leaving hints or breadcrumbs
Rebecca feeling her face did not match her internal experience	Internally having to admit to being/feeling female first					

Reactions to hints about gender exploration						
Jon compliments the changes Rebecca is making	Able to give legitimate reasons for behaviour.	Friend highlighting reason why manager/they didn't pick up the breadcrumbs	Not following gendered norms	Dad changed and started to refer to trans son as his son	Didn't view her partner as female	Partner was supportive and buying clothes for the x-dressing
Suggests that he noticed but it took him some time	Legitimate reason that was also true	Realising that with hindsight book title is clear signal	Creating own identity	Dad using humour to make the shift to saying 'son'	Felt could support partner in exploring the female side of themselves	Didn't find her partner attractive dressed as a female
Casual noticing, non-judgemental	Jon seeking to join up the different breadcrumbs.	Only small number of people who spotted breadcrumbs	Mum thought trans son initially being individual, not questioning gender identity	Dad now calling trans son his son	Hvaing to be certain wouldn't be 'caught' during x-dressing	Better not to see dad's processing of trans disclosure
Jon asking about painted nails	Only just realising that friend is gay	Friend completely missed breadcrumbs	Recognition for mum that there was more to the outward gender expression	Took dad time to process the gender transition	Relieved when partner lost interest in x-dressing	Initially dad not accepting of trans son's disclosure, changing language/gendered terms of reference
Jon stating feeling of surprise due to sudden change.	Friend didn't recognise breadcrumb, but others noticed	Realising that GD friend didn't pick up on the friend's own breadcrumbs	Realising that this was about complete gender transition	Family members getting frustrated by constant trans issue chat	Didn't encourage partner when the x-dressing stopped	Mum thinking that trans son didn't care about other's opinions

States that Jon expressed interest in reason for shaving off beard, but does not give real reason.	Please checking on GD person as they don't look quite right - ill?	Wondering if risking upsetting people with breadcrumbs	Parent accepting of trans identity disclosure	Mum in denial about breadcrumbs - avoiding recognition	X-dressing was not discussed again for nearly 20 years	Trans son not conforming to gendered norms
Starting to question Rebecca's behaviour as it does not fit with 'normal' expected behaviours for male.	Explaining to manager that nothing has changed quickly or dramatically	Mum recognised hints about possible trans gender identity	Father's journey of acceptance was personal and not visible	Breadcrumb receiver choosing not to pick up breadcrumbs	Can't understand manager's behaviour.	Exploration as a result of new ideas due to moving location. - new places, new people, new ideas.
Recognition that Rebecca was exploring gender, not necessarily questioning her gender	No one noticing wearing women's clothing	Mum admires trans son not conforming to appearance norms	Dad's hidden acceptance difficult for trans son	Parent making assumptions builds up ready for disclosure to be 'disappointed' at wrong assumptions	Use of pronoun 'we' indicating not alone in opinion of manager's opinion	Viewing the exploration with these women as safe and ok.
Emotional experience						
Feeling anxious about gender exploration	Friend feels upset as missing the breadcrumbs	Trans son not wanting to upset parent	Still times of emotional discomfort when discussing trans issues	Was happy as husband and father	Safety = not wanting to deliberately upset/hurt another	Suddenly feeling better, good emotionally
Feeling anxious about disclosing gender exploration and transition	Personal point of acceptance for GD person	Trans son worrying about picking on mum on this issue	Very vulnerable emotionally with dad due to lack of	Evident that x-dressing was upsetting for wife	Disclosure not safe, as not sure relationship will survive	Common experience of relief for the trans person

			predictable response			
Only able to give limited words to describe feeling of gender exploration experience	Can't let go of the denial of bisexuality from work colleague	Trans man not wanting to have to manage other people's stress about misgendering	Parental struggling reaction to trans conversation viewed as rejection	Went back to repressing wish to x-dress	Didn't occur to trans partner that it might be risky to disclose to partner	Transition also gave relief to partner who felt that wrong things were not her doing/fault
Unsure about own feelings towards gender exploration, not ready to share	Worrying about move to new area with more people	Tiring for trans man feeling like he is the problem for other people	Personal battle over gender transition	Relieved when partner lost interest in x-dressing	Being treated/called by female gendered language = joy at passing	The emotional pain caused was main worry in disclosing
Relief at positive response	Not bothered whether a person 'accepts' them or GD others	Trans man trying to be themselves	Upsetting that people are not listening and responding to own feelings and perception of passing	Existential feelings = got to disclose	Scary to put the love/relationship at risk through disclosure	Worrying that parents would change behaviour/treatment post disclosure
Framing positively decision to transition to family members.	Transitioning = anxiety like being tested	Trans son initially upset at family saying to change subject, but now understands their viewpoint	Not going to ask mum if he passes as he doesn't want the honest answer	Realising wrong to repress transgender feelings	Gender journey was filled with changes and confusion Needed to disclose gender identity as feeling upset and confused Worried that confusion and upset would last forever	Mum wondering if trans son worried about being disowned by parents

Family needing time to understand/accept	Relief after disclosure	Explaining that when making a gender disclosure it is the main thought/focus for the trans person	Trans identity has a lot of emotional weight	Feeling time of life had more influence on decision to disclose	Nervous about disclosing to mum	Worried that parents would not show affection because he is now a boy
Shock for family members	Anxiety pre-disclosure	As time passes, the focus becomes less intense	Trans son having to build up emotionally to tricky trans conversations	Gender disclosure made as part of wish for 60th birthday	Trying to establish emotions of mum to disclosure was tricky	Relief that relationship has continued as normal
Joint feeling of relief for Jon and Rebecca after disclosure	Anxiety reducing after disclosure realising that people are ok	Other things in life now beyond trans/gender	Recognition that parents not so deeply invested in the changes	Recognition that partner would not find their trans female partner sexually attractive	Realising trans male was scary	Wife was hardest hit by gender transition
Feeling pleased that friend can live authentically	Post-disclosure = not having to hide emotions/feelings	Trans son feels need to have medical transition procedures	Might also create some less positive emotions	Still love and care for the trans partner	Reassure younger self that things will work out	Feeling worried by how people reacting before announcement
Feeling of respect that Rebecca is able to be authentic	Not had the problem of hiding feelings due to toxic masculinity	Trans son finds mum's lack of acceptance hurtful as he is also worried about undergoing medical procedure	Recognition of pain can be caused if see your child in emotional distress	Partner experiencing feelings of resentment	Ok/normal to feel confused about gender identity	Announcement was stressful for everyone. All learnt from the experience

Mixed range of emotions in preparation for disclosure	Idea of being female disgusts GD person	Comfort and safety = mum, not requiring someone who knows about trans issues	Not wanting to feel that have to perform emotional distress to be believed about mental struggle	Once admitted to, hard to 'unknow' feelings of gender discomfort	Worried that gender disclosure to parents = rejection of birth body	Meeting = worries from colleagues about what would be said.
Relief when using new voice with people close to you	Being trans male felt very good	Mum = comfort and love which is more important than saying the 'right' things	Worried that mum is being pushed too fast/stressed out by knowledgeable trans friend	Frightening not knowing what experience or needs would be ahead	Worrying that parents may see rejection of birth body as their failure	Feeling silly and uncomfortable - missing something critical
Friend left feeling 'silly' by end of meeting. Discomfort	Mum stating the expectation of a 'normal' family life/experience	Family = love, care, comfort	Trans son wants to be accepted/loved as he is by his family	Recognition of emotional pain for partner	Not taking gender disclosure as a failure or rejection	Worrying after feeling others in team are not supportive or worried about reaction
Suddenly becoming nervous and feeling unable to speak	Difficult to hide big feelings about gender identity	Finds it scary to have this independence	Gender transition feels real	Upsetting at pain/loss caused to partner by transition	Relief that parents not viewed gender transition as failure or rejection	Guilt at suddenly feeling authentic/good
Knowing who is safe to share gender exploration						
Jon viewed as knowledgeable about gender exploration	Friendship with GD person means indicates that a person is 'safe' for	Likely choosing people who are judged safe to form friendships	Mum was first to be disclosed to	Previous experience of trans co-workers – knew	Knowing that no physical threat from mum	Hiding breadcrumbs from family

Recognition of personal blocks to understanding gender exploration	Recognition of political situation being a threat to GD friend	Highlighting the arguments between people experiencing similar gender based challenges	Once medical transition is underway, felt colleagues were going too far with jokes about gender and the transition	Straight colleague getting annoyed by amount of gender focused chat	Doubts about gender identity are normal part of being trans	Finds trans community view/reaction of accepting/not accepting polarising/negative
Altering voice was difficult and needed practice	Describing friend's worry about upsetting them	Within the gender/sexually diverse community there is discrimination or unkindness towards each other	Male colleagues using gender stereotype jokes in an extreme or inappropriate way	Media portray of risks to trans women is not wholly accurate	Father's opinions on some topics very different from trans son's.	Accepts that there may be extreme or opposite reactions of parents to trans disclosure
Gender norm views from childhood are hard to shift	GD person suggests she is the clumsy/awkward person	Feeling the discrimination within LGBTQ community is odd	Suggests that male colleagues don't know how to manage gender transition	Gender journey with mum not been easy	When dad is not fully in control (drunk) true opinions are on show	Couldn't just do what he wanted
Family needing time to understand/accept	GD person highlighting that the language around trans/gender means that people sound awkward/clumsy	Better to be away from the fighting and arguing	Stereotypical jokes about female hormones made by colleagues	Been a lengthy process of finding gender identity	Parents having to work to alter their gendered terms/pronouns	Mum stating the expectation of a 'normal' family life/experience
Jon worrying about things he had said during Rebecca's period of questioning	Language used by manager creating misunderstanding	Experienced a small amount of trouble due	One colleague really worried about asking	Worrying that period of instability around gender	Making mistakes with pronouns within the family	Recognition that parental objection related to physical

		to being trans from work colleagues	questions, but wants to ask	identity would never end		change in any form not necessarily transgender change
Jon saying not good at handling conversations	Time in past when trans was not well understood or known about	Colleague openly sharing negative views on trans people	Tend to be more careful with questions or things said about diverse groups now than in past	Feeling when younger don't realise things can change	Different/younger generations handle misgendering better	Difficult to hide big feelings about gender identity
Doesn't feel confident in ability to handle tricky conversations. Worried will say wrong thing	Friend feeling that the announcement was badly handled	Colleagues telling GD person about other colleagues views	Preferred clearer messaging from manager re disclosure meeting with colleagues	Gender transition not what mum expected or wants for child	Trans son will always do what they want regardless of parental feelings	Wishing that had waited to disclose gender identity until sure of feelings
Jon worrying about upbringing influencing his ability to be supportive/understand	Manager had to decide on what to say	Work colleague who does not interact with trans person	Needing friend to understand the meaning of manager's announcement to work colleagues	Gender disclosure is unexpected and frustrating	Older adults misgendering become highly apologetic	Gender journey was filled with changes and confusion Needed to disclose gender identity as feeling upset and confused Worried that confusion and upset would last forever

Struggling to alter voice with familiar people	Friend feeling that they were not well informed or knowledgeable about gender transition	Going into the unknown	Friend still struggles to understand manager's phrasing of disclosure	Highlighting that mum comments on birth gender	Trans son is already ahead, diving in with trans issues chat	Mum finds trans son's trans based conversations are 'heavy'
Feeling got to fit people's expectations – can't change	Recognition that LGBTQ was unusual over 10 years ago	Being on gender spectrum = voice not matching assigned gender	Didn't really know what to expect or what should ask or do	Coming out to mother harder than to friends	Trans son realising that family are not keeping up with their ideas	Mum finds managing common 'social' questions about her children tricky
Challenge of using new voice	Friend feels that he didn't pay proper attention to his friend/wasn't fulfilling role of a good friend	Ensuring that not misgendering a person	Today can worry too much about making mistake and don't ask questions which isn't good	Gender disclosure harder for parents as they have known GD person since birth, know them as assigned birth gender	Family slow the conversation about trans issues	Mum feels need to give explanation for trans son's gender identity
Difficult to use new voice with specific people, e.g. partner due to reminder of transition. Worry about impact of new voice on other's feelings	Acknowledging own biases relating to sexuality	Worries about misgendering	Previously when didn't know what to do get overwhelmed with questions, not good	Perception that cis people think gender transition is straightforward	Using train journey to describe process of gender change	Mum tired of having to explain trans son's gender journey to others
Wish for voice and appearance to match along with internal experience	Lengthy internal 'battle' with gender exploration	Avoid using pronouns to avoid risk of misgendering	Reference to current challenges facing trans	Difficult for trans people to explain their experience to	Trans allies advising to leave mum behind if not instant acceptance	Trans son experiences similar problems to mum

			people socially/politically	cis people due to lack of experience		
Friend worrying about their memory with supporting with gender exploration/using wrong pronouns	Pronouns are difficult especially when talking about pre-transition	Feel that use of name over pronouns reduces risk of offending or upsetting gender diverse people	Friend feels ineffectual in supporting trans friend when they are upset about gender issues	Idea of gender transition is new to cis people	Would have already medically transitioned if not waiting for mum to process gender transition	Doesn't want to tell trans experience to people at work
Spotting opportunity to disclose gender	Recognition that being trans meant had to disclose fully and openly	System that defines people by gender assignment	Reference to adjusting to gender norms	Parental idea that trans is a passing phase or free choice	Not being stopped from medical transition through force from parent	Having to tell people trans experience while working is difficult
Knowing what can be shared when	Full and open disclose not easy	Feeling that defining people by gender titles is problematic	Difficult to understand why some work colleagues will not alter their name to match gender identity	Difficult to develop own male identity	Trans son finding it hard to communicate importance of having surgery to family/important people	Now exhausting to tell trans story everytime
While friend worries about making mistakes with names/pronouns, they understand it is a small detail in bigger picture	Disclosure about sexuality is easier than trans as can choose people to share with	People making up names	Still progress to be made with supporting GD people to make changes to external identity - to feel safe?	Not wanting to be like dad	Surgery is scary but will lead to easier day to day experience	Some people are scandalised by trans identity

Recognising that experience growing up meant that was feeding the anxiety about supporting with the gender transition	Unable to hide transitioning	Unsure what to do when people are playing jokes and altering names on the system	Conversations about gender issues can be strange/funny	Being authentic, don't have to copy other men	Medical transition is a difficult topic for family	Does not understand cis interest in trans gender identity
Fears for GD friend's safety	Friend's recognition of the challenge of trans disclosure	System is slow to catch up when people transition gender	Conversations about gender issues can be confusing	Sometimes feel pretending to be male	Not following 'usual' trans behaviour of picking own name	Trans identity isn't that interesting
Understanding that prepping for disaster is normal, but worries about GD friend being targeted is within awareness of friend	Recognition from friend that sexuality means little after the more challenging disclosure of trans	Due to muddled information, don't know how to refer to trans colleagues	Conversations on current topics involving gender	Going to get found out as trans	Experienced some push back from trans community for letting mum help with name choice	Mum tried not telling people about trans son
Tried different ways of managing questions about gender of her children	Upset at having to make changes	Doesn't like doing voice coaching	People not thinking about what they are saying	Hard to disclose to mum as always known him as female	Can't stop talking about trans issues	Feels like female identity was pre-determined
People try to find ways to make personal links	Struggling with decision about making hormonal changes to start transition	Wishing to have a person who can encourage him with voice coaching sessions	People view gender transition as simple and complete	Knew it would be hard for mum to adjust after gender disclosure	Mum feeling that trans son making his life harder going through gender transition	Depends on mood for how the language callout is taken
Now trans identity isn't extraordinary	Doesn't like sound of voice	Doesn't enjoy voice coaching as thinks he is bad at it and stops	Finding it difficult to manage idea of passing	Making gender disclosure was hard	Difficult to tell mum that not happy in body	Picking over people's gender language not helpful to having

					as feels his mum has 'given him his body'.	useful/open discussion
People view trans identity as unusual and want to know more about it	Wanting to look like other people is not the same from trans perspective	Voice coaching costs money	Feeling secure in trans man identity but still difficult when thinking about passing	Misconceptions about trans identity due to transphobic arguments	Feels that it will upset mum by sharing his true feelings about his body	Picking over people's gender language = problems with acceptance from general population
Really not that unusual or interesting	Focus is on passing/looking like a man	Voice coaching is tricky	Wouldn't ask mum if he passes	Mum not always wanting to talk about trans experience with trans son	Mum saying that she wouldn't take this upset as a personal insult	People getting called out = feeling bad
Mum not sure if she prefers her son to be professional fire eater to being trans	Cis body image worries different from trans body worries	Finds it hard to believe people when they say that he passes as a man Feeling this is unique experience to him Feels this is experience common to others trans people	Feels certain that he does not pass	Sense of frustration, difficulty in getting message across to mum about trans experience	Challenge of deciding how much to share ahead of disclosure-leaving breadcrumbs	Wife was hardest hit by gender transition
Overwhelming to find out he was trans	Dad doesn't talk about this body image worries	When says doesn't pass to these people, they feel a rejection of their compliment	Don't know what will gain from asking if he passes	Trans son not always picking best/most appropriate moments to discuss challenging trans topics	Not wanting to always perform 'miserable' to highlight mental struggle	Worrying about impact on relationship

				Mum/family wanting to enjoy holiday moments without having to talk trans issues		
Generally doesn't like change and won't make big changes in life if unhappy	Doesn't feel good at voice coaching	Sees people saying he passes as a compliment	Asking a question for reassurance and not getting the honest answer	Feeling unsure about how the boundary on trans chat will be personally managed	Don't want to feel that needs to give proof to parents about dysphoric feelings	Worried about impact of disclosing trans identity on their children
Recognition that trans will be a big life change	Don't know how to do voice coaching	Gets misgendered daily	Mum has known trans son's previous gender identity = harder to see him as completely male/passing	Gets very focused on talking about specific topics	Trans community pushes for acceptance immediately, not accepting that some people take processing time	Wouldn't have been able to continue teaching if disclosed as transgender
Going to need to make big life changes	Feels embarrassed at voice coaching attempts	Feels that people are being false/fake when saying he passes	Difficult to make the switch when told trans gender identity	Trans issues one of the passion topics	Finds thinking back to female identity challenging	Partner had to decide whether to continue relationship
Trans partner wanted to maintain relationship	Didn't want to have sexual relationship post transition	Didn't want to have sexual relationship post transition	Didn't want to have sexual relationship post transition	Important to recognise difference between facts and opinions in trans issues	Didn't want to have sexual relationship post transition	Didn't want to have sexual relationship post transition

Couldn't be certain about wanting sexual relationship after transition	Once accepted transition, needed to think about who to disclose to	Once accepted transition, needed to think about who to disclose to	Once accepted transition, needed to think about who to disclose to	Annoyed at being spoken to in a condescending manner	Once accepted transition, needed to think about who to disclose to	Once accepted transition, needed to think about who to disclose to
Having to discuss sexual needs	Had to tell children first about decision to transition	Had to tell children first about decision to transition	Had to tell children first about decision to transition	Idealised view that everyone can be supportive of varied gender expressions		
Supportive factors on the gender journey						
Previous experience gave opportunity to challenge gender norm views	Trusted with private information	Not experienced problems at work due to trans disclosure	Would stop asking questions if trans friend looked tired of questions	Parent wanting child to be themselves	Not disadvantaging themselves by slowing down transition to keep parents with them	Mum wanting to give her trans son 'nice' things to have a good life
Previous experience = greater ability to support, less time working through own issues	Normalising aspects of the gender transition process	People able to alter matched name in directory system	Able to talk openly about gender experience	Agreeing that it is good parents aren't rejecting child's gender disclosure	Parent offering both emotional and practical support with medical transition	Mum saying other people are interested by trans identity of her son
Discussing when to disclose with friend	Wishing to create a supportive environment for transitioning friend	Easy to set conversational boundaries with friends	Continued to treat trans friend kindly as pre-disclosure	Parent stating open talking to people about child's gender transition	Recognition of need for practical help after transition surgery	Discloses trans status to people and they take interest in personal story

Family starting to arrive at point of acceptance	Jon recognising that it took him time to adjust and understand what it meant for him re gender exploration	Use of collective pronoun indicating that friend would help if another colleague was unkind	Friend not shocked or upset by idea that friend disclosed as trans - open-minded	GD person surprised that parent talks to others about their gender transition	Comfort and safety = mum, not requiring someone who knows about trans issues	Didn't find it tiring to tell trans story initially
Family asking questions after gender disclosure	Wish for freedom in expressing gender in way that makes a person feel happy and authentic.	Work team are supportive towards each other and the GD person	Open-minded, but surprised by disclosure	Recognition of experience for GD child	Mum = comfort and love which is more important than saying the 'right' things	Making changes is better than remaining with assigned birth gender
Family wanting to know how to support	Advice not to worry about other people's thoughts/perceptions of you	Acceptance/quiet acceptance is best outcome	Questions asked by colleagues were all considerate, nothing horrible	Speaking to others to gather support and perspectives to aid understanding of GD child	Family = love, care, comfort	Mum will not give fake answers
Appreciation of trust from Rebecca.	Supportive friend recognises don't have to 'do' everything set out by a gender label	Other colleagues have followed Jessica's lead - not alone in trans status	Going with the experience and managing things as they came up.	Not pressuring dad to change language immediately, giving time for processing	Parent must allow trans son to be an independent adult making own decisions	Can get the false reassurance answers from friends
Recognition of trust involved	Autonomy on how going to behave, not needing to conform	Viewed as a person to go to for advice on transitioning in workplace	Recognition that need to find a balance in being able to ask questions and not overwhelm trans person	Not pressuring dad helped maintain relationship and allowed him to accept new situation	Trans son makes own decisions which they feel is good and bad	Got friends, but still needs mum for honesty

Recognition of importance of being trusted.	Not going to worry about other people's opinions	Colleagues supportive with jokes about medical transition	Friend feels that they are focused on trying to balance their questions	Younger generation more accepting of mistakes (of themselves and others)	Trans son likes to hear parent's opinion on issues	Doesn't really think about who gives honest/fake answers
Need to take responsibility for actions	Important to GD person to have the ongoing friendship despite change	Still get questions from colleagues but they are odd or unusual	Trans person educates others on trans issues	Trans son understanding of family perspective on constant trans chat	Mum is no longer most important feature of trans son's life	Mum doesn't say anything if someone misgenders her trans son
Needing a confidant who can be trusted to share the journey/experience	Support very important for GD person	Newer colleagues still ask the expected questions	Open talk = important to supportive relationship	Trans son wondering if could have been more relaxed in approach to talking trans issues with family	Job is first time of being really independent from mum	Mum doesn't want to create drama about misgendering
Knowing that can talk openly within someone is important for mental health	Happiness of GD friend is most important to supportive other	Once colleagues feel safe with trans person, they ask questions about trans issues	Good friends don't have to agree on everything = acceptance of different opinions	Trans son wants to keep mum on the gender journey	Trans son is able to problem solve at work independent of mum	Knows that this is not due to mum not knowing his gender identity
Jon's positive reaction to disclosure was helpful for Rebecca's gender journey	Accepting that life = change	Chatting in breaks = jokes and open chat = relieving tension about trans topics	Differences of opinion are normal, not hateful = debate	Finding a middle ground/compromise	Mum states that trans son doesn't need her to solve his work decisions/problems	Trans son doesn't want a drama about misgendering

Regular chances to support changes and elements of transition	Wanting GD friend to be able to live authentically	Trans person happy to answer questions and tells colleagues to ask	Not really interested in debates about sport	Mum helped trans son pick new name	Glad that mum is not interfering	What you can say depends on relationship with the trans person
Importance of the safe relationship	Supporting GD friend to stay safe	Different friend who would stop the gender questions from colleagues	Most people accept gender transition	Wanting to pick a name mum likes to make the transition easier for her to accept	Recognition that mum doesn't feel that she needs to be involved in his life decisions	Mum is very important/close relationship and need her to understand trans identity
Was able to use new voice without worrying about upsetting feelings	Small, more intimate team within the larger team	Relieved that friend stopped questions as would get strange and would go for whole shift	Not much to talk about as gender transition accepted by most people	Mum thinking that name selection was coincidentally same name as she would have picked if trans son had been assigned male at birth	Mum is generally very opinionated about small/insignificant issues	Mum recognition that trans son needs her to look after him and go alongside on top surgery journey
Continuity in personality despite physical changes	Trust key to relationship	Wonders if fewer questions nowadays about transition as people know more about it	Gender journey = learning for both sides	Working with mum to pick out name	Mum only gives opinions when asked	Can talk about trans issues at the right time
Friendship has continued after gender disclosure	Friend will ask when does not understand specific trans issue	Don't get angry at people asking questions	GD person is grateful for the learning provided by supportive other (mum)	Feels attached to name that he has chosen with mum's help	Mum will give opinion but will not act/be forceful about it	Mum/family have provided everything needed during trans son's life

Highlighting friendship, high level of communication	Using laughter/humour to manage uncomfortable moments	Friend confirms that trans person never got angry about questions with them	GD person will do what they need to do in relation to gender identity, regardless of others' opinions	Considering impact of every decision on parents during gender journey	Mum will always give an opinion and won't be ambivalent	Trans son recognising boundaries for times to share trans conversations
Exploration is perceived as fine by Jon.	Mutual friendship - trust	Using humour/jokes to relieve tension about questions	Mum checking that son knows he can finish full transition	Having parental support is more important than transitioning really quickly	Mum will not always agree with trans son's opinions or requests	Mum encouraging talk on other topics beyond trans
Mum wanting to give her trans son 'nice' things to have a good life	Not having to talk trans all the time	Giving time and space for processing important	Recognition of/appreciation for mum's efforts	Planning together disclosure of new trans identity	Self and society both changing attitudes towards transgenderism	Recognition of the emotional experience is important
Mum saying other people are interested by trans identity of her son	Friend helps mum see that trans son is improving his life and making his life 'easier'/more comfortable	Understanding others feelings/position is important	Likes mum calling him her son	Able to have open and frank discussions about emotional experience of parent going through gender transition	Counselling was very supportive	Mum doesn't necessarily understand everything, but she does understand the emotional challenges
Discloses trans status to people and they take interest in personal story	Mum does not feel pressured by friend to move faster in understanding trans son	Having parent there/loving is important	Time and strength of relationship = most important person in trans woman's life	Didn't need to break the relationship with children	Joint counselling was supportive	Mum knows what matters most to trans son, even if she doesn't realise it

Recognition that gender is not a concrete idea.	More acceptable to transition female to male	Trans son does not feel he's clever like his dad (like a man)	Some people have an easier relationship with gender than he does	Banning trans women from competing in competitive chess	Feels that gender for them is more simple/straightforward	Society becoming more aware of idea of gender fluidity
Changing understanding of gender and what it means	Men view themselves as better than women Female to male transition = upgrade	Dad/husband viewed as clever	Personal relationship with gender is at a mid point compared to others	Not realising that chess is gendered	Gender identities feel like from the same root/person	Concept of gender and non-binary is questioned far more now
Expressing that this is limit of discussion on meaning of gender for Jon.	More questions about decision to transition male to female	Fixing things = being male	Learning the social norms for women communicating with each other	Unsure how gender transition affects ability to compete in sport	Being trans is not a special identity	Can gender change over the life span?
Wish for freedom in expressing gender in way that makes a person feel happy and authentic.	Recognition of different ways trans men are treated compared to trans women	Questioning about what makes a man a man	Realising how much she has missed out on in learning the ways of communicating in female friendships	Gender plays a major part in child rearing experience	Dad labelled as not typically male	Always been female, made sense when admitted it to self
Rebecca reflecting that at university, didn't really understand gender	Direct experience - no questions for trans man about decision to transition	Not viewing dad as 'typically male'	Would like to build own understanding of cisgender women's experience	Seeing dad as model of 'being male' = difficult to match own identity as 'male'	Dad's behaviour around 'manly men' = uncomfortable	Gender is no longer viewed as a fixed/binary experience

Viewing gender as something simple and binary	Treatment of trans women is completely different to treatment of trans men	Going on gender journey has altered mum's understanding of gender	How much does external appearance drive how people treat us?	Being male = not emotional	Not feeling like being a trans man is special	Gender journey = changed understanding of gender as fluid
Recognising that as she started the gender exploration journey that gender is more complex	Treatment of trans women linked to patriarchal society	Mum recognising that gender can be changed if needed, doesn't have to be tolerated	Partner saw how others treated her trans partner differently pre transition	Not being emotional doesn't match with own identity	Gender transitioned into 'basic man'	Gender is fluid over time
Travelling gender exploration journey = greater understanding of Gender	Discourse around testosterone is contradictory	Can change gender if it will make a person happier	Ways that people are treated based on gender are changing	Can't be male as not fitting unemotional stereotype	Basic dude' forms part of trans identity	Going on the gender journey has broadened trans woman's understanding of gender
Knowing and using terminology supporting understanding of gender	Regardless of how much testosterone is taken by trans man can't be a 'real' man	Not sure that ideas about gender have changed over their own trans journey	Going through gender journey alongside = shift in understanding	Difficulty with identity as can't change to match unemotional stereotype	Trans son gets joy from 'just being a bloke' - ordinary	Idea of gender exploration as a rabbit hole = dark/deep/single line = dangerous
Realising that do not like to use certain aspects of gender norms	In competitive context, women with high testosterone = man	Partner said that she was not trans	Gender biologically determined	Male = clever	Feels he has a simple relationship with gender, for others it is more complex	Gender is complex containing many different dimensions

Gender as a versatile idea that can be shaped to what you need/want to feel ok	Some people have clear agenda to argue on gender identity	Once started to think about transgenderism, realised that it made sense	Understood gender from a theoretical point of view	Trans as a new idea for friend of GD person	Everyone's experience of gender dysphoria is unique	Challenging discourse about gender - people fearful about discussing
Gender was formerly a fixed idea for Rebecca	Arguments about testosterone and women = contradictory/complex arguments	Ways of class management different due to trans identity	If gender feeling didn't match biological gender needed to be fixed	Highlighting how unusual or rare gender transition is/they perceive it to be	Growing up with a binary understanding of gender	Reference to expectation that men don't have to understand gender identity
Using familiar analogies to aid understanding and explanation to others of gender expression	Debate about testosterone = commonplace	Class management techniques drawn from experience of being male - come more naturally	Coming at questions about gender from an open and accepting perspective	Unsure how to relate to word gender	Due to binary thinking, continue to think she was male, who enjoys x-dressing	Trans women face more questions or angry discourse than trans men
Using metaphor to reassure and explain/support understanding for others	Being trans is rare	Gender no longer so clearly defined/binary	Viewing the mismatch between gender feeling and biological gender as dysphoria	Do believe in gender spectrum	Over time realising that actually feel female rather than male	Recognition that rare to hear questioning of male gender identity
Metaphor for gender that can be understood easily	Football not accepting of gender/sexual diversity	Gender discussed online with others	Feel easier to change the mind on dysphoria than the body	Respects people's decisions about gender status	Lack of physical aspect to chess - why the ban on transwomen?	Not using stereotypes to define gender

Explanation given to family to explain transgender experience/gender expression/fluidity	Football one of few sports not to discuss gender issues	Gender 'vibes' not clearly defined making them hard to comprehend	Reality people need to change the body and rarely regret the change	Hard to answer questions about meaning of gender	Insulting to women's intelligence	Find gender vibes hard to relate to
All forms of gender expression are valid	Official football organisations avoiding discussing gender issues or reviewing policies	Gender vibes are hard to understand	Societal gender labels that we assign and live by	Bans on transwomen in chess = insult to cis women	Gender vibes idea is simplistic	Pushing back against societal pressures to view gender in specific ways.
Every person takes different items from the gender buffet and presents uniquely						
Formative/early experiences shaping understanding of gender						
Understanding/conceptualisation of gender formed by advice given by parents	Don't know people of own age who've transitioned	Recognition of own biases around 'right' or typical male/female voices	Expectations that boys don't play with dolls	Realising how much she has missed out on in learning the ways of communicating in female friendships	False nature of medical team stating birth gender	Older generation not so familiar with trans issues
Recognition that as a child, identifying labels, but	Experience of transgenderism is often remotely	Everyone has made assumptions about a	Childhood experience = not worrying about	Class management techniques drawn from experience of	Previous exposure to trans ideas = not huge	Generational difference in approach to ideas

wondering at why you care about them	experienced through others	person's gender based on voice	gender norms/ sticking to gender norms	being male - come more naturally	surprise when working out that he was trans	about gender - easier for younger people to adjust to ideas
Perceives gender labels and linked behaviours as silly	Negative attitudes towards transgender people in the past		Needing to remember to hold onto childhood ideas about gender	Trans women stating that they do not have the range of female experiences/ understandings as those assigned female at birth	Been aware of idea of transgenderism before starting own trans journey	Medical team tell you gender of baby at birth
Practicing gender in specific way because it is expected	Personal lack of knowledge about transgenderism	Recognition that a person's gender and sound of voice will 'match'	Voice change = wondering if have the right person	Growing up with a binary understanding of gender	Already got friends who exposed them to trans ideas	Learning the social norms for women communicating with each other
Experience of pushing back on gender expectations						
Misunderstandings						
Meeting = worries from colleagues about what would be said.	Not sure how the holiday dinner felt like the right moment to talk trans issues with family	Transphobic arguments suggest trans people are choosing or wrong in their thinking	Feels that actually most parents fall in the middle and this is not discussed	Feeling that arguments show lack of understanding about complexity of gender and sexual orientation	Expecting meeting was about something completely different - work related	Transphobic argument idea that being trans relates to thinking you have the wrong genitals (Based on physical appearance)

Suspicion from colleagues	Wondering if she was insensitive to needs/feelings of others at work during transition	Transphobic arguments show a lack of understanding of trans people	Feels that binary view is too simple			
Sexuality vs gender						
Arguments about sexuality and what is legitimate or real	Colleagues asking questions about sexuality when they already know the answer	Idea that may wish to hide sexuality	Disclosure of sexuality is easier than disclosure of trans	Can question sexuality	Confusing gender identity with sexuality	Idea of a gradual shift to true sexuality
Idea that person is denying their true sexuality, can't be bi	Never questioned gender, could question sexuality	Questions about sexuality	More difficult to disclose trans status than sexuality	Denying of existence of bisexuality upsetting friend who was bisexual		
Challenges outside the gender journey						
Example of the pressures faced by quality checkers	Managing a lot of change in their lives	Unqualified to manage house renovation - mirrored in feeling about managing transition?	House move during transition	Realising not to get over needle fear = just have to get on with tattoo	Transition surgery not the only pushback for trans son	Needing to put down clear boundaries with work colleagues about what can and cannot be discussed directly

Workplace reactions to gender disclosure						
Not experienced any problems with inclusion or diversity based concerns	Whole school team +children were accepting of transition	Both good and bad ways to manage disclosure and transition of employee	Equality and inclusion are current topics of focus for company	Indicates management not familiar with procedures for transitioning colleagues	Little faith in company/managements diversity and inclusion processes Issues with trust	A little pushback from some colleagues possibly due to insensitivity on trans woman's part?
Expects that company should be able to manage GD based issues with relative ease should they arise	Explaining to children was easy - likes attention?	Managers supporting gender diverse people to live according to their preferred gender identity	Getting support from management to manage worrying behaviour/response of colleague	Indicates procedures exist for transitioning colleagues	Indicating that company know what they should be saying around diversity and inclusion	Management should already be aware of policies and procedures
Should be able to manage GD issues well as it is well known, with good information available	Working jointly with head teacher to develop explanation for children and staff	If someone working for, not expecting full understanding of trans identity, only acceptance	Workplace management are supportive	Disclosure and management of transition by employer was messy	Mostly positive response from work colleagues	School have reacted/managed transition well
Information is freely and openly available	Head teacher allowing teachers to go away and process message about transition	Understanding from people at work is different from people at home	Being asked about guidance by management in relation to issues related to transitioning colleagues	Highlights a company commitment to supporting GD colleagues		

Support for/from others on their journey						
Noticing a change in voice = recognition of transitioning colleagues	Trans community giving guidance on appropriate responses/ways to speak with trans people about their experience	Knowing that their experience is helping others to be understanding/supportive to trans people is positive	Others know how to support trans people based on experience with Jessica	GD person will change their name to match gender identity but others will not	Trans community not new	Working jointly with head teacher to develop explanation for children and staff
Other colleagues have followed Jessica's lead - not alone in trans status	Some community language works for participant and some does not	Respects requests for specific pronoun use	Others experiencing with trans person helping them in their current work/support of trans kids	Viewed as a person to go to for advice on transitioning in workplace	Doesn't want to be judging others language or identities	Colleague using their birth name at work making them unhappy
Using own (generational) experience to understand the gender journey						
Parental response to planned surgery links to own experience of body image	Older generations tend to put up with uncomfortable situations	Dad feeling that trans son looks at other men and wants to look like them	Difficult to think outside generational ideas/perceptions	Older generations realising that living with unhappiness can be changed	Older generation jealous of more outspoken younger generation	Partner thought x-dressing was related to sexual fetish
Wondering if perception of trans surgery as optional relates to generational difference	Concept of x-dressing had different meanings/connotations 20 years ago	Family members need to communicate boundaries for conversation topics/times/places Difference in	Dad viewing trans son's wish to be more cis-male = influence of toxic masculinity	Mum unsure about right or wrong of different generational approaches to unhappiness	Generational difference in approach to things that may us unhappy	

		generational approach to boundaries				
Reactions to transition plans						
Parental recognition of insensitivity of response to surgery	Remodelling house + person at the same time	Wondering if partner could be more gender neutral	Mum initial response to planned top surgery = shock/lack of understanding	Recognition that medical transition is upsetting for mum	Mum surprised that trans son willing to go through pain of surgery and getting a tattoo	Transition surgery not the only pushback for trans son
Can't compare cosmetic surgery with gender transition surgery	Transition = able to make big changes	Initially, not sure how far they could travel together on the gender journey	Mum establishing current point on journey towards top surgery	Recognition that mum is trying to support, so they must support too	After disclosure, able to make other big changes	Partner hoping that there would be a change of mind about gender transition
Surgery is a choice whether for cosmetic or other reasons	Older uni friends have accepted new transgender identity	Wondering if partner needed to go through full transition	Happy to support trans son going through top surgery	Mum doesn't want trans son having unnecessary medical procedures	Recognition that parents need time to process transition and gender disclosure	Some friends advised partner to explore avenues to get out of relationship
Cosmetic surgery is a choice	Old uni friends not changed way they treat trans friend	Gender disclosure unwelcome from partner perspective	Mum says once top surgery decision made don't need to go back and discuss it	Mum stating understanding that trans son needs to medically transition	Mum finds constant chat about top surgery challenging	Surprise at mum's pushback against medical transition plans

Not wanting to force people to have surgery due to disliking an aspect of themselves. Surgery not a solution to all problems	Some friends drew away from trans friend after disclosure	Wanted relationship to remain the same	Trans son not wanting to have to talk about top surgery once decision made	Would get rid of friends who do not accept trans identity	Unusual experience to be so accepting	Been together through many life experiences = hard to accept gender transition
Surgery seen as unnecessary by cis parent						
Building understanding						
Mum trying to develop her understanding	Mum asking if trans son feels she understands his trans identity	Recognition from partner that transition was going to happen	Does mum understand that transgenderism isn't a choice	Not showing respect for parents if demanding immediate acceptance	Dad hasn't 'heard' argument before from trans son	Having open dialogue with people we do not agree with on trans issues
Trans son feels that mum must accept his feelings despite her own worries/opinions	Difference between acceptance and understanding of trans identity	Trans partner needed to be completely honest in relationship after earlier 'dishonesty'	Trans son pleased that mum feels transgenderism is not a choice	No acceptance if not processing time	Dad thinks politically about trans issues in way that trans son doesn't want to	Would like to build own understanding of cisgender women's experience
Mum says that trans son has to accept that she feels as she does too	Mum needs to review her understanding as it makes sense to trans son	Children have arrived at a point of accepting and supporting their trans mum	People can just accept trans experience without understanding it	Acceptance builds over time	Mum not being permissive over medical transition surgery	Mum not permissive, but not blocking trans son's decision to medically transition

Considering impact of every decision on parents during gender journey	Trans son saying family need to communicate when it is not the right moment for trans conversations	Partner acting as mediator with children after disclosure	Now understanding parental viewpoint on previous trans conversations	Gendered terms are commonplace	Wants to hear others' views to aid own understanding	Can trans women say truly understands what it is to be male? Different male experience
Parents feelings matter to trans son	Would mum prefer that they talk about the experience of medical transition or not talk	Child feeling that they could be more open with the non-trans parent	Wanting to look like another person is common experience	Do gendered words carry true meaning?	Some understanding of both sides of gender experience due to lived experience	Some male experiences are similar
Trans son realising that he will have to talk and support mum through process if he wants her support	Mum would like to talk about the changes sometimes	Generally, child shared her feelings equally with both parents after the disclosure.	Trans experience is more than just the 'wrong genitals'	People are judging and managing others' language choices	Accepting that people may not use correct gender language	Can accept other's views on gender if they aren't harmful to others
Trans son taking mum on gender journey	Agreeing to check-ins, but not daily conversations on trans issues	Understanding of concerns from both sides	Truly understanding trans identity is tricky	Some in trans community may call out other people's gendered language	It is about the meaning behind the language use	People need to be supportive and tolerant of other's gender expressions
Travelling the gender journey with mum has taught trans son more about her	Can't remember the important breakthrough Dad had - something generic	Needs to be safety and protection for all	Wants mum to try to understand and accept his trans experience	Dad considering trans issues related to sport (mixing his interests with son's)	Would like to get involved in conversations about safe spaces	Kept trying to get mum to understand his trans experience
Surprise for trans son that mum has her own opinions and						

values that she will apply to his requests or decisions						
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F.2 Combined themes

Overarching themes	Factors influencing the journey		The gender journey					
Main themes	Challenges on the gender journey	Supportive factors on the gender journey	Emotional experience	Disclosure	Testing the waters'	Reactions	The future	Understanding gender
Sub themes	Misunderstandings	Common experiences	Uncertainty	How? When?	Do you see me?	Workplace		Formative experiences
	Generational differences	Relationships	Reactions	What now? Next steps	Dropping hints to self and others	Time to process		Gender journey changing understanding
	Time to process	Building understanding		Safety	Safety			Societal influences
		Support to/from others						Sexuality vs gender
To answer the RQs, I am thinking about using the metaphor of a journey - starting with testing the waters, disclosure, the reactions and then the future. Within this, there is the emotional experience, which includes the reactions. There are the challenges and supports along the journey. Over the journey, the understanding of gender develops for both the GD person and the person who is important to them.								
	Challenges		Supports					
	Managing biases/previous ideas		Common experiences - bonding					

	Time to adjust		Building understanding				
	Managing conversations		Previous experience of supporting GD friends				
	Physical changes		Time and space to process				
	Staying safe/keeping GD person safe		Trust and safety and love				
	Misunderstandings		Recognition of continuity in personality				
	Generational differences		Not worrying about opinions of others				
	Unkindness from others		Supportive work systems/colleagues				
	Disclosure announcements at work		Open conversation, not having to agree				
	Adjusting to gender norms		Support for authenticity and happiness				
	Powerful and changing emotions		Having shared experience/conversation				

			beyond gender issues				
	Uncertainty about gender identity		Societal shifts				
	Passing and misgendering						
	Impact on relationships						
	Societal/political factors						

F.3 Final descriptive themes

Overarching themes	Gender exploration journey/experiences						Understanding gender
Main themes	Challenges	Supportive factors	Emotional experience	Exploration journey			Understanding changing over time
Sub themes	Managing exploration and transition	Directly supportive actions of others	Dynamic and uncertain	Testing the waters	Disclosure	The future	Formative experiences
	Managing relationships and other people	Underpinning supports beyond personal influence	Love, trust and acceptance	Self-recognition	Safety emotional and physical	Keeping safe	Societal influences
	Societal/political factors	Supportive actions taken by gender diverse person		Do you see me?	How?	Settling	Sexuality vs gender
					When?	Acceptance	
					What next?		
	Themes below combined under grouped titles above						
	Managing biases/previous ideas	Common experiences - bonding					
	Time to adjust	Building understanding					
	Managing conversations	Previous experience of supporting GD friends					
	Physical changes	Time and space to process					

	Staying safe/keeping GD person safe	Trust and safety and love					
	Misunderstandings	Recognition of continuity in personality					
	Generational differences	Not worrying about opinions of others					
	Unkindness from others	Supportive work systems/colleagues					
	Disclosure announcements at work	Open conversation, not having to agree					
	Adjusting to gender norms	Support for authenticity and happiness					
	Uncertainty about gender identity	Societal shifts					
	Passing and misgendering	Having shared experience/conversation beyond gender issues					
	Impact on relationships						
	Societal/political factors						
	Reactions						

F.4 Drawing together the analytic themes

Managing biases/previous ideas	Common experiences - bonding	Disclosure
Time to adjust	Building understanding	<i>Safety emotional and physical</i>
Managing conversations	Previous experience of supporting GD friends	<i>How?</i>
Physical changes	Time and space to process	<i>When?</i>
Staying safe/keeping GD person safe	Trust and safety and love	Understanding of gender changing over time
Misunderstandings	Recognition of continuity in personality	Formative experiences
Generational differences	Not worrying about opinions of others	Societal influences
Unkindness from others	Supportive work systems/colleagues	Testing the waters
Disclosure announcements at work	Open conversation, not having to agree	<i>Self-recognition</i>
Adjusting to gender norms	Support for authenticity and happiness	<i>Do you see me?</i>
<i>Keeping safe</i>	Having shared experience/ conversation beyond gender issues	<i>Acceptance</i>
Uncertainty about gender identity	Societal shifts	<i>Settling</i>
Passing and misgendering	Dynamic and uncertain	Sexuality vs gender
Impact on relationships	Love, trust and acceptance	
Societal/political factors	The future (planning for)	
Reactions	<i>What next?</i>	
	What binds us	
What pulls us apart/what divides us	Points of compromise	

F.5 Identifying analytic sub-themes

What binds us	What divides us	Meeting in the middle					
Staying safe/keeping GD person safe	Managing biases/previous ideas	Time to adjust					
Disclosure announcements at work	Misunderstandings	Managing conversations		Safety	Trust, love, acceptance	Shared experiences	What gives us strength
Keeping safe	Generational differences	Physical changes		Staying safe/keeping GD person safe	Trust and safety and love	Disclosure	Previous experience of supporting GD friends
Common experiences - bonding	Unkindness from others	Adjusting to gender norms		Keeping safe	Love, trust and acceptance	Common experiences - bonding	The future (planning for)
Previous experience of supporting GD friends	Uncertainty about gender identity	Time and space to process		Trust and safety and love	Acceptance	Having shared experience/conversation beyond gender issues	Recognition of continuity in personality
The future (planning for)	Passing and misgendering	Building understanding		Disclosure	Settling	Disclosure announcements at work	Not worrying about opinions of others
Trust and safety and love	Impact on relationships			Safety emotional and physical	Support for authenticity	The future (planning for)	Understanding of gender

					y and happiness		changing over time
Recognition of continuity in personality	Societal/political factors			How?		What next?	What next?
Not worrying about opinions of others	Reactions			When?			
Supportive work systems/colleagues	Dynamic and uncertain			Testing the waters			
Open conversation, not having to agree	Formative experiences			Self-recognition			
Support for authenticity and happiness	Societal influences			Disclosure announcements at work			
Having shared experience/ conversation beyond gender issues	Do you see me?			Supportive work systems/colleagues			
Societal shifts	Sexuality vs gender			Open conversation, not having to agree			
What next?				Societal shifts			
Love, trust and acceptance							
Disclosure							
Safety emotional and physical		Powerful challenging emotions	Misunderstandings	Political/societal backdrop		Time and space to adjust and process	Building bridges
How?		Unkindness from others	Formative experiences	Sexuality vs gender		Time to adjust	Managing conversations

<i>When?</i>		Uncertainty about gender identity	Generational differences	Societal influences		Adjusting to gender norms	Building understanding
Understanding changing over time		Reactions	Sexuality vs gender	Societal/political factors		Time and space to process	
<i>Acceptance</i>		Dynamic and uncertain feelings	Managing biases/previous ideas	Generational differences		Physical changes	
<i>Settling</i>		Passing and misgendering	<i>Do you see me?</i>	Managing biases/previous ideas			
Testing the waters		Impact on relationships	Passing and misgendering	Passing and misgendering			
<i>Self-recognition</i>			Impact on relationships	Formative experiences			

F.6 Analytic themes and sub-themes

What binds us	What divides us	Meeting in the middle
Safety	Powerful challenging emotions	Time and space to adjust and process
Trust, love, acceptance	Misunderstandings	Building bridges
Shared experiences	Political/societal backdrop	
What gives us strength		

