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Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences

School of Psychology

The Journey to Authenticity: Trans autistic people's experiences of unmasking and living authentically

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology

29th August 2025

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Abstract

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In December 2023 the then government of the United Kingdom published draft non-statutory guidance in relation to gender diverse children and young people for schools in England as part of a consultation process. The following year, in April 2024 the Cass Review into gender identity services for children and young people in England was published. The resulting press attention, debate, and actions by members of the UK government focused heavily on the potential harms and negative impacts of children and young people identifying as a gender other than that which they were assigned at birth. Much of the existing research in the area of trans health and social care, education, and everyday experiences is focused on the negative impacts on wellbeing, physical and mental health. However, when the voices of the trans community themselves are highlighted, they frequently share the positive benefits of living authentically and experiencing acceptance and congruence in their gender identity. This thesis explores the voices of the trans community through a critical disability studies and positive psychology lens, in order to begin to find ways in which trans and gender questioning children and young people can flourish. The systematic literature review will focus on the concept of gender euphoria while the empirical paper will address the apparent overlap between trans and autistic identity by exploring the identity development and disclosure experiences of trans autistic adults in relation to both their autistic and gender identities.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: JULIA THOMSON

Title of thesis: The Journey to Authenticity: The experiences of unmasking and coming out for gender diverse autistic individuals.

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.

Signature: Date:

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Finally, and most importantly, my thanks, admiration and love go to my two beautiful children. Thank you for entertaining yourselves while I was busy working away on this thesis. You inspire, motivate and encourage me always.

Definitions and Abbreviations

2SLGBTQIA+	Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual and other sexual/gender identities not listed.
Ableist	Discrimination and prejudice against people with disabilities or the favouring of non-disabled people.
Agender	A person who does not identify as having any gender.
Allistic	A person who is not autistic.
APA.....	American Psychological Association.
Autigender	A person who defines their gender as being intrinsically linked to being autistic.
Autistic	A person with traits and behaviours related to the diagnosis of autism, without or without a diagnosis.
CASP	Critical Appraisal Skills Programme.
Cisgender	A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
Cisnormative	The assumption that everyone has or should have the same experience of gender which aligns to the sex they were assigned at birth.
DSM-V	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition.
EP.....	Educational Psychologist.
Gender diverse.....	An umbrella term referring to all people who identify with a gender which differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
Genderfluid.....	A person who does not experience a fixed gender identity, and as such their experience of gender changes over time.
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and other sexual/gender identities not listed.
Neurodivergent	Someone who's processing, learning, thinking, or behaviour differs from that which would be considered typical by the dominant perspective of the society in which they live.

Definitions and Abbreviations

Neurodiversity.....	A term referring to the natural diversity in human brains and the impact of this upon thinking and behaviour.
Non-binary	A person who identifies their gender as neither male nor female.
PRISMA.....	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses.
Queer	An umbrella term used by people who do not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender to describe their own lived experience.
RTA.....	Reflexive thematic analysis.
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist.
ToM	Theory of mind.
Trans	An umbrella term referring to people whose gender differs from the sex they were assigned at birth, including those whose gender falls outside the binary of male and female.
Transgender	A term used to describe people whose gender is the opposite to the sex which they were assigned at birth.
Transphobia	Prejudice against people whose gender does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.
Two-spirit.....	An umbrella term used by some indigenous North American native peoples to describe a traditional third-gender/gender-nonconforming experience.
UK	United Kingdom.
USA	United States of America.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Terminology

1.1.1 Autism

The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) states that autism is a “persistent impairment in reciprocal social communication and social interaction [with] restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities” (American Psychiatric Association., 2013, p. 53). However, from a critical disability studies perspective, ‘autism’ can also be understood as a natural part of human diversity (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist et al., 2019; Holt et al., 2022). In this understanding autistic people are not a homogenous group, but simply those who face difficulties in relation to an unaccommodating environment (Chapman, 2020) built on the social norms of non-autistic or ‘allistic’ people. One example of this is the nature of ableist language used when discussing autism (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2021). Although much of the research and clinical literature related to autism has traditionally used the phrase ‘person with autism’, when asked, most people with the diagnosis show a preference towards identity first language (Kenny et al., 2016). Participants in the empirical study presented in chapter three also shared this preference when asked (see table 5 for additional information). Therefore, the term ‘autistic’ is used in this thesis, with the understanding that others within the autistic community may prefer person first language (Buijsman et al., 2022).

1.1.2 Gender Dysphoria

Much like autism, gender dysphoria is also a diagnostic label featured in the DSM-V, where it is described as distress related to the “incongruence between one’s experienced or expressed gender and one’s assigned gender” (American Psychiatric Association., 2013, p. 451; Lev, 2013). However, people whose gender differs from that which they were assigned at birth are not one homogenous group, and not all experience gender dysphoria. There are also those who feel that the existence of the diagnostic label of gender dysphoria remains problematic as it perpetuates the idea that to hold a gender different from that which one is assigned at birth is akin to a psychiatric disorder, rather than part of the nature of human variation (Cooper et al., 2020; Lev, 2013).

1.1.3 Trans

Transgender and gender diverse people, including those whose gender sits outside of the binary of male or female (e.g. non-binary and gender fluid) are not one homogenous group. However, what they share in common is that unlike cisgender people (those whose gender corresponds with the one assigned at birth; American Psychological Association, 2015) their gender does not align with the one they were assigned at birth. Although language related to transgender and gender diverse people evolves over time and differs between individuals (Crocq, 2021; Ryan, 2019), currently the shorthand term ‘trans’ is most commonly used by transgender and gender diverse people as an all encompassing term to describe their experience and identity (Vincent, 2018; Zwickl et al., 2024). Therefore, this thesis uses the term ‘trans’ to refer to the collective group of people whose gender differs from the one they were assigned at birth, including those with culturally specific genders and those whose gender falls outside of the binary.

1.2 The Co-Researcher

Throughout the course of my thesis, from the initial ideas to design, data collection, and write up, it was important for me to centre the voice and experience of the community I was conducting research for. As part of this I wanted to ensure that my thesis research, particularly materials for my empirical paper, were accessible to the autistic community. I noted a lack of autistic voices in my research team and hoped to resolve this through the use of an expert by experience. This was achieved by the recruitment of an undergraduate voluntary research assistant, who had approached one of my academic supervisors expressing interest in supporting with research related to autism. However, due to the hierarchical nature of the term ‘voluntary research assistant’ the term ‘co-researcher’ was used to emphasise the collaborative nature of the support provided. My co-researcher predominantly supported me by editing and providing feedback on the materials related to my empirical paper, particularly the qualitative survey and related questionnaires. This enabled me to ensure that the language used was accessible to my autistic participants. Later my co-researcher read through my initial themes write up and through discussion, acted as a sounding board for my theme development. In addition, my co-researcher supported with my systematic literature review by conducting a quality assurance screening. All aspects of each paper where my co-research supported me are clearly stated as such in chapters two and three.

1.3 Context and Rationale for the Thesis

In April 2024, paediatrician Dr Hillary Cass released the final report of her review into child gender identity services in the United Kingdom (The Cass Review; Cass, 2024b). The report sparked significant debate (Thornton, 2024) in the media as well as professional and academic support (D’Lima et al., 2024; Evans, 2025; McDeavitt et al., 2025) and critique (Grijseels, 2024; Horton, 2024; McNamara et al., 2024; Noone et al., 2025). Much of this debate related to what could be described as the original question which led to the commissioning of the review by the then government of the United Kingdom: whether children under the age of 16, particularly autistic children, can fully understand and consent to gender affirming healthcare (de Vries et al., 2021; Evans, 2025). The particular concern raised in The Cass Review (Cass, 2024b, 2024a) relates to an apparent overrepresentation of autistic children and young people in the referrals to childhood gender identity clinics, in relation to the wider population (Evans, 2025). The conclusions and recommendations of the review are that all children and young people presenting to gender identity clinics should be screened for “neurodevelopmental conditions” (Cass, 2024b, p. 148), the implication being that gender dysphoria is directly related to neurodiversity (McNamara et al., 2024), and more specifically autism.

Prior to the final publication of The Cass Review, a preliminary report (Cass, 2022), highlighted concerns from parents that children and young people with neurodevelopmental conditions are vulnerable and not always able to express themselves clearly. In relation to this in early 2023 the UK government announced they would be publishing new guidance for schools relating to transgender pupils (BBC News, 2023). When the draft guidance was published under a consultation in December 2023 (Department for Education, 2023) it did not include explicit references to neurodevelopmental conditions or autism. However, it maintained a position that children and young people who disclose that they are trans may be vulnerable and encouraged schools to explore “any relevant clinical information that is available” (Department for Education, 2023, p. 10) when making decisions regarding informing parents and allowing pupils to socially transition at school. This is of particular importance to Educational Psychologists (EPs) working in schools in England as research has found that requests for EP involvement from schools are commonly related to pupils described as having autistic traits (Melling et al., 2017). Furthermore, statistics from the Department for Education show that autism is one of the most common areas of need stated on education health and care plans (EHCP) in England (Department for Education, 2022). This makes it likely that, in the context of the current political and media coverage of The Cass Review (Cass, 2022, 2024b) and trans guidance for schools (Department for Education, 2023), EPs will be asked for advice from schools in relation to supporting trans autistic pupils. Therefore, this thesis aims to explore how adults working with

and alongside autistic and allistic (non-autistic) trans pupils can best support them, through exploring the lived experiences and reflections of the trans community.

Historically, research related to both the trans and autistic community, as well as trans autistic people, has focused on describing and overcoming negative outcomes such as poor mental health (Benestad, 2010; Bertilsson Rosqvist et al., 2019; Cooper et al., 2022; Lev, 2013; Murphy et al., 2020; Strang et al., 2023; Vincent, 2018). However, to be trans or autistic is not only to live a life of poor wellbeing. From the position of positive psychology, focusing on what is going wrong - as psychology has historically - is not as useful for moving forwards and enhancing wellbeing as when we focus on building upon the positive aspects of life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In this way, to live a happy healthy life, does not simply mean to live in the absence of illness or disorder (Seligman, 2019). Instead, the key to overall positive wellbeing comes through exploring the facilitators of positive emotions, what gives one purpose, and how positive relationships are sustained (Seligman, 2008). Following this perspective, this thesis aimed to explore the lived experiences of the trans autistic community through the lens of what works well, rather than focusing on challenges. This presents a challenge in the context of research into marginalised communities where historically research has been conducted through a negative or pathologizing lens. Therefore, in the systematic literature review presented in chapter two, the construct of gender euphoria, as more broadly experienced by the wider trans community, is explored. Gender euphoria has been mentioned as a hopeful topic for exploration by trans people when asked what research they would like to see, but has historically been overlooked by researchers (Asquith et al., 2021). Building on the concept of positive psychological perspectives, the empirical paper presented in chapter three utilises a participatory qualitative questionnaire design to illicit the lived experiences of trans autistic people in relation to supportive factors in their own personal journeys of discovering and disclosing their identities to and with others.

1.4 Ontology and Epistemology

The systematic literature review presented in chapter two seeks to explore meaning making in relation to how trans people construct the concept of gender euphoria. This aligns with a constructivist paradigm which asserts that knowledge is actively developed (Raskin & Debany, 2018) and constructed through individual experiences and interactions with others (Olsen & Pilson, 2022). A social constructionist (Burr, 2015) epistemological approach was taken, viewing language and interaction as central to meaning making while challenging societal assumptions. Social constructionism posits that, through interactions with others, individuals and groups create meaning through their unique perspectives, which in turn lead to understanding of self

and the world in which one lives (Andrews, 2012). This is in line with the aims of my systematic literature review, which both challenges the broader societal perspective of the experience of trans lives as inherently miserable, or 'dysphoric', and instead looks to how the trans community discuss and develop their experiences through the lens of the phrase 'gender euphoria'.

In the empirical study presented in chapter three I again took a social constructionist approach, as the study further explores the conceptualisation of one's lived experience through discussion and interaction with others (Alanen, 2015; Burr, 2015). The focus of chapter three is on the discovery and disclosure experiences of trans autistic people in relation to the trans and autistic aspects of their identity. I therefore took an integrated ontological and epistemological perspective combining the social constructionist approach with that of an emancipatory critical disabilities studies paradigm (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). As both trans and autistic identities feature in the DSM-V as diagnosable conditions, trans autistic people can be conceptualised as falling within the category of disability. Critical disabilities studies looks at disability not as a tragedy nor an internal experience of the individual, but rather as the interaction between the lived experience of disability and the perspective and structures of the society in which one lives (Reaume, 2014). In this way, the challenges experienced by people with disabilities are acknowledged while challenging the structures which perpetuate and enhance these (Goodley et al., 2021).

1.5 Reflexivity

The qualitative methodology and social constructionist epistemological position taken throughout this thesis view the researcher as part of the process of generating and analysing data, rather than as an abstract or objective observer. Therefore reflexivity is important to both contextualise the research as well as acknowledging my own role as a researcher in the research process (Finlay & Gough, 2008). However, reflexivity must be more than a statement of positionality of the researcher in relation to participants or subjects of the research study (K. A. King, 2024) otherwise it becomes another way in which the participants are 'othered' and does not add context to the conclusions of the study. Furthermore, an expectation that researchers from minoritised groups disclose details of their within group status to enhance research reports fundamentally damages existing moral and ethical safeguards in research practices (Savolainen et al., 2023). In this context, the following reflections on my position as a researcher and reflexivity throughout my thesis journey, centre on the context in which the thesis was conducted and the implications this had directly upon my interpretations and analysis.

My interest in the overall topic of my thesis comes through my lived experience as a child of the 1980s and 90s whose educational experience in England was substantially impacted by Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act, which explicitly prohibited the ‘promotion of homosexuality’ meaning adults in schools were unable to present LGBTQ+ lives as a natural variation of the human experience, nor sufficiently support LGBTQ+ pupils (Greenland & Nunney, 2008; Lee, 2019). This means that I inevitably view the proposed guidance for schools in relation to trans pupils (Department for Education, 2023) with suspicion and apprehension. In addition, my position within the LGBTQ+ community means that I am equally personally impacted by the current political and media climate for trans people. In the context of my thesis research, during the period from designing my project to writing the final report, events in the UK and USA have had a negative impact on the overall wellbeing of the trans community. These events include, rights being taken away (or proposed to be taken away) from trans people through executive orders in the USA (House, 2025; Redfield & Chokshi, 2025) and a ruling defining sex and gender by the supreme court in the UK (Herbert, 2025; Reed et al., 2025). Alongside this, the autistic community has also experienced challenges during the process of writing up my thesis, with some areas of the media and prominent government officials in the USA raising long debunked claims linking autism to childhood vaccination alongside negative expressions of autism as a disease (Nunn & Stolberg, 2025; Schreiber, 2025; Tanne, 2025).

All of the above mean that when I approached my research as part of this thesis I did so with a sense of moral duty to change the pervasive narrative against both trans and autistic people, and find ways to centre and celebrate their voice and experience from an empathetic hermeneutics perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2022b). Furthermore, this perspective is central to my interpretations of both data extracts in my systematic literature review, and participants’ responses in my empirical study. As the below extracts from my reflexive journal attest, particularly when analysing written words, the meaning made or inferred comes from my own lived experiences and perspectives:

June 1st 2024

I feel sad reading some responses where answers state things do not apply to them. But could this be a clear direct response from their perspective, in that they simply do not share or have the experience asked about in the question, rather than something they perceive as missing from their lives or ‘sad’?

September 6th 2024

I feel deeply moved and also excited/energised by reading participants' answers. Their words give me meaning. Having words/language given to them through a diagnosis of autism or finding words through researching different gender experiences has helped these participants to understand themselves and know who they are.

1.6 Dissemination plan

It is important to me from an emancipatory perspective that my research and more importantly my participants' contributions to my research, do not end with the writing of this thesis.

Therefore, I intend to share the findings of both my systematic literature review and empirical paper in a number of ways. At the time of writing, I have already presented the findings of my systematic literature review at a conference organised by a local charity who support the trans community. I intend to present my empirical study at the University of Southampton School of Psychology postgraduate conference in June, and hope to have further opportunities to present at equally suitable conferences over the summer.

My systematic literature review has been written with the intention of submitting for publication to the *International Journal of Transgender Health*. This is a suitable journal for my research as, in partnership with the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, the journal has a unique international focus on contemporary and multidisciplinary research by and in support of the trans community. With an impact factor of 10.5 and an annual readership of 693 thousand, the journal is well placed at the forefront of international trans research. Furthermore, the *International Journal of Transgender Health* welcomes contributions from a range of disciplines, including psychology, and has previously published multiple articles related to gender euphoria (Beischel et al., 2022; Grant et al., 2024) as well as several thematic syntheses (New-Brown et al., 2024; Tyni et al., 2024).

I intend to submit my empirical paper to the *Journal of Homosexuality*, an international peer-reviewed journal with a focus on original research related to LGBTQ+ studies from a variety of disciplines. The journal has an impact factor of 2.4 and an annual readership of 546 thousand, with a declared commitment to provide accessibility to both researchers and the wider population, and the promotion of sexual and gender justice. The *Journal of Homosexuality* is well suited to my empirical paper as they have previously published articles related to the intersection between autistic and trans identity (Fortunato et al., 2022; Machado Silva, 2025), the identity disclosure experience of trans people (Taube & and Mussap, 2024), as well as research following the exact methodology of Braun and Clarke's (Braun & Clarke, 2022b) reflexive thematic analysis (Clarke & Smith, 2015).

Chapter 2 Constructions of Gender Euphoria within the Trans Community: A Systematic Review and Qualitative Synthesis

2.1 Abstract

Historically, research into the experience of transgender and gender diverse people has been conducted from the perspective of cisgender researchers. This has resulted in a focus on negative outcomes and experiences, as well as a pathologisation of the transgender experience. However, gender minority stress theory would suggest that the marginalised status of trans people creates these negative consequences, rather than there being something innately negative in the experience of being trans. Therefore, this paper seeks to change the traditional research narrative regarding trans people by exploring the construct of gender euphoria within the trans community. A systematic literature review seeking qualitative research exploring or referencing gender euphoria, resulted in a total of 24 studies being included in a thematic synthesis. Six themes were created from data related to how trans people themselves describe the experience and facilitators of gender euphoria: exhilarating, tranquil, cosy, created by me, given by others, and cultivated through community. Together, these themes tell a story of gender euphoria as an experience of congruence between one's outward appearance and inward experience of gender, created and sustained by the personal efforts of the individual alongside affirmation and support from others. In addition to this, gender euphoria is described as being found in connections with a wider community giving individuals a sense of purpose and belonging which goes beyond the surface level experiences of congruence. Implications for future research and practice include the importance of centring trans people in decision making, flexible policies which enable everyone to be treated as individuals with respect of personal preferences in relation to language, and creating safe and supportive environments for trans people and allies to come together and build a sense of community and belonging.

2.2 Introduction

Transgender and gender diverse people, including those whose gender sits outside of the binary of male or female (hereafter referred to as trans) experience a high level of marginalisation in their daily lives (W. M. King et al., 2020; White Hughto et al., 2015). From an early age trans people experience rejection from family

members (Grishow-Schade et al., 2023) or bullying and stigmatisation at school (Martín-Castillo et al., 2020). Trans adults are more likely to experience homelessness (McCann & Brown, 2021) and discrimination in the workplace (Collins et al., 2015). Furthermore, studies have found that trans people can experience negative bias within the legal system (Ribeiro & Nitschke, 2025) despite being more likely to be victims of violence (Stotzer, 2009) than cisgender peers (those whose gender corresponds with the one assigned at birth).

According to minority stress theory (Frost & Meyer, 2023; I. H. Meyer, 1995, 2003), negative environmental factors, such as discriminatory laws and policies and direct experiences of violence, known as *distal stressors*, lead to *proximal* stressors such as internalised stigma and expectations of rejection and violence. The combination of these distal and proximal stressors then in turn leads to a higher likelihood of poor wellbeing (I. H. Meyer, 1995; Wilson et al., 2024). Minority stress theory has been developed into a gender minority stress model, to apply directly to the unique experiences of trans people (Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Testa et al., 2015). In this model distal stressors include gender-related discrimination, gender-related rejection, gender-related victimisation, and non-affirmation of gender identity. These in turn lead to the proximal stressors of internalised transphobia, negative expectations, and concealment, which is the hiding of one's trans identity in an attempt to avoid distal stressors.

Research has found that trans people experience higher levels of poor mental health, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Nobili et al., 2018; Scheim et al., 2024) than the wider cisgender population. From the perspective of the gender minority stress model, both distal stressors and proximal stressors have been found to correlate with poorer mental health outcomes for trans people (Pellicane & Ciesla, 2022; Tan et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2024). Concerns related to these findings, and the fact that historically research related to trans people has been conducted about them rather than with them, predominantly by cisgender researchers (Adams et al., 2017; Vincent, 2018), has resulted in the prevailing focus of trans research being on negative outcomes, specifically poor mental health (Scheim et al., 2024; Sweileh, 2018). However, for most people the experience of being trans is not one of pure distress and the amount of dysphoria (distress in relation to incongruence between one's external and internal experience of gender) experienced will differ from person to person (Cooper et al., 2020).

There are protective and resiliency factors that can reduce the significant detrimental effects of gender minority stress (Frost & Meyer, 2023; I. H. Meyer, 2003). Pride in one's gender identity has been found to mitigate the impact of both distal and proximal stressors on trans people's mental and physical health (Tan et al., 2020; Testa et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2024). However, resilience when conceptualised at the individual level alone may not be helpful, as social structures make opportunities for building individual resilience unequal (I. H. Meyer, 2015). Individual resilience factors, such as gender pride, also require external support

to be in place for the impact of them to be sustained. Wider studies into resilience amongst trans people have found that support from family (Brown et al., 2020; Tankersley et al., 2021) and wider community can foster a positive view of one's gender, which leads to increased self-worth (Singh et al., 2011) and self-belief (Smith et al., 2022).

An additional mitigator to the impact of distal and proximal stressors is a sense of connection to a wider community (Tan et al., 2020; Testa et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2024). A strong sense of community connectedness, that is being part of a community rather than simply receiving help or support from others, has been found to significantly reduce mental health difficulties and increase wellbeing for both trans children and adults (Barr et al., 2016; Singh et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2022; Tuzun et al., 2022). While the focus on protective factors and resilience creates a more positive focus, wellbeing and good health can be viewed as more than simply an absence of illness or distress (Seligman, 2008, 2019). Therefore, by focusing on resilience against negative outcomes, we risk misrepresenting the everyday experience of trans people. When asked what research they would like to see, trans people have pointed to gender euphoria as a construct frequently used within the trans community but largely overlooked in academic research historically (Asquith et al., 2021).

2.2.1 Gender Euphoria

One of the first recorded uses of the term gender euphoria is from a transcript of a symposium at the 2nd annual Fantasia Fair (Kane, 1976). In this speech the term is described as the antonym of gender dysphoria, meaning “a person who feels content expressing a dual gender role” (Kane, 1976, p. 6). More contemporary uses of gender euphoria tend to expand on its use as an antonym for gender dysphoria and often conceptualise it as an increased sense of wellbeing related to congruence between internal and external experiences of gender (Benestad, 2010; Bradford et al., 2021; Grant et al., 2024). A small number of quantitative studies have found support for this conceptualisation through a significant relationship between experiences of gender euphoria and increased wellbeing (Grant et al., 2024; Reisner et al., 2023). The positive experience of gender euphoria has also been described as a way one first experiences a realisation that one is trans (Lev, 2004).

The term gender euphoria is frequently used by trans people in online and in person community spaces to express their experiences, and has been found to be a more unifying concept amongst trans people than gender dysphoria (Dillon et al., 2023). To date there has been one systematic literature review exploring the conceptualisation of gender euphoria within academic research (Kulesza et al., 2025). The review examined two quantitative and 18 qualitative studies and found that gender euphoria was

conceptualised by researchers as a motivation for self-exploration, an influence on individuals' affect, and a protective factor against poor mental health. In addition, researchers attributed moments of euphoria to personal experiences of embodiment, community connection, and external acts of affirmation. However, to date no review has focused on centring the voices of trans people from qualitative studies in order to explore the nuances of the experience of gender euphoria from a community perspective.

2.2.2 Aims and Objectives

The present review builds upon the findings of Kulesza and colleagues (2025) by centring the voice of the trans community in regards to how trans people themselves explain and experience gender euphoria. This review aims to explore how the trans community's conceptualisation of gender euphoria relates to ideas of resilience against gender minority stress as well as overall concepts of wellness as more than an absence of ill health. The specific research question for this review is: How do trans people experience and explain the concept of 'gender euphoria'?

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Selection and Search Strategy

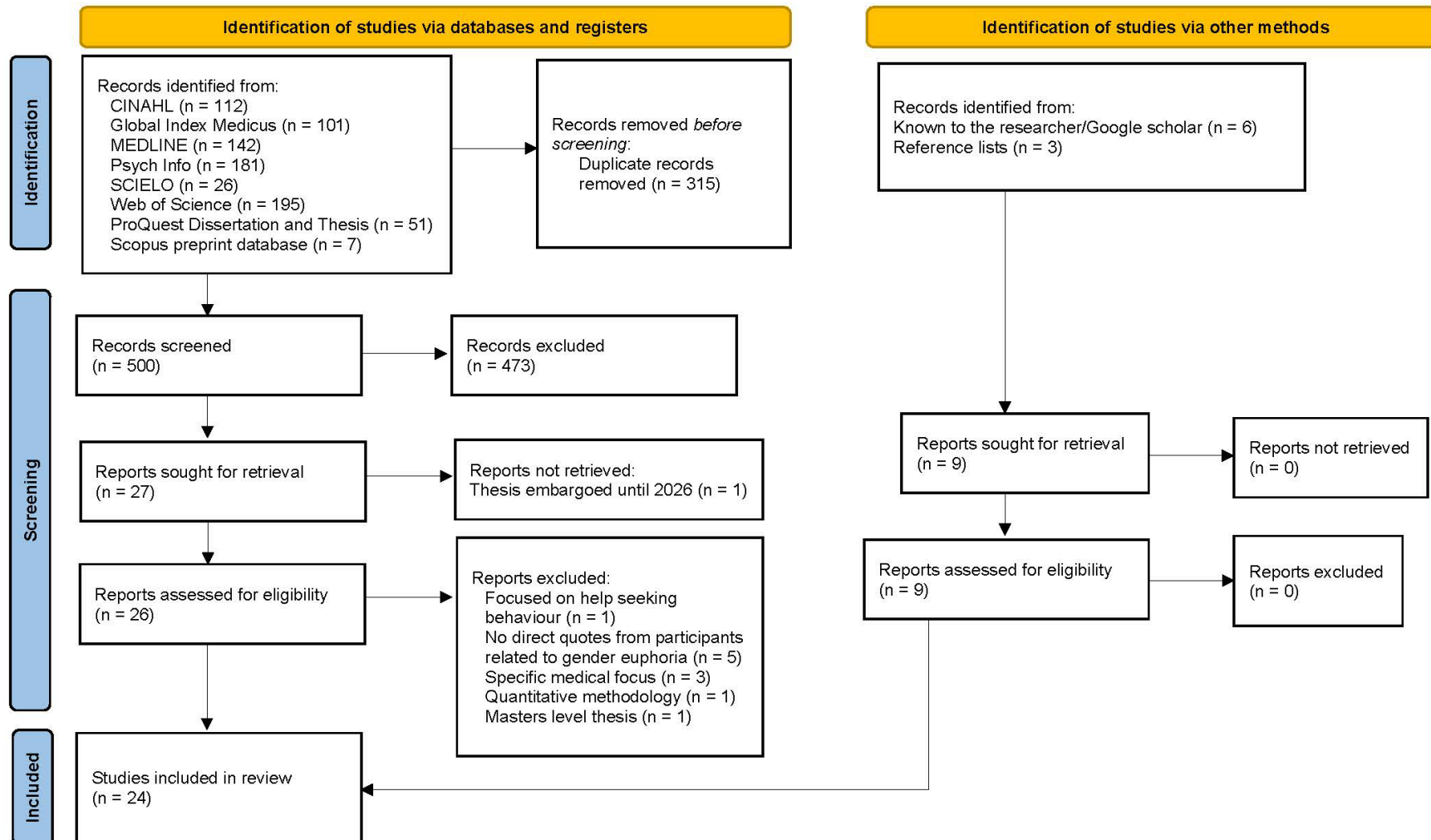
A systematic literature search was conducted between the 28th and 30th September 2024, with an additional search conducted on 6th January 2025 covering the interim months due to the recency of the publication of included records from the first search. For this reason, an additional preprint search was also carried out using the Scopus preprint database. The following databases were chosen for the search due to their relevance to the topic of transgender research and psychology: APA PsychInfo, CINAHL Plus, Global Index Medicus, MEDLINE, SCIELO and Web of Science. Search terms were created using the SPIDER framework (see Appendix A). The SPIDER framework was chosen as the terms relate more specifically to qualitative synthesis than other frameworks, such as PICO (Stansfield et al., 2023). However, as the SPIDER has been found to return fewer records than other frameworks (Cooke et al., 2012; Methley et al., 2014) the records returned using the search terms devised from SPIDER were checked for their appropriateness by ensuring they returned key papers related to gender euphoria found during initial scoping searches. This led to an alteration of the search terms when searching the Global Index Medicus and SCIELO databases to remove terms related to 'D' design and 'R' research type. Following the advice of Thomas and Harden (2008, p. 3) that "qualitative research is difficult to find", further records were sought through a process of hand searching included studies reference lists and

ensuring relevant papers found during scoping searches were screened. In addition, a grey literature search was conducted using the ProQuest Dissertation and Thesis Database to minimise the potential impact of publication bias (Paez, 2017). All searches were restricted to the past 20 years as although the phrase ‘gender euphoria’ has been referenced as early as 1976 (Jacobsen & Devor, 2022; Kane, 1976) the meaning in relation to gender identity development and joyful experiences of gender has only been referenced in the literature more recently (Lev, 2004).

In total the systematic search of the databases returned 815 records. After duplicates were removed a total of 500 records were screened by the lead researcher using the inclusion and exclusion criteria detailed in table 1. Initial title and abstract screening resulted in a total of 26 records being assessed in greater depth for the eligibility, resulting in 15 studies being deemed eligible for inclusion in the review. An additional nine papers were identified for inclusion through initial scoping searches using google scholar and references from papers previously known to the research team, and Kulesza and colleagues’ (2025) review. Further details of the screening process are displayed in the PRISMA (Page et al., 2021) flow diagram (figure 1).

Table 1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Screening

Inclusion	Exclusion
Human studies	Non-human studies – i.e. animal or data only
Published papers in scientific journals or pre-prints, or research masters or doctorate level research thesis.	Undergraduate or taught masters level dissertations
Original research papers	News or other media articles.
Published within the past 20 years (since 2004)	Reviews, commentaries, conference presentations, books etc.
Participants identify as transgender including non-binary, gender fluid, etc.	Older than 20 years (published before 2004)
Qualitative analysis and data collection methods.	Participants do not identify as members of the trans community.
At least one aspect of qualitative data analysis (i.e. theme) relates to participants’ descriptions of positive gender affirming experiences (i.e. gender euphoria).	Participant quotes and analysis do not distinguish between trans and other participants.
	Paper only contains quantitative methods of data analysis and collection.
	No reports or analysis related to positive gender affirming experiences.
	Study has specific healthcare/medical focus.
	No direct quotes from participants describing their experience/understanding of gender euphoria explicitly.

Figure 1 PRISMA (Page et al., 2021) Flow Diagram

To ensure reliability of the screening process, approximately 20% of records from the initial September 2024 search were screened by the co-researcher following the instructions to screeners (Appendix B). When comparing records flagged for inclusion and exclusion by both researchers, the interrater reliability was 100%.

2.3.2 Quality Assessment

All 24 studies included in the final review were quality assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative studies (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018). The CASP checklist was chosen due to its questions covering all areas recommended for assessment when appraising qualitative studies (Flemming & Noyes, 2021). The CASP checklist for qualitative studies also allows for qualitative responses to enhance the appraisal, rather than a simple rating system. This enables the more nuanced elements of qualitative appraisal to be considered and reflected upon during the final synthesis as recommended by Thomas and Harden (2008). In addition, the appraisal was informed by guidelines and recommendations for reporting qualitative research and best practice in reflexive thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2024a, 2024b). The purpose of the appraisal was to assess in detail the overall design of each study including limitations related to the quality of research. In this way the quality appraisal was not intended to form part of the screening process, but rather to give richer context to the overall synthesis. See table 2 for a summary of the quality appraisal, and Appendix C for a more detailed justification of each rating.

Overall, all of the included studies were assessed to have clear aims which matched their qualitative approach and appropriate methodology. While no papers were deemed to not have met the criteria across any of the 10 CASP questions, there were several for whom it was not possible to make a clear judgement due to a lack of detailed information in the published paper, especially in relation to recruitment strategy. The quality appraisal highlighted a key strength in reflexivity across all included studies. The authors of all studies declared the position of the research team in relation to the community they were conducting research about clearly in their papers. Furthermore, 15 of the included studies included members of the research team with lived experience within the trans community (Austin et al., 2022; Barborini et al., 2024; Beischel et al., 2022; Burkholder et al., 2024; Burstall et al., 2024; Horton, 2022; Jacobsen & Devor, 2022; Levitt et al., 2024; Mann et al., 2024; Morrow, 2023; Rosati et al., 2024; Skelton et al., 2024; Tebbe et al., 2024; Ussher et al., 2022, 2023).

Table 2 Overview of Quality Assessment of Included Studies

CASP Question	Austin et al., 2022	Barborini et al., 2024	Barras & Frith, 2024	Beischel et al., 2022	Burkholder et al., 2024	Burstall et al., 2024	Easterbrook-Smith, 2024	Evans, 2023	Goetz & Arcomano, 2023	Hall et al., 2024	Horton, 2022	Jacobsen & Devor, 2022	Leitch et al., 2025	Levitt et al., 2024	Mann et al., 2024	Meyer et al., 2023	Morrow, 2023	Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024	Riggs et al., 2024	Rosati et al., 2024	Skelton et al., 2024	Tebbe et al., 2024	Ussher et al., 2022	Ussher et al., 2023
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Y	Y	CT	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Y	Y	CT	CT	Y	CT	CT	CT	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	CT	Y	CT	Y	CT	CT	Y	Y	Y
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	CT	Y	Y	Y
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	CT	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	CT
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Y	Y	CT	CT	Y	CT	CT	CT	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	CT	CT	CT	CT	Y
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Y = Yes

N = No

CT = Can't Tell

2.3.3 Data Extraction and Synthesis

A thematic synthesis was conducted, from a social constructionist epistemological perspective, following the three stage process as described by Thomas and Harden (2008). A social constructionist perspective was taken due to the nature of the research question seeking to understand meaning making through language and community rather than viewing the world through objective truths (Burr, 2015; Kitzinger, 1995). Thematic synthesis fits this epistemological perspective due to its appropriateness for addressing questions related to individual experiences and perspectives along with its flexibility to acknowledge the context of individual studies while also going beyond them to construct new meaning to inform future research, policy and practice (Thomas & Harden, 2008). The use of thematic synthesis for analysis also allowed for the inclusion of papers where the focus was not exclusively on the concept of gender euphoria, but where findings included themes, categories, or quotes from participants related to it.

Due to the importance of acknowledging the context of original studies, and the brief insight published papers provide into the qualitative data collected from participants, all text within the results or findings sections of papers was considered data for the purpose of coding and analysis. However, for studies where the main focus of the research was not related to gender euphoria, only sections of the findings related to gender euphoria explicitly were extracted. Table 3 presents a summary of how qualitative data was extracted from the included studies (see Appendix D for more detailed information). During the first stage of the thematic synthesis data was coded line-by-line using NVivo (release 14.23.4). Codes were created and developed based on the content of the text with multiple codes assigned as deemed appropriate. Codes were developed and revised throughout the synthesis as new meaning was brought by the introduction of each included study to the analysis. Through this process concepts were translated and developed from one study to another (Thomas & Harden, 2008) supporting the move to the next stage: the development of descriptive themes.

Table 3 Summary of Extracted Qualitative Data

Study	Extracted Qualitative Data	
	(sub)theme(s)	all findings
Austin et al., 2022		X
Barborini et al., 2024	X	
Barras & Frith, 2024	X	
Beischel et al., 2022		X
Burkholder et al., 2024	X	
Burstall et al., 2024	X	
Easterbrook-Smith, 2024	X	
Evans, 2023	X	
Goetz & Arcomano, 2023	X	
Hall et al., 2024		X
Horton, 2022	X	
Jacobsen & Devor, 2022		X
Leitch et al., 2025		X
Levitt et al., 2024	X	
Mann et al., 2024		X
Meyer et al., 2023	X	
Morrow, 2023	X	
Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024	X	
Riggs et al., 2024	X	
Rosati et al., 2024	X	
Skelton et al., 2024		X
Tebbe et al., 2024	X	
Ussher et al., 2022	X	
Ussher et al., 2023	X	

During the second stage, the 97 codes generated and developed in stage one, were organized into 14 descriptive themes. See table 4 for a list of descriptive themes and the studies represented within them, more detailed information related to how codes were organized into descriptive themes, including

Table 4 Descriptive themes identified in each included study

	Austin et al., 2022	Barborini et al., 2024	Barras & Frith, 2024	Beischel et al., 2022	Burkholder et al., 2024	Burstall et al., 2024	Easterbrook-Smith, 2024	Evans, 2023	Goetz & Arcomano, 2023	Hall et al., 2024	Horton, 2022	Jacobsen & Devor, 2022	Leitch et al., 2025	Levitt et al., 2024	Mann et al., 2024	Meyer et al., 2023	Morrow, 2023	Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024	Riggs et al., 2024	Rosati et al., 2024	Skelton et al., 2024	Tebbe et al., 2024	Ussher et al., 2022	Ussher et al., 2023
A journey of self-discovery	X	X	X	X		X				X		X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X			X
Activism and collective identity					X					X		X	X	X	X						X	X		
Acts of gender affirmation by others	X			X		X				X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X			
Being a part of the LGBTQ+ community	X			X	X			X		X		X		X	X		X				X		X	
Being part of a diverse community or group					X					X					X						X		X	
Clothing and style	X			X	X	X				X		X	X		X		X				X		X	X
Freedom of self-expression	X			X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	
Hope for the future	X			X		X		X		X		X	X			X		X			X			
Non-judgemental spaces	X		X	X	X					X		X			X		X				X			
People who support and accept me	X			X	X	X				X		X			X		X		X		X			
Personal views related to external appearance	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X
Physical changes to body	X			X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X		X
Wellbeing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X		X
When others notice effort I have made				X		X		X		X				X				X		X	X		X	

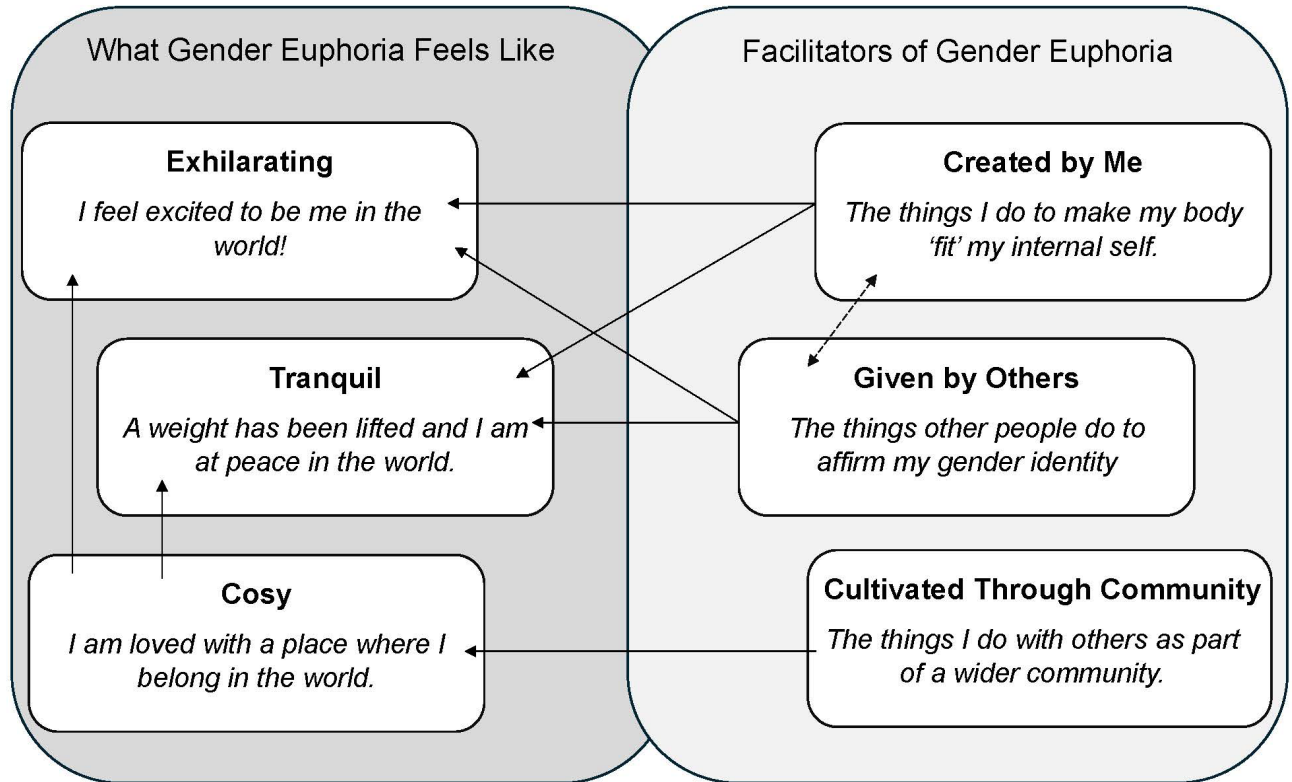
illustrative quotes, can be found in Appendix E. In stage three of the thematic synthesis the findings of the original studies, as represented by the descriptive themes, were used to inform the creation of analytical themes. When creating analytical themes consideration was also given to the context of the original studies, and in particular who was speaking in relation to gender identity, age, and researcher or participant in quotes related to codes used to inform descriptive themes.

2.4 Synthesis

2.4.1 Synthesis Overview

Of the 24 qualitative studies included in the synthesis, two were doctoral theses (Evans, 2023; Morrow, 2023), with the remaining 22 being articles published in scientific journals. Seven studies were conducted in Australia (Burstall et al., 2024; Hall et al., 2024; Mann et al., 2024; Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024; Riggs et al., 2024; Skelton et al., 2024; Ussher et al., 2022), seven in the United States of America (USA; Austin et al., 2022; Goetz & Arcomano, 2023; Leitch et al., 2025; Levitt et al., 2024; H. M. Meyer et al., 2023; Morrow, 2023; Tebbe et al., 2024), four in Canada (Barborini et al., 2024; Burkholder et al., 2024; Evans, 2023; Jacobsen & Devor, 2022), two in the United Kingdom (Barras & Frith, 2024; Horton, 2022), one in Italy (Rosati et al., 2024), and one in New Zealand (Easterbrook-Smith, 2024), with the remaining two studies being jointly conducted in the USA and Canada (Beischel et al., 2022); and Australia and New Zealand (Ussher et al., 2023) respectively. A total of 976 trans participants were represented across the 24 included studies, from a range of age groups including children, young adults, and older adults. Views of participants were predominantly gathered via interview, however three studies (Beischel et al., 2022; Mann et al., 2024; Ussher et al., 2023) utilised a qualitative survey, and one (Burkholder et al., 2024) conducted a focus group discussion with all participants at once. More detailed information regarding the included studies can be found in the data extraction table (Appendix D).

As described by Thomas and Harden (2008), analytical themes were developed to go beyond the individual findings of the original studies in order to address the research question of the present review: ‘How do trans people experience and explain the concept of ‘gender euphoria’?’ Two overarching themes ‘What Gender Euphoria Feels Like’ and ‘Facilitators of Gender Euphoria’ were developed, each comprising of three interlinking subthemes respectively: Exhilarating, Tranquil, and Cosy, and Created by Me, Given by Others, and Cultivated Through Community. These analytic themes are described individually below, however as demonstrated in Figure 2, there is an interlinking relationship between facilitators and felt experiences of

Figure 2 Thematic Map Depicting Analytic Themes and Their Relationship with One Another

gender euphoria. Therefore, facilitators are discussed under each 'What Gender Euphoria Feels Like' subtheme in order to highlight and further explain this relationship.

2.4.2 What Gender Euphoria Feels Like

Trans participants across all studies are quoted as describing gender euphoria in terms of how it makes them feel. Although there are underlying nuances to these descriptions, as demonstrated by the sub-themes, overall, every participant and researcher who describes the experience of feeling gender euphoria does so in a positive way. However, Beischel and colleagues (2022) also refer to a number of their participants describing a sense of foreboding alongside positive emotions related to gender euphoria, due to a realisation that for cultural and societal reasons being trans may not always feel as joyful.

2.4.2.1 Exhilarating: I feel excited to be me in the world!

The analytic sub-theme 'Exhilarating' is perhaps most closely aligned with what many people outside of the trans community may assume the definition of gender euphoria to be, based on a dictionary definition of 'euphoria'. It describes an often instant, intense happiness and excitement in relation to experiences of one's gender (Beischel et al., 2022; Burstall et al., 2024;

Hall et al., 2024; Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024). These intense emotions are often described by trans participants and researchers as automatic responses to positive affirmations by others, for example, strangers using one's correct pronouns or being referred to by one's chosen name (Hall et al., 2024; Mann et al., 2024). One adult participant described being correctly gendered as a feeling of "absolute elation" (Hall et al., 2024, p. 12) while an adolescent participant, described a teacher using his chosen name as "amazing" (Mann et al., 2024, p. 52). Despite the positive way in which participants talked about this instantaneous emotional experience, many felt that the intensity of this form of gender euphoria fades over time when it is in response to the affirmation of others (Beischel et al., 2022; Skelton et al., 2024).

Another way in which "exhilarating" gender euphoria is described relates to the actions of the individual to maintain or enhance their external appearance to create a better fit with their internal experience of gender (Austin et al., 2022; Evans, 2023; Jacobsen & Devor, 2022; Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024; Rosati et al., 2024; Ussher et al., 2022). For one female participant, finding and wearing an outfit she feels is cute, leads to such a strong positive emotional response, she feels as if she is "float[ing] around" in a "euphoric high" (Austin et al., 2022, p. 1417). An intense, often overwhelming emotional response is also felt by non-binary and transmasculine participants in relation to using chest binders (Beischel et al., 2022; Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024; Tebbe et al., 2024) or following mastectomy surgery (H. M. Meyer et al., 2023; Ussher et al., 2023). These intense positive feelings related to congruence between external appearance and the internal experience of gender are not merely superficial incidents. For multiple participants across studies, the intense positive emotion of gender euphoria alluded to a deeper meaning both confirming their trans identity and opening up the possibility of hope for the future. As one nonbinary participant describes it, the "electric" feeling of intense euphoria is "what keeps trans folks alive" (Beischel et al., 2022, p. 282).

2.4.2.2 Tranquil: A weight has been lifted and I am at peace in the world.

For multiple trans participants across studies the experience of gender euphoria was less an intense excited emotion and more an overall feeling of tranquillity. For these participants, the experience of gender euphoria comes as a sense of relief as if a weight has been lifted from their shoulders (Austin et al., 2022; Barborini et al., 2024; Goetz & Arcomano, 2023; Horton, 2022; Mann et al., 2024; H. M. Meyer et al., 2023). In this way gender euphoria is experienced like a "glass of water at the other end of the desert" (Austin et al., 2022, p. 1413), particularly after a period of difficulty. For example, after a difficult journey accessing gender affirming care one participant describes the feeling of gender euphoria linked to starting hormone therapy as akin to a fog being lifted to reveal how he "always should have felt" (H. M. Meyer et al., 2023, p. 197). This peaceful feeling of calm in relation to gender as the 'norm' that individuals 'should' always be

able to experience was described by one participant as “gender contentment” (Leitch et al., 2025, p. 10) rather than euphoria, however the feeling is described alongside and as euphoria by many. For example, one participant talked about how “being trans” has enabled her to feel content with who she is including being able to “take a photo...and not despise it” (Hall et al., 2024, p. 16). Genderfluid participants also described using feelings of euphoria to tune into their experiences of gender from day to day (Morrow, 2023), for example by experimenting with items of clothing until they feel a sense of euphoria, which tells them they are feeling “more femme” at that time (Morrow, 2023, p. 76). Again, this highlights the experience of gender euphoria, not as a fleeting intense emotion, but as a normalising day-to-day experience of life where “euphoria tends to be the rule instead of the exception” (Jacobsen & Devor, 2022, p. 131).

2.4.2.3 Cosy: I am loved with a place where I belong in the world.

In a similar way to experiences of gender euphoria as tranquil, ‘cosy’ describes experiences of gender euphoria which are not intense or fleeting emotions, but rather a more prolonged and profound experience of contentment. While experiences of gender euphoria as exhilarating or tranquil often link to physical changes made by trans people to align their external appearance with their internal experience of gender and the affirmation of others, ‘cosy’ describes a deeper feeling related to support and connection with others (Austin et al., 2022; Barras & Frith, 2024; Morrow, 2023). When experiencing gender euphoria as ‘cosy’ trans participants put less emphasis on the need for affirmation from strangers or external appearance, and more on connection with others making them feel truly content and of value in the world.

For some participants the experience of ‘cosy’ gender euphoria was related to being in a supportive relationship where you can “[let] go of like the presentation aspects of gender and just [realise] the emotional aspects of gender” (Austin et al., 2022, p. 1414). This is particularly the case for participants in relationships with other trans people. For example, a genderfluid participant described “queer love” as enabling them and their partner to feel “comfortable with each other” including not having to worry about changing the pitch of their voice or wearing certain clothing to be accepted (Morrow, 2023, p. 282). Feeling comfortable is also often linked to being part of a wider community of trans people (Austin et al., 2022; Skelton et al., 2024), as well as physical spaces or groups outside of the trans community but where the breaking of societal norms is accepted and celebrated (Hall et al., 2024).

Unlike ‘exhilarating’ or ‘tranquil’, which are purely experiences of gender euphoria, ‘cosy’ can also act as a facilitator for additional experiences of gender euphoria. For example, a non-binary participant describes a feeling of exhilaration related to their identity in itself being a form of resistance to “structures, that like, want us dead” after creating a life for themselves where they

feel that they belong (Levitt et al., 2024, p. 1777). The design of Burkholder and colleagues' (2024) study included a community fashion show and arts workshop. This in itself created a sense of connection and comfort that enabled participants to actively experience other aspects of gender euphoria, described by one participant as "a lot of DIY joy" (Burkholder et al., 2024, p. 10).

2.4.3 Facilitators of Gender Euphoria

As with descriptions of how gender euphoria makes trans people feel, participants across all studies are quoted as talking about the facilitators of gender euphoria. However, while all explanations of what gender euphoria feels like are accompanied with a description of what facilitated this feeling, facilitators of gender euphoria are not always described in relation to an explanation of what gender euphoria means or feels like to the participant. However, when explanations are given, facilitators related to external appearance or affirmation from other people, almost always create an experience of gender euphoria as 'exhilarating' or 'tranquil'. On the other hand, facilitators linked to community connection result most often in experiences of gender euphoria as 'cosy', which in turn facilitates moments of gender euphoria as 'tranquil' and 'exhilarating'.

2.4.3.1 Created by Me: The things I do to make my body 'fit' my internal self

With the exception of one (Horton, 2022), trans participants across all studies are quoted as describing experiences of gender euphoria in relation to changes they have made to their physical appearance. For many participants this related to clothing that matched their internal experience of gender (Austin et al., 2022; Beischel et al., 2022; Burkholder et al., 2024; Burstall et al., 2024; Hall et al., 2024; Mann et al., 2024; Morrow, 2023; Ussher et al., 2022, 2023). For example, a female participant describes feeling "affirmed" by the experience of "wearing a bikini top" on the beach for the first time (Austin et al., 2022, p. 1413). For a non-binary participant the sense of control over their external appearance through the "journey" of creating an entire outfit that matches their internal experience of gender is described as an "indescribable feeling" in relation to gender euphoria (Burstall et al., 2024, p. 6). Other changes to external appearance such as hairstyle (Austin et al., 2022; Beischel et al., 2022; Burstall et al., 2024; Skelton et al., 2024), jewellery (Ussher et al., 2022) and makeup (Burstall et al., 2024; Hall et al., 2024; Leitch et al., 2025; Ussher et al., 2022) were also described as being important facilitators of gender euphoria for multiple participants when looking at themselves in the mirror or having confidence to go out in public. The removal of body hair for female trans participants (Austin et al., 2022; Ussher et al., 2023) and chest binding for non-binary and male trans participants (Beischel et al., 2022; Jacobsen & Devor, 2022; Levitt et al., 2024; Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024; Tebbe et al., 2024) are

also significant facilitators of gender euphoria in relation to feeling comfortable in one's own body.

More permanent changes to physical appearance such as tattoos (Austin et al., 2022; Burkholder et al., 2024), surgery (Burstall et al., 2024; Evans, 2023; Goetz & Arcomano, 2023; Jacobsen & Devor, 2022; Leitch et al., 2025; H. M. Meyer et al., 2023; Ussher et al., 2023) and the impact of hormones (Austin et al., 2022; Barras & Frith, 2024; Burstall et al., 2024; Easterbrook-Smith, 2024; Hall et al., 2024; Jacobsen & Devor, 2022; H. M. Meyer et al., 2023; Rosati et al., 2024; Skelton et al., 2024; Ussher et al., 2023) are also frequently described as important facilitators of gender euphoria. Surgery related to treatment of cancer facilitated feelings of gender euphoria for one non-binary participant by enabling them to be "more connected" with their body, despite the fact that the results of this surgery was a body that does not "resemble any mainstream body" (Ussher et al., 2023, p. 908). This experience of connecting to one's body in a way that has not previously been possible is shared by a female participant when talking about feeling "absolutely happy" about the changes to her body as a result of hormone treatment (Hall et al., 2024, p. 10).

2.4.3.2 Given by Others: The things other people do to affirm my gender identity

Participants and researchers across the majority of studies describe the affirming actions of others, including pets (Riggs et al., 2024), as important facilitators of gender euphoria. One of the most common examples of this was the way in which language used by others is understood to indicate one's external appearance is congruent with one's internal experience of gender. This can be compliments directly associated with efforts made by trans participants in relation to their external appearance (Beischel et al., 2022) or the more subtle experiences of strangers using gendered language such as "mate" (Skelton et al., 2024, p. 478) or "handsome" (Morrow, 2023, p. 75). However, when participants were quoted as discussing gender euphoria in relation to the language of others, it was most commonly associated with correct pronoun use (Austin et al., 2022; Burstall et al., 2024; Hall et al., 2024; Skelton et al., 2024). This link between gender euphoria and correct pronoun use is shared across participants from all trans identities, for example for one non-binary participant it "feels really good when people do use they/them pronouns...that's euphoric" (Hall et al., 2024, p. 12), and for a female participant each time she is "called miss or ma'am or she or her" she "get[s] like giddy and bubbly about it" (Austin et al., 2022, p. 1416). The experience is also shared by a genderfluid participant, who describes how the difficulty of a stranger in finding the correct pronoun also elicited gender euphoria: "on my non-binary days if someone just couldn't figure out what I was and just stuttered out while trying to gender me. That would be very good." (Beischel et al., 2022, p. 284).

Most participants are quoted as experiencing gender euphoria in relation to being correctly gendered by strangers. However, for younger participants the use of their chosen name and pronouns by family, friends, and school staff was more often discussed as a source of gender euphoria (Horton, 2022; Mann et al., 2024; Skelton et al., 2024). This is most likely due to these participants being at an earlier stage in their trans journey where they are in a more active process of revealing their trans identity to others. However, the supportive actions of friends, family and colleagues was also expressed as a cause of gender euphoria for many adult participants (Austin et al., 2022; Beischel et al., 2022; Burkholder et al., 2024; Burstall et al., 2024; Hall et al., 2024; Morrow, 2023). For example, one participant describes an increase in confidence in being “open about [her] transness” now that she has a group of supportive friends who she described as “little attack dogs next to [her]” (Hall et al., 2024, p. 17) giving her protection from any potential negative interactions she may encounter. This sense of support through others’ protection of one’s gender identity is shared by a non-binary member of school staff who describes gender euphoria in relation to “students and staff correct[ing] each other on my pronouns or title” (Mann et al., 2024, p. 53).

2.4.3.3 Cultivated Through Community: The things I do with others as part of a wider community

The final subtheme within facilitators of gender euphoria relates to a sense of connection and purpose within a wider trans or other similarly accepting community. Although less commonly reported in relation to gender euphoria than instances related to physical appearance and direct affirmation by others, when participants and researchers discuss gender euphoria through community it is often associated with a more sustained experience of overall life satisfaction and contentment. Gender euphoria through community often comes from active participation in LGBTQ+ groups and spaces (Austin et al., 2022; Beischel et al., 2022; Burkholder et al., 2024; Evans, 2023; Hall et al., 2024; Jacobsen & Devor, 2022; Levitt et al., 2024; Mann et al., 2024; Morrow, 2023; Skelton et al., 2024). In these communities’ trans people are able to relax and be themselves more freely, without the fear of judgement as they are “freed from things like cisnormative ideals” (Hall et al., 2024, p. 16). One non-binary adult participant describes the joy of connecting with the wider trans community and discovering they were not “alone in [their] experience” as “incredibly euphoric for [them]” (Beischel et al., 2022, p. 284). The experience of acceptance through role models and peers going through a similar journey, is also experienced by a non-binary young person. For them access to a supportive community of LGBTQ+ staff and students at school, provides “a safe space in which [they] can be [themselves]” (Mann et al., 2024, p. 51).

Another way in which gender euphoria is created through a sense of connection and community, is through activism for and within the trans community (Burkholder et al., 2024; Hall et al., 2024; Jacobsen & Devor, 2022; Levitt et al., 2024; Mann et al., 2024; Skelton et al., 2024; Tebbe et al., 2024). For some participants this related to doing things to ensure the “next generation doesn’t have to fight as hard” (Hall et al., 2024, p. 13). For example, through school staff taking on a mentor role, supporting LGBTQ+ students to “open up and discuss their identity” (Mann et al., 2024, p. 54). While for others simply being able to live their lives as their authentic selves was viewed as an act of activism and resistance “to traditional roles” (Tebbe et al., 2024, p. 8) that enabled them to experience gender euphoria: “What I am, my gender identity: that I am a chica! It makes me feel proud. I feel good about being a trans woman” (Rosati et al., 2024, p. 1158)

2.5 Discussion

This systematic review and qualitative synthesis aimed to address the question: How do trans people experience and explain the concept of ‘gender euphoria’? The systematic literature search resulted in a total of 24 reports of unique qualitative studies from six countries, the thematic synthesis of which resulted in the creation of two main analytic themes, each containing three subthemes. These represented the two broad ways in which trans participants discussed gender euphoria in the included studies: what experiencing gender euphoria feels like and how gender euphoria is created. However, although presented as separate analytic themes, neither of these areas were mutually exclusive.

Throughout all accounts of gender euphoria there was overlap between what it feels like and how it is fostered, as well as the different ways each of these are experienced. For example, while gender euphoria can be facilitated by acts of affirmation by others or changes to one’s appearance, the former can also lead to the latter as individuals take control of how others interact with them in the world through adapting their appearance to match their internal experience of gender. Although conceptualised as a positive and often empowering act, when viewed through the lens of gender minority stress making changes to one’s physical appearance in response to active or perceived threat of intolerance or rejection, may overall not be supportive to one’s mental health (I. H. Meyer, 2003; Pellicane & Ciesla, 2022). Indeed, when gender euphoria is experienced in relation to the affirmation of others, it is often described as an intense, but short lived, positive emotion. This links to the final theme from Kulesza and colleagues (2025) review, who caution that while external acts of affirmation is conceptualised as a key source of gender euphoria in research, this has potentially detrimental consequences for trans people. This is due to the onus for what can or cannot be experienced as euphoric being placed on others, rather than from trans people themselves.

Outside of the relationship to increases in affirmation from others, acts of self-affirmation through physical changes from clothing and tattoos to surgery and hormone therapy were frequently described alongside deep emotions related to discovering who one truly is. This could be viewed as the concept of 'gender pride' in gender minority stress theory, which has been conceptualised as a protective factor against the detrimental impact of concealing one's trans identity and internalised transphobia (Testa et al., 2015). However, the way participants in the reviewed studies describe these events often links to a sense of hope for the future or a discovery of a better understanding of themselves, which transcends the idea of simply not wanting to be hidden or having pride in one's gender against external stressors. For many, looking in the mirror and seeing themselves as they know themselves to be internally, or experimenting with fashion or body modification, is a joyful experience which grounds them in a deep sense of their authentic identity, outside of external pathologizing constructs related to being trans.

Connection with others, beyond simply receiving help or support, has previously been found to be a significant protective factor against poor mental health for trans people (Tan et al., 2020; Testa et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2024) and the findings of this review suggest this is a fundamental part of the construct of gender euphoria for many trans people. In contrast to the often transient nature of gender euphoria in response to appearance of affirmation, a deeper more sustained feeling of contentment is achieved through gender euphoria facilitated by a sense of connection and purpose within a wider community. When trans people across studies discussed gender euphoria in these terms, the need to change one's appearance or be directly affirmed by others often dissipated as they expressed feeling a sense of acceptance that enabled them to be themselves. This deeply felt sense of belonging and purpose often leads to a desire to advocate for themselves and others and results in a sense that they have the strength to overcome the challenges and structures of the society in which they live.

2.5.1 Implications for Policy and Practice

This review highlights the importance of centring trans voices in research. Historically, when research has been conducted from an outsider perspective, the result has been a view of the trans experience as intrinsically linked to poor wellbeing. However, this review highlights the many important positive aspects of the trans experience, an understanding of which is important in order to fully develop future research, policy and practical support for trans people. Therefore, when new or existing policies are drawn up or reviewed, trans people should be central to all steps of the process. It will be important to include trans people on review boards and actively engage the trans community throughout consultation processes, and not simply consult with them in a way that is separate from a broader decision-making process. In

addition, cisgender practitioners working with trans people should recognise that trans people are not one homogenous group, and therefore policies and practices should include ways to ensure that individuals' needs and wishes are respected.

Themes related to facilitators of gender euphoria from this review show the importance of the support of others and an accepting environment to enable trans people to thrive. It is therefore important that all those working with and alongside trans people have an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the impact of language. One way this could be achieved is by asking either verbally or through questionnaire, how people wish to be referred to before meeting with them for the first time. Furthermore, a key facilitator of gender euphoria found in this review was the ability to experiment with one's gender through external appearance, such as clothing and hair style. Workplaces and education settings could therefore support trans members of staff and students through flexible rules and policies related to uniform and dress code.

An underlying and sustaining facilitator of gender euphoria found in this review relates to the importance for opportunities to be a part of a community of people with shared experiences and values. The implication of this for health, social care, and education professionals is the need to ask trans people using their services about their involvement in local community organisations and groups. Such professionals should have a good local area knowledge to be able to sign post people to such groups as well as working alongside them. For education settings, community organisations, and the trans community it is important that spaces are created to enable opportunities for connection. This does not have to be an explicit trans support group, but rather a place where trans people and allies can feel safe to come together in collaborative group activities, which could include sports, arts and crafts, or simply being together in a social space where everyone can feel strengthened by the advocacy and support of one another.

2.5.2 Strengths, Limitations and Future Research

A key strength of this review is that it is the first qualitative synthesis to bring together the voices of trans people from the emerging field of qualitative research exploring gender euphoria. Another strength is the high-quality nature of the included studies, particularly the reflexivity of authors in terms of their positionality and approach to research with trans people. Furthermore, the reviewed research covered a wide array of topic areas across six countries with participants of multiple trans identities, with almost all studies conducted by trans people or allies. Future research could build upon the findings of this review to explore the proposed model of gender euphoria as strengthened and cultivated through community connection using quantitative measures for wellbeing and euphoria or further qualitative studies more explicitly focused on this aspect of gender euphoria.

Limitations of this review include the fact that due to this being an emerging area of research only 7 of the reviewed studies focused exclusively on gender euphoria. The data related to gender euphoria analysed from the remaining 17 papers was often ‘discovered’ by researchers during analysis and not part of the aims or expected outcomes of the original study. Therefore, it is possible that more participants would have discussed gender euphoria, perhaps in new or differing ways, if these researchers had actively explored gender euphoria as part of their study design. It will be important that further systematic reviews of both qualitative and quantitative studies are conducted as the research in this field expands.

A further limitation of this review is linked to the cultural differences inherent in a synthesis of studies from different populations across the world. The inclusion of studies from multiple countries, including some focused on minoritised communities within these countries, could be viewed as a strength. However, when we synthesise these experiences together through the lens of the authors’ cultural context and experiences, nuances related to meaning may be lost. It would be beneficial for future research to focus more explicitly upon the impact of culture on understanding of gender euphoria. Furthermore, the use of the phrase ‘gender euphoria’ itself poses a limitation to this review. Due to the explicit focus on exploring the construct of the phrase itself, studies featuring the term were predominantly from English speaking countries and were all located in the global north. This means that the diverse voices of trans people from around the world were not explored. Future empirical studies and reviews should focus on exploring the construct of gender euphoria in languages other than English to see if similar or differing experiences of joy, contentment, and connection are experienced by trans people across cultures.

2.6 Conclusion

This systematic literature review and qualitative synthesis of 24 studies has found that trans people do not simply construct gender euphoria as the antonym of gender dysphoria. Gender euphoria is experienced by trans people in a variety of ways, including for those who do not experience gender dysphoria. Experiences of gender euphoria can come as moments where minority stress is not experienced, such as in moments of congruence between one’s outward appearance and inward experience of gender, and the affirmation of others. These moments often feel exhilarating or like an overwhelming sense of calm, but they can also be fleeting. A deeper more cosy experience of gender euphoria as a form of connection and belonging, comes from feeling part of a community. As part of a community of others who respect and advocate for one another, trans people can find strength to overcome the stressors of the wider society in which they find themselves and exist authentically in the world.

Chapter 3 The Journey to Authenticity: The lived experiences of discovering and disclosing autistic and trans aspects of self.

3.1 Abstract

There is an increasing body of research highlighting an apparent over representation of autistic people within the trans population and vice-versa. One theory to explain this suggests that autistic people may be more likely to identify as and disclose their trans status due to a resistance to social norms. However, no study to date had explored the specific identity development and disclosure experiences of trans autistic people. Therefore, this paper aimed to explore the lived experience of trans autistic people in relation to their identity development and disclosure decisions in relation to both their trans and autistic identities. An online qualitative survey was utilised, with 40 participants, over the age of 18, who self-identified as both autistic and trans. Survey responses were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, resulting in the construction of four main themes: 1. An innate part of who I am. 2. An unsafe world. 3. With you I understand myself, with you I am home (including sub-theme: now I have the words I understand who I am and where I have been). 4. No going back: the imperative of authenticity. Together these themes tell a story of autistic people having different social norms to the wider allistic population, which for some fundamentally alters their experience of gender. Through community connection, supportive others, and information finding, trans autistic people were found to discover and disclose their gender identity through similar mechanisms to those found in wider trans research. Implications for future research, policy and practice include a caution against positioning autism as an alternative explanation for gender dysphoria, rather than a potentially related yet separate experience.

3.2 Introduction

Over the past decade there has been increasing academic interest in the apparent over representation of those with a diagnosis of autism (hereafter referred to as ‘autistic’) within the transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse (hereafter referred to as ‘trans’) population, and vice-versa (Bonazzi et al., 2025; Kallitsounaki & Williams, 2023; Thrower et al., 2020). Multiple studies have focused on calculating the difference in the proportion of autistic people within the trans population to the wider cis-gender (non-trans) population, finding a significantly higher number of autistic people within the trans population (Thrower et al., 2020). However, studies

often rely on data from clinical populations and research participants (Bonazzi et al., 2025) and conflate gender dysphoria with gender incongruence and autism diagnosis with autistic traits (Kallitsounaki & Williams, 2023). The area has also been of interest to clinicians and policy makers who report an increased number of autistic people being referred to gender identity services and the over representation was a particular focus of the findings and subsequent debate in relation to the final report of a review into child gender identity services in the United Kingdom (Cass, 2024b; Evans, 2025; McNamara et al., 2024).

Alongside research focused on quantifying the apparent over representation of autistic people in the trans population, there is also a body of academic work focused on theorising the reason for this. For some the explanation lies in the idea that autistic people may be confused and not ‘truly’ trans (Gratton et al., 2023). This is particularly found to be the case when research is focused on the views of clinicians or parents (Cooper et al., 2022; Cooper, Mandy, Butler, et al., 2023; Cooper, Mandy, Russell, et al., 2023) rather than directly with trans people. Studies comparing experiences of gender dysphoria in autistic and allistic participants have found similarities in the experience of both groups (Khorashad et al., 2024; Tollit et al., 2024), indicating validation for the gender experience of trans autistic people. There are also those who have suggested that gender dysphoria may be misdiagnosed as autism (Gratton et al., 2023), that is that trans autistic people are not autistic but have some behaviours which are misconceived as autistic. However, neuroimaging studies have found no significant difference between the brain scans of trans and cisgender autistic people (Strang et al., 2023), where differences have been found between autistic and allistic people (Haghighat et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021) indicating a potential connection beyond surface level confusions.

When information related to trans autistic people is examined in relation to specific gender identities, genders outside of the binary frequently form a large proportion of the data (Bonazzi et al., 2025; Kristensen & Broome, 2015; Walsh et al., 2018). Qualitative studies exploring the perspective of autistic people in relation to gender have also found that many autistic people experience a disconnection from sociocultural gender norms and expectations (Kourti & MacLeod, 2019). Furthermore, studies focused on non-binary autistic peoples’ experiences have found that participants often make direct connections between being autistic and non-binary (Peachey & Crane, 2024; Voltaire et al., 2024). Linked to this, a systematic literature review by Wattel and colleagues (2022), concluded that of all the theories purporting to explain the apparent overrepresentation of autistic people in the trans population, those related to weakened sex differences and a resistance to social norms have the most promising evidence. They also suggest that the latter may link to ideas related to a theory of mind deficit model (ToM) of autism (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985), whereby autistic people are suggested to not be able to mentalise the thoughts and feelings of others, meaning autistic people are more likely to

disclose their trans status than allistic peers (Kallitsounaki & Williams, 2020; May et al., 2017; Wattel et al., 2022). However, there is strong criticism of ToM from the autistic community (Holt et al., 2022) and critiques from the academic literature regarding the empirical evidence base supporting it (Gernsbacher & Yergeau, 2019). Both suggesting that the model comes from an outsider observer perspective and does not take into account the individual experiences of autistic people.

Considering the critique of ToM, rather than making assumptions related to trans autistic people's decision-making regarding identity disclosure, it is important to ask them directly about their experiences. However, to my knowledge there are currently no studies exploring the experience of trans autistic people in making decisions regarding disclosing their trans or autistic identities. However, there is a small body of qualitative research exploring both disclosure experiences within the trans community and autistic community respectively. Qualitative research into the lived experience of trans people has found that people often describe experiencing a feeling that their gender is different from the one they have been assigned at birth, from a young age (Heiden-Rootes et al., 2023). However, the process of understanding and sharing this with others is long and gradual (Kade, 2021; Kennedy, 2022) rather than a single 'coming out' moment (Brumbaugh-Johnson & and Hull, 2019; Grishow-Schade et al., 2023). Trans people describe navigating a difficult context of perceived and experienced stigma, rejection, and violence (Brumbaugh-Johnson & and Hull, 2019; Kade, 2021) related to disclosing their gender identity. This is managed through making small disclosures (Heiden-Rootes et al., 2023) or leaving gender related clues (Grishow-Schade et al., 2023) for trusted others, before fully sharing or expressing their gender identity openly.

Studies exploring the disclosure decisions of autistic people in relation to their diagnostic status similarly find participants describe navigating stigma (Togher & Jay, 2023) and misconceptions (Huang et al., 2022) alongside worries related to being disbelieved (Farsinejad et al., 2022). Unlike the gender disclosure experiences of trans people, for autistic people disclosing autism diagnosis is also frequently described as necessary to facilitate understanding from others (Farsinejad et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2022). Disclosing in this context is an attempt to avoid being stigmatised for autistic behaviour and to receive adaptations and support in education or workplace settings (Togher & Jay, 2023). However, this experience of disclosing autism status to support understanding appears to be dependent on sociocultural context, as one small study from Latvia found that participants did not disclose their autism diagnosis at work directly due to fear of being treated differently by colleagues if they did (Nimante et al., 2023).

3.2.1 The Present Study

The present study aims to explore the experiences of trans autistic people in discovering and disclosing aspects of their identity. The research question, developed using participatory approaches to centre the voice of trans autistic people, was: How do trans autistic people conceptualise and describe their experiences of understanding and sharing their autistic and gender identities. A related aim of this study is to provide insider insight to the existing body of research related to the apparent overrepresentation of autistic people within the trans community.

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Design

This study utilised a participatory qualitative online survey design. While existing qualitative research in this area has been conducted using interviews or focus groups, autistic people express finding verbal communication with unfamiliar allistic people challenging (Howard & Sedgewick, 2021). Therefore, the written nature of the qualitative survey provides a greater opportunity for autistic people to participate who may otherwise feel unable to take part in qualitative research. Furthermore, qualitative surveys also provide a sense of safety when discussing potentially sensitive subjects, such as gender diversity, as well as reducing the power imbalance between researcher and participants (Braun et al., 2021). The initial questionnaires (Appendix F) were developed by the lead researcher in collaboration with the co-researcher who identifies as part of the autistic community. In addition to the main qualitative survey, and demographic questionnaire, an additional feedback survey was presented to participants, the answers to which were used to further develop the qualitative survey throughout the study. The participatory aspect of the study design was intended to address an issue highlighted by many autistic individuals that research related to autism is often created about them rather than with them (Kaplan-Kahn & Caplan, 2023).

3.3.2 Participants

Participants were eligible to participate if they self-identified or were diagnosed as autistic and self-identified as a gender other than that which they were assigned at birth, were over the age of 18, and had spent at least some of their education under the age of 18 in the United Kingdom. Due to the nature of the data collection method, all participants were also able to understand and express themselves through the medium of English and had a device enabling them to access to the internet. An initial 10 participants were recruited via the online paid participant

pool, Prolific to pilot test the usability of the survey. Following this initial pilot, the qualitative survey and demographic questionnaire were amended (Appendix G) in response to participant feedback. Following questionnaire amendments an additional 20 participants were recruited via Prolific. The participant feedback form remained active throughout data collection, however after the initial 10 participants there were no significant responses requiring changes to be made to the qualitative survey. The use of Prolific provides access to a wide array of screened participants from multiple demographic backgrounds (Boskey et al., 2023). Prolific further enables complete anonymity for participants, enabling those who may otherwise feel unable to come forwards for qualitative studies the opportunity to share their experiences in a safe way. However, to be a participant through Prolific one must be actively involved in online communities where information about Prolific is shared. Therefore, to ensure opportunities for a broader data set, participants were also recruited through the sharing of a research advert (Appendix H) through trans inclusive community spaces and organisations. This resulted in the recruitment of an additional 10 participants, with an overall total number of 40 participants. Table 5 below presents detailed self-identified demographic information for my participants.

Overall, participants were predominantly aged between 18 and 35 (87.5%) and declared their ethnicity to be white or white British (62.5%) with an additional 22.5% of participants identifying themselves as British, English or Scottish without specifying cultural heritage. There was a relatively even split between participants who self-identified as autistic (45%) and those who had received a formal diagnosis (47.5%). Most of my participants identified with genders outside of the binary including agender and autigender (70%), with only seven participants identifying only as male or trans masculine (17.5%) and three identifying as female or trans feminine (7.5%).

Table 5 Participant Self-identified Demographic Information

Demographic Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Autism diagnostic status		
Formal diagnosis	19	47.5
Awaiting formal assessment	3	7.5
Self-identified	18	45
Gender ^a		
Agender	2	5
Autigender	1	2.5
Female	3	7.5
Male	7	17.5
Male/agender	1	2.5
Non-binary	8	20
Non-binary/any other gender	16	40
Transgender	1	2.5
Other ^b	1	2.5
Sex assigned at birth		
Female	29	72.5
Male	8	20
Do not wish to share	3	7.5
Age range		
18-25	19	47.5
26-35	16	40
36-50	4	10
50+	1	2.5
Ethnicity		
African	1	2.5
British/Chinese	1	2.5
British, English or Scottish	9	22.5
British/Indian	2	5
Northern Irish	1	2.5
White	3	7.5
White/Asian	1	2.5
White/British (including English, Welsh, & Scottish)	22	55
Sexuality		
Asexual	1	2.5
Gay or Lesbian	12	30
Bisexual, abrosexual, pansexual, or queer	23	57.5
Straight	3	7.5
Do not wish to share	1	2.5
Autism language preferences		
Identity first (i.e. autistic person)	10	25
Identity first/neurodivergent or neurodiverse	21	52.5
Neurodivergent or neurodiverse	2	5
No preference	7	17.5

^a Most participants selected multiple options for gender, therefore the above represents a summary where for example, trans masculine and male have been merged together. For more specific information relating to how participants self-identified see additional demographic information in Appendix I.

^b "I feel that 'lesbian' is my gender identity"

3.3.3 Procedure

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the University of Southampton Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences Ethics Committee. Interested participants followed a website link on the study advert or shared with them directly through Prolific and were taken to a digital copy of the participant information sheet and consent form (Appendices J and K) hosted on the Qualtrics survey platform. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study up until the final submit page and gave their informed consent by selecting the appropriate check box at the end of the information sheet. Once consent was given, participants were taken through the three stages of the survey: 1. demographic questionnaire; 2. Qualitative survey; 3. Feedback questionnaire. To aid accessibility and reduce uncertainty, participants were given the opportunity to view the questions in advance at the beginning of each stage of the survey. Additional explanatory information was also available to participants for the screening questions section of the demographic questionnaire to ensure that no eligible participants were inadvertently excluded. Following the final questionnaire participants were asked to affirm their consent for their answers to be included in the study and were then taken to the debrief form (Appendices L and M). Data from participants who did not reach the final affirmation of consent page ($n = 15$) were assumed to have withdrawn from the study and their data was deleted. On average participants took approximately 30 minutes to complete the survey, with two participants taking just under 10 minutes and three taking slightly more than one hour. Participants recruited via Prolific received £12 for their participation, all other participants received a £10 gift voucher.

3.3.4 Analytic Method

Data from qualitative questionnaires was analysed by the lead researcher using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA; Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021, 2022b, 2024b), with additional discussion and reflection through verbal discussion with the co-researcher at the theme development stage. Due to the nature of the research exploring the development and disclosure of identity through discourse with others, the analysis took a social constructionist approach in order to centre language in the process of meaning making (Burr, 2015; Willig, 2013). A qualitative approach always involves an element of deductive analysis due to the role of the researcher's own experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2022b), in this way the research team bring lived experiences within and as allies of the trans and autistic communities which form part of the process of analysis. However, the analysis was predominantly approached inductively with a focus on the latent or underlying implied meaning of participants' responses.

The six phases of RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021, 2022b, 2024b) were applied in the following ways: Data familiarisation occurred through the process of reading through survey responses as they were completed in order to approve remuneration to participants, and when transferring data from qualitative questionnaires into new documents ready for coding. During this process notes were made in a reflexive journal related to the emotional response to participants' answers, links to own lived experiences, and reflections on relationships with current social and political context. Data was coded electronically using NVivo (QSR International, 2023). All data from the qualitative survey was coded at a meaning unit level, exploring the underlying meaning of participants' responses in relation to how they make sense of the autistic and trans aspects of themselves, and make decisions related to sharing this with others. Codes were refined through a process of going back through each survey response at least twice and making links between codes to add new meaning. As the process of RTA is not linear (Braun & Clarke, 2022b), notes related to initial theme ideas were also made throughout the coding process. Themes were later developed by organising codes into groups that made sense in relation to the story I wanted to tell about my data (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 14). The sixth phase of RTA, writing the report, is not an additional "add on to analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2022b, p. 118) but rather an integral part of the analysis where the story being told about one's data continues to be refined and developed. Therefore, themes were further refined and developed during the writing and editing process to ensure they represented the meaning behind the data as constructed through the analytic process, and not a summary of participants' words. Furthermore, this report reflects the notion of RTA, that data from participants does not exist in a vacuum nor speak for itself (Braun & Clarke, 2022b). Instead, data is created through the interpretation of participants' words by the researcher, which is in turn situated within existing research and knowledge in the field as understood by the researcher. Therefore, in contrast to more traditional reporting methods, the results section below is reported as a combined results and discussion and includes an analytic narrative with references to relevant existing research and theory throughout (Braun & Clarke, 2022b, 2024b; Byrne, 2022). This is then followed by a general discussion section which presents a summary of my analysis in relation to the research question and provides further discussion in relation to the implications for future research, policy and practice.

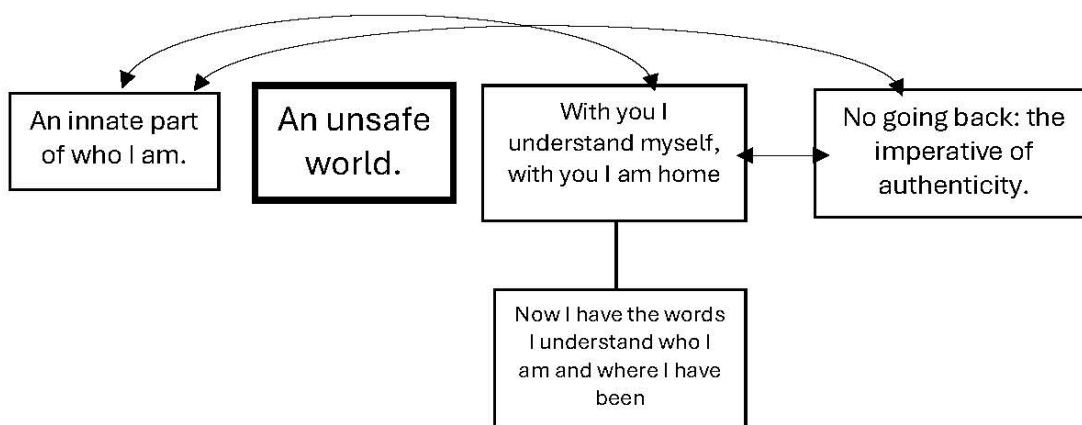
3.4 Results and Discussion

Through the process of analysis, I created the following four themes: 1. An innate, fundamental part of who I am; 2. Navigating an unsafe world; 3. With you I understand myself, with you I am home (including the subtheme: Now I have the words I understand who I am and where I have been); 4. No going back: the imperative of authenticity. Figure 3 illustrates how these themes

interlink and represent a process of understanding and disclosing identity for my trans autistic participants. Theme two ‘navigating an unsafe world’ is represented in bold to emphasise the way this theme represents a barrier between moving from the underlying sense of difference (theme one), to the active understanding and expression of trans and autistic identity (themes three and four). Additional codes which were not included in any identified theme covered a broad area related to participants’ comments on their wider hobbies, interests and future plans in relation to questions explicitly asking about these. Although not included in the final themes presented here, relation between these codes points to the desire found within my interpretation of participants expressing individuality outside of the label of both trans and autistic.

The final four themes presented below are illustrated with data extracts where participant have been pseudonymised with spelling and grammar edited for readability purposes. Data extracts are tagged with the participant’s pseudonym; their self-identified gender identity; and whether at the time of participation they had received a formal autism diagnosis (DX), were awaiting assessment (AA), or self-identified as autistic (ID). In line with the qualitative methodology no frequency counts are presented in relation to the number of participants whose responses relate to each theme. However, all themes presented were developed from collections of codes including data from at least 90% of the total 40 participants’ responses.

Figure 3 Thematic Map



3.4.1 An Innate, Fundamental Part of Who I am

A strong theme constructed through my data analysis was that being autistic or trans is not a choice one makes or something one discovers later in life, but rather something innate in who you are from childhood. The idea of “feeling different” as a more pervasive or general experience felt from a young age was developed across my participants’ responses: “I have always just felt different.” (Kiran, DX autistic, non-binary/gender non-conforming); “I always felt a little off growing up” (Jaden, DX autistic, male/ non-binary/ genderflux). From a young age my participants were both aware of how they differed from their peers as well as how this might impact others’ estimations of them: “general feelings of not fitting in with other people” (Alyx, DX autistic, unsure/male/non-binary); “I have always thought I was quirky or strange because people gave me that reaction to things I did” (Lilly, ID autistic, other/lesbian). These responses suggest a sense of awareness of others that may not be apparent to the outside observer as is often described by autistic people challenging allistic interpretations of their behaviour (Holt et al., 2022). In these extracts from Alyx and Lilly, I construct autistic childhood experiences as a fundamental sense of difference which is experienced both internally and through the responses of others, so viscerally that it is recalled clearly upon reflection in adulthood.

My interpretations of many of my participants’ responses finds links to the ideal that being autistic is only problematic in an allistic world (Botha et al., 2024; Milton, 2012): “I am not less than for struggling with things that neurotypical find easy” (Oliver, ID autistic, male/transgender); “being overwhelmed in ways that others seemed to handle effortlessly” (Harley, DX autistic, transgender). With many positive aspects of themselves only being possible due to being autistic: “it contributes to my creativity and imagination” (Oliver, ID autistic, male/transgender); “I am absolutely shit hot in a crisis” (Kendall, DX autistic, non-binary/agender/autigender). When autism is viewed not as a dysfunction, but as neurodiversity, autistic people are not ‘wrong’ but instead part of the natural variety of the human experience (Botha et al., 2024). In this way, a strong feature of my interpretation for this theme links gender diversity to the unique experience of being autistic: “I very quickly realised that gender didn’t seem to be something that I experienced” (Harper, ID autistic, non-binary/agender); “In that context, my gender identity is normal for an autistic person” (Eden, DX autistic, autigender).

My data analysis highlights the complex picture of how gender is understood and expressed by my participants. Rather than being unaware or resistant to the gender norms in the society in which they live (Wattel et al., 2022), my participants share reflections on a childhood spent being pulled between the expectations of others and their internal experiences of gender: “I was always a “tomboy”...I tried wearing skirts and growing out my hair in high-school, I hated it.” (Charlie, DX autistic, trans masculine/non-binary/agender/bigender); “my mother called me a

woman and it felt like alarm bells went off in my head.” (Dana, ID autistic, non-binary/ androgynous). Furthermore, responses to questions related to introducing oneself to others, designed to elicit important aspects of identity as viewed by participants, highlight how gender is viewed as an integral part of oneself: “I am a nonbinary lesbian...” (Brooke, AA autistic, non-binary/ gender fluid/ gender queer/ androgynous); “I’m a trans person, which has been a big part of my journey to understanding myself.” (Harley, DX autistic, transgender). This sharing of gender identity over autistic identity highlights the conceptualisation of gender as more central than autistic identity, where autism is something additional to oneself but not an important part for others to know. The centring of gender identity above autistic identity also indicates a concern that to share ones’ autistic identity would risk being disbelieved in one’s gender identity.

3.4.2 Navigating an unsafe world

A noticeable feature developed through my data analysis was the strength to which the theme of existential threat and stigma was present in how my participants conceptualised the way in which their autistic and trans identities fit into the world around them. Despite my questionnaire being designed to not ask explicitly about negative impacts of identity, questions related to both understanding and disclosing trans and autistic identity elicited reflections on harms both experienced and perceived: “[she] treated the news as if I’d died” (Noah, ID autistic, male/ transgender); “you get the feeling a lot of people think [autism’s] a trend or something.” (Liam, ID autistic, female to male transgender). Deep understanding of the impact of stigmatising views of others is featured in my data analysis, not only in direct experiences of rejection or stigma, but also through a broader understanding of a world of hostile and unhelpful stereotypes: “People will view us as capable of such horrific things when we are often hypersensitive to violence and trying to come to terms with the horror ourselves.” (Eden, DX autistic, autigender); “Society is [not] very accepting of gender diverse individuals because it threatens them somehow...something that threatens their world view or something they actively find offensive.” (Ocean, DX autistic, non-binary/ gender fluid/ genderqueer).

The above extracts demonstrate an acute awareness of the stigmatising views others may hold in relation to both trans and autistic aspects of identity. I understand this in relation to the double empathy problem (Milton, 2012; Milton et al., 2022) where allistic misinterpretations of the external behaviours of autistic people lead to false conceptions of how autistic people understand the world (Gernsbacher & Yergeau, 2019). Therefore, my interpretation of my trans autistic participants’ understanding is that rather than lacking the ability to perceive how they are viewed by others, they instead reflect deeply on this in relation to multiple levels of decision making linked to understanding and disclosing their identities.

An acute awareness of potential threat related to others' perceptions is considered deeply when making decisions related to disclosure of both trans and autistic identity. In this way autism is often perceived as a necessary descriptor to support others understanding in order to receive support or avoid stigma: "Without this detail, it's likely that people would be less forgiving of my symptoms because they may not recognise them as such." (Lucas, DX autistic, male/trans masculine); "[I] tell some people I'm autistic so that they understand why I act how I do sometimes." (Elijah, ID autistic, trans masculine). When this understanding from others is not given, the allistic world can have significant detrimental effects for trans autistic people: "I began to mask so that I could fit in and I now struggle to just be myself." (Ocean, DX autistic, non-binary/ gender fluid/ genderqueer); "I was filled with anxiety and depression and looking back I was also in autistic burnout" (Morgan, DX autistic, transgender/ non-binary). Explicit mentions of 'masking' and 'burnout' by my participants links to latent meaning constructed within my data related to a need to conform with the expectations of others leading to decreased wellbeing. This relates to research suggesting that when autistic people are compelled to suppress their differences this has a significant detrimental impact on wellbeing and mental health (Arnold et al., 2023; Higgins et al., 2021).

While autism is often found to be an aside or explanation for others, being trans is consistently constructed as a more fundamental part of who one is. Nonetheless, trans identity, like autistic identity, still needs to be disclosed with caution. For example, through a process of leaving clues (Grishow-Schade et al., 2023) or testing the water (Heiden-Rootes et al., 2023) of others reactions, in order to avoid stigma and live safely as one's authentic self: "I just sort of kept it personal for a while and updated my socials" (Brecken, DX autistic, non-binary); "I just made a post about it...and started openly identifying that way online." (Elliot, ID autistic, trans masculine). For some this navigation of being trans in a hostile world results in decisions in the past or present to suppress or hide gender identity: "I'm not 'out' to everyone as I know there is a lot of stigma for 'all these made-up genders', etc, etc." (Baily, DX autistic, agender). For others, the awareness of negative stereotypes and stigma related to being trans is internalised preventing understanding of personal gender experience until later in life: "My parents were quite transphobic...this rubbed off on me, so I did not want to think that I was trans." (Daryl, ID autistic, trans masculine/ non-binary); "I didn't know what it was but it made me hate myself." (Zayn, DX autistic, male/ transgender).

The gender minority stress model (Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Testa et al., 2015) would suggest that these experiences of concealing identity or internalising stigma are the consequence of exposure to a world of external prejudice and experiences of discrimination. My data analysis highlights trans autistic people experiencing the same mechanisms related to societal stigma as have been theorised and researched in the wider trans community (Tan et al.,

2020; Wilson et al., 2024). When people are exposed to high stress environments due to direct and indirect prejudice and discrimination their wellbeing is negatively impacted resulting in them consciously or subconsciously attempting to protect themselves through suppressing or concealing elements of themselves related to the external stigma.

3.4.3 With you I understand myself, with you I am home

My third theme highlights a protective factor against the impact of societal stigma related to being both autistic and trans. Throughout my data I interpreted a message of understanding oneself and finding the courage to live authentically coming through connections and community with others who share a similar perspective or life journey. For some this comes naturally via family members who are either autistic, trans, or both: “All my immediate family is Autistic, so to me Autism is simply the natural way to be.” (Charlie, DX autistic, trans masculine/non-binary/agender/bigender). For others they find themselves drawn to similar others, who then help them to make sense of their own identity: “finding my queer community and like-minded other neurodiverse people” (Luna, DX autistic, non-binary/gender fluid/genderqueer/intersex); “we are hanging out from a really nice base understanding...I don't have to pre-empt and disclaim after every comment” (Quin, ID autistic, agender).

Linked to the double empathy problem (Milton, 2012) autistic people have more potential for connection (Milton et al., 2022) and experience smoother communication (Crompton et al., 2020) with other autistic people, than with allistic people. As the extract from Quin expresses, when surrounded by fellow autistic people they are protected from the external stigma that otherwise prevents them from being themselves as they share mutual empathy and understanding. The gender minority stress model (Hendricks & Testa, 2012; Testa et al., 2015) would also suggest that being with other trans people and allies is a protective factor that can diminish the impact of external stressors on internalised stressors and the need to conceal gender identity.

Beyond individual relationships, connection to the wider trans community and a feeling of being part of something bigger also featured heavily in my interpretation of the data, as a way in which one makes sense of and feels safe to express gender identity: “The first time I felt fully free was going to my first ever pride parade.” (Alyx, DX autistic, unsure/male/non-binary); “It was full of queer people and a safe place. I felt happy and free.” (Kit, AA autistic, non-binary). Being part of a wider community can decrease the need to conceal gender identity through feeling protected by supportive others (Tan et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2024). Feeling part of a wider trans community can also increase a sense of individual gender pride which in turn increases resilience against stigma (Singh et al., 2011): “To me, being trans is about community and self-love.” (Charlie, DX autistic, trans masculine/non-binary/agender/bigender).

3.4.3.1 Now I have the words I understand who I am and where I have been

Within theme three I developed a sub-theme related to information seeking and language, which interlinks to the experience of developing and disclosing identity through connection with others. A strong aspect of understanding one's autistic or trans identity and moving forwards to disclose it, was the importance of having the words to make sense of and express the innate experiences of feeling different; "when I finally got my assessment and found out it was like I finally understood what was 'wrong' with me" (Jaden, DX autistic, male/non-binary/genderflux); "I came across a lot of different LGBTQIA+ identities and finally found out I wasn't alone in how I felt" (Morgan, DX autistic, transgender/non-binary).

In the case of autistic identity this language was often given by parents or clinicians during the diagnostic process: "I met a counsellor who said that most of my problems stemmed from symptoms of autism." (Byron, ID autistic, male/trans masculine); "I realised that I had some autistic traits when my parents started suggesting that we went for a diagnosis" (Parker, DX autistic, non-binary/gender fluid). While for some the language of autism supports their understanding of themselves as well as providing a useful explanation for other people, others describe having language given to them as unhelpful as it comes without an understanding of what this means: "I was still young so I myself did not even know what autism was. I was given my diagnosis and then I had to research what that meant throughout the years." (Ocean, DX autistic, non-binary/gender fluid/genderqueer). This extract from Ocean points to the importance of agency in the usefulness of diagnostic labels. As seen in the previous extract from Jaden, for some being given the language of autism supports understanding of self and opens doors to connection with other autistic people. However, the label of autism is less helpful when it is bestowed by others without the involvement of the person receiving it (Fletcher-Watson, 2024). In this way, words alone do not unlock understanding unless they hold meaning for the individual.

For trans identity my data analysis highlights a more personal process of discovering language through seeking information to support understanding of internal experience: "My online searches led me to an NHS page on gender dysphoria, and that explained a lot." (Jade, DX autistic, female/ trans feminine); "I researched about what I was feeling and...came across transpeople for the first time, and it made sense to me." (Zayn, DX autistic, male/ transgender). These extracts demonstrate a motivation to seek out information related to experiences of gender which do not align with allistic expectations, which in turn gives one the language to articulate this disconnect. This discovery of language then leads to greater understanding of self and connection with a broader trans community.

3.4.4 No going back: the imperative of authenticity

My final theme brings together data which I interpret represents the value of living authentically and how once one experiences this the personal benefits make it difficult or impossible to live any other way. For many of my participants, disclosing their autistic and gender identities enhanced their personal and family relationships: “it’s just made it so that I have stronger more authentic relationships with people” (Elijah, ID autistic, trans masculine); “it’s only served to improve my relationships given I’m not withholding info from people closest to me.” (Dakota, ID autistic, non-binary). When people begin to share who they are with others, and this is met with unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1951), where others do not judge or question them based on their disclosure, this in turn enhances their self-compassion. This then leads to a re-evaluation of less supportive relationships: “I see them very rarely because they won’t/can’t stop misgendering me...I won’t be in that environment anymore” (Marley, ID autistic, trans masculine/non-binary); “Anybody who isn’t comfortable with these aspects of me isn’t a true friend.” (Kendall, DX autistic, non-binary/agender/autigender).

As people are afforded more opportunities to both disclose and express their autistic and trans identities, they experience a sense of relief and contentment unlike any they have previously felt: “Living authentically means I lose/lowered the mask of being self-aware about my presentation It felt so freeing and correct to finally lean into just embodying who I am.” (Luna, DX autistic, non-binary/gender fluid/genderqueer/intersex); “I have never felt more like myself until now, presenting on the outside how I feel inside me, other people seeing me the way I see myself and the confidence id never had before since now.” (Zayn, DX autistic, male/transgender). This overwhelming sense of wellbeing derived from a feeling of congruence between how one feels internally, externally and how one is perceived by others is related more strongly in my data interpretations, to gender identity than autistic identity: “Being out and knowing who I am means...[feeling] like I’m a real person in a way I never did before.” (Marley, ID autistic, trans masculine/non-binary). However, this sense of relief related to not having to conceal one’s identity, linked to increased wellbeing is also found in research related to autistic people feeling more free to express their autistic traits through the process of unmasking (Pearson & Rose, 2021) as referenced in the extract from Luna above.

Initially expressing one’s authentic identity may come at a cost in terms of stigma from an unsafe world or rejection from friends and family. However, once the benefits of being able to express oneself freely and being supported by others in doing so, there is often a sense of urgency in relation to being able to live authentically more often: “once it clicked, I felt the need to be recognised not misgendered immediately.” (Quinn, ID autistic, agender); “I couldn’t wait any longer to start transitioning - when being myself only on the internet was no longer enough.”

(Noah, ID autistic, male/transgender); “it just reached a breaking point where I needed to start transitioning or else.” (James, AA autistic, male/trans masculine/agender). These extracts illustrate my interpretation of a wider sense that although to an outside observer it may appear my trans autistic participants disclosed their gender identity suddenly, there is in fact a long period of internal decision making leading up to this point.

3.5 General Discussion

The themes I devised through the analysis of my data illustrate the complex process of developing and disclosing both trans and autistic aspects of self for my trans autistic participants. In common with research related to how the wider trans community make decisions around disclosing their gender identity and living authentically (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019; Heiden-Rootes et al., 2023; Kade, 2021; Taube & and Mussap, 2024), my data analysis reflects a considered process of information finding and navigating direct stigma, before testing the waters within trusting relationships enables one to feel an overwhelming sense of relief which then makes it difficult to return to living an inauthentic life. This contradicts suggestions that autistic people may be less aware of how others perceived them (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985) and are therefore more open in sharing their trans identity than allistic peers (Kallitsounaki & Williams, 2020; May et al., 2017; Wattel et al., 2022). Furthermore, the experiences shared by my participants resonate with existing qualitative studies into the experiences of autistic people in relation to sharing autistic identity (Farsinejad et al., 2022; Huang et al., 2022; Togher & Jay, 2023). My participants describe a considered approach to accepting and disclosing their autistic labels, navigating potential stigmatised views against a need to provide others with the language to understand them. This highlights the importance of including autistic people in the design of any research or theory about them (Bertilsson Rosqvist et al., 2019; Gernsbacher & Yergeau, 2019; Holt et al., 2022).

A strong theme constructed in my data was the perspective of multiple participants that the way in which their gender differed from that which they were assigned at birth directly related to them being autistic. This perspective of social gender norms as less important to autistic people (Davidson & Tamas, 2016) has previously been shared by autistic research participants (Kourti & MacLeod, 2019; Peachey & Crane, 2024) and stands in contrast to suggestions from allistic researchers (Kallitsounaki et al., 2021), parents (Cooper et al., 2022) and clinicians (Cooper, Mandy, Butler, et al., 2023) that autistic children are unaware or do not understand the typical social norms of gender. Furthermore, although my study was open to anyone from the trans community, 29 of my 40 participants self-identified as a gender outside the binary of male and female. This links to suggestions from previous studies (Bonazzi et al., 2025; Kristensen & and

Broome, 2015; Walsh et al., 2018) that one explanation for the apparent over representation of autistic people within the trans community could be that they are less likely to identify with a binary construction of gender. In this way it could be that rather than not understanding social norms of gender, autistic people are ‘resistant’ to them (Wattel et al., 2022). That is not to say that autistic people do not understand social norms, but rather that they do not necessarily subscribe to the arbitrary norms of the dominant allistic population. This can be seen as a natural response to norms which have developed to create cohesion amongst the allistic population, and therefore by their nature are likely to be exclusionary of those who fall outside of the norm (van Haasteren, 2011). In this sense it may be more prudent to describe autistic people as having “different”(Pearson & Rose, 2021, p. 54) social and gender norms, as is found with other minoritized groups within society (Fluit et al., 2024).

Although autistic people may have different social and gender norms to the allistic population, it is important to note that this does not diminish their experience of gender dysphoria.

Fundamentally, gender dysphoria is not an interchangeable term for being trans, but rather a clinical diagnosis related to the experience of distress resulting from incongruence between one’s experience of gender and that which was assigned at birth (American Psychiatric Association., 2013). Therefore, although this study adds to a growing body of research suggesting a potential increased likelihood of being trans within the autistic community, gender dysphoria and autism are still separate diagnoses. In fact, in the construction of my theme ‘navigating an unsafe world’ I understand my participants’ experience of being both autistic and trans to come with high levels of distress related to incongruence between their assigned gender and their experience of gender. This distress may be expressed in ways that allistic outsiders do not understand, particularly through suppressing or hiding aspects of their identity or distress, often referred to as masking. However, overall trans autistic people experience distress that when viewed outside of their autism diagnosis would meet the criteria for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria, and as such requires the same treatments and support as would typically be available to all people with gender dysphoria.

Whether they have a formal diagnosis or not, autistic people are more likely to be drawn to other autistic people (Milton, 2012; Milton et al., 2022) as interactions are smoother and less likely to be at crossed purposes with other autistic people than allistic people (Crompton et al., 2020). Therefore, autistic people are potentially more likely to be in communities of people who share similar experiences related to gender differences. Similar others who are ahead in their understanding of themselves, are therefore able to share information they have discovered through their own quest for understanding. This information then provides the language to make sense of one’s own experience and enables the sharing of this with others (Kristensen & Broome, 2015), using the same mechanisms used by the wider trans community.

3.5.1 Implications for Policy and Practice

My findings add to an increasing body of work suggesting that autistic people experience being trans in the same way as the broader trans community. As such it is important that allistic clinicians, practitioners, and policy makers do not make assumptions which devalue the experience of trans autistic people based on their outsider perspectives. Furthermore, my participants describe a similar slow process of disclosing their gender identity as found in wider trans literature. This means that by the time someone comes to a clinician, practitioner or family member to disclose or share an aspect of their gender which differs from that which they were assigned at birth, this should be viewed as a final step after a long, often difficult, period of self-reflection and discovery. It is therefore important that these disclosures are met with openness and support to stand alongside the trans autistic person as they continue on their journey of self-discovery, not dismissing nor hurrying along the process but matching the individual with the care and active listening they need to fully develop their understanding of themselves in a positive and supportive way. Policy makers especially should be cautious not to inadvertently imply that to be autistic is to be unaware of oneself through the introduction of policies and procedures that position autism as an alternative explanation for gender dysphoria, rather than a potentially related yet separate experience.

3.5.2 Strengths, Limitations and Future Research

This study has provided valuable insight into the experiences of trans autistic people in relation to how they develop understanding and make disclosures related to both their gender and autistic aspects of themselves. The participatory aspect of an anonymous online survey has provided a way to shape the research to match the perspective of the trans autistic community from an insider rather than outsider position. This enabled richer data through a greater diversity of participants than perhaps would be possible with other qualitative methodology such as interview studies which generally rely on in person verbal communication with allistic strangers, often described as less comfortable for autistic people.

Limitations of this study include the small number of trans women's voices included in my data. Future studies would benefit from specifically seeking the views of trans autistic women as well as finding ways to make research more accessible to them. In addition, my participants represented a predominantly white British cultural and ethnic heritage. In my participatory feedback survey, participants from minoritised backgrounds shared a desire for future research to include questions more specifically related to the intersection of cultural heritage and both autistic and trans identity. It will therefore be important for future research to focus on this group in particular and find ways to reach minoritised individuals within the trans autistic

community. Finally, my research aligned with previous studies in finding a significant proportion of participants identified with a gender outside the binary and often attributed this directly to being autistic. Further exploration of this connection both in qualitative and quantitative research is needed to fully explore the question of whether the apparent overrepresentation of autistic people within the trans community links more explicitly to a less binary experience of gender than might previously have been considered.

3.6 Conclusion

This study has found that, for my participants at least, it appears that there is potentially something innately linked to autism that means people more often do not share allistic experience of binary gender identification. This could be linked to autistic people having different social norms to the wider allistic population, or a more fundamental difference in their experience of gender. Through community connection they are then able to receive information which enables them to make sense of and share their gender identity with others using similar mechanisms to those found in previous research with the wider trans community. These findings should inform academics, practitioners and family members alike, of the importance of including trans autistic people in all decisions and research about them, so that conclusions are not based on potentially harmful outsider misconceptions.

Appendix A Search Terms in Relation to SPIDER Framework

	Description	Search Terms
Sample	Transgender children, young people, and adults, including non-binary, gender-fluid, and any other gender identity different from that assigned at birth.	"transg*" OR "transma*" OR "transfem*" OR "non binary" OR "non-binary" OR "nonbinary" OR "gender diverse" OR "gender fluid" OR "genderfluid" OR "genderqueer" OR "gender queer" OR "agender" AND
Phenomenon of Interest	Gender Euphoria – the experience of joy through affirmation/congruence of gender experience and gender identity	"gender euphoria" OR "transjoy" OR "transgender joy" OR "trans joy" OR "euphori*" OR "affirmation" OR "alignment" OR "congruence" AND
Design	Qualitative questionnaires, individual or group interviews, focus groups,	"qualitative" OR "questionnaire" OR "survey" OR "interview" OR "focus group" AND
Evaluation	meaning making: e.g. the experience/ perception/ description/ understanding of	"meaning making" OR "experience" OR "perception" OR "understanding" OR "describe" OR "understand" OR "conceptuali?e" OR "perceive" OR "define" OR "definition" AND
Research type	Qualitative or mixed methods (using only the qualitative element for this review)	"Qualitative" OR "mixed methods"

N.B. For searches in Global Index Medicus and SCIELO () replaced "" and search terms related to 'Design' and 'Research type' were excluded.

Appendix B Instructions to Screeners

Step 1: The initial search will include restrictions by date and record type, however step one of screening will be to remove any papers which have been picked up that fall outside of the date and record type to be included.

Instruction to screener: sort papers by date using reference management software and remove any published earlier than 2004.

Step 2: Remove duplicates using a duplicate detection assistance function of the reference management software.

Instruction to screener: sort the papers by author and use the duplicate detection assistance function of the reference management software to highlight duplicates. Merge all duplicates together into one record within the reference manager. Complete a further manual check for duplicates after records highlighted by the automatic tool have been merged: scan the list of records for records where title, author, and date of publication match and merge together any records which are found to be duplicated.

Step 3: Title screen.

Instruction to screener: Manually read through the titles of each record in the list of records and assess them against the exclusion criteria below. Titles containing obvious references to exclusion criteria, e.g. where the title explicitly states the paper is a systematic review, quantitative study, that the subject of the study is not transgender individuals themselves, or where the topic is clearly unrelated i.e. from the field of computer science, should be removed from the list and filed in a separate 'excluded during title screen' folder within the reference manager. N.B. papers with a title in a language other than English should not be excluded at this stage so that further assessment of the availability of a published translation can take place during stages 4 or 5 below.

Step 4: Abstract screen.

Instruction to screener: Manually read through the abstracts of remaining records and assess them against the exclusion criteria, following a similar procedure to that of the title screen. Any papers where the abstract references any of the exclusion criteria should be removed from the list and filed in a separate 'excluded during abstract screen' folder within the reference manager. If a paper is found to not have an English language translation at this stage it should be removed, if it remains unclear as to whether an English language version is available then the full text of the paper should be sought to ensure no papers where an English language version is available are missed.

Step 5: Full text screen.

Instruction to screener: All remaining records should be sought for retrieval. Make a note of any records where a full text version is unavailable or where the record cannot otherwise be retrieved and remove it from the list of final records for inclusion. For all papers where the full text is available read the methods section and assess to ensure the paper meets the inclusion criteria (e.g. that it is a qualitative study with transgender participants). Next read through the results section and assess against the exclusion criteria. Any papers which are determined to meet the exclusion criteria should be removed from the list of final papers and filed separately in a 'excluded during full text screen' folder within the reference manager.

N.B. At any stage in the screening process if a screener is uncertain as to whether a paper should be excluded, they will in the first instance refrain from excluding the paper until the next stage of screening. If there is still uncertainty once the next stage has been reached the screener will discuss the potential for exclusion/inclusion with the wider research/supervisory team.

Exclusion Criteria

- Non-human studies – i.e. animal or data only
- Not available in English
- Undergraduate or taught masters level dissertations (as viva could be viewed as a form or peer review that would not be present in taught course dissertations).
- News or other media articles.
- Reviews, commentaries, conference presentations, books etc.
- Older than 20 years (published before 2004)
- Participants do not identify as members of the transgender community (i.e. doctors, family members, other individuals commenting on their perception of the experience of transgender people, not first person experience).
- Participant quotes and analysis do not distinguish between transgender identifying and other participants (i.e. in LGBTQ+ studies)
- Paper only contains quantitative methods of data analysis and collection.
- No reports or analysis related to positive gender affirming experiences (i.e. only focused on negative impact on wellbeing or specific health issue focus)
- Study has specific healthcare/medical focus.
- No direct quotes from participants describing their experience/understanding of gender euphoria explicitly.

Appendix C Quality Appraisal of Included Studies

CASP Checklist: 10 questions to help you make sense of a Qualitative research¹

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme. (2018). CASP Qualitative Studies Checklist. <https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/>

Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) part of Oxford Centre for Triple Value Healthcare www.casp-uk.net

Austin, A., Papciak, R., & Lovins, L. (2022). Gender euphoria: A grounded theory exploration of experiencing gender affirmation. <i>Psychology & Sexuality</i>, 13(5), 1406–1426. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2022.2049632	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The author gives a clear and concise explanation of the aims of the wider research project and the specific aspect reported in this paper.	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments The research aims are to explore the experience of transgender adults and to “give voice” to their experiences, meaning qualitative methodology is most appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The specific choice to use photo elicitation interviewing is explained alongside a description of the method and in relation to the participants of the study. Other aspects of the methods are not always justified but are explained in detail and appear to be in line with the aims and overall qualitative methodology.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Recruitment took place digitally using social media and digital marketing which matched the online nature of the data collection (online survey and virtual interviews via Zoom). Adverts were targeted at transgender and gender diverse adults in line with the aims of the research. However, there is no discussion of how online/social media focused recruitment strategy may have missed certain groups or reflections on why certain groups may not have taken part, although in the limitations section the lack of diversity of participants who were majority white and transmasculine, is acknowledged.	

¹ Appraisal also informed by: Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2024). Reporting guidelines for qualitative research: A values-based approach. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 0(0), 1–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2024.2382244>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2024). Supporting best practice in reflexive thematic analysis reporting in Palliative Medicine: A review of published research and introduction to the Reflexive Thematic Analysis Reporting Guidelines (RTARG). *Palliative Medicine*, 38(6), 608–616. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02692163241234800>

5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments Data collection was via online survey and follow up online video call for participants who consented to this second phase of the study. There is a clear description of the steps of data collection in the methods section. The use of photo elicitation is described in detail, including how researchers were trained in using the technique. Data is defined as transcribed audio files, narrative data, and images.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments There are reflections on the positionality of the researchers within the paper as well as clear statements related to working with participants throughout.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Can't Tell
Comments The overall design of the research appears to have considered the ethical issues involved in working with participants from the transgender community, including the relationship of the researcher in terms of positionality. However, there are points throughout the article where ethical issues could have been more explicitly addressed, particularly in relation to the discussion and limitations. There is also no specific justification for completing the interviews online nor is there a reflection on the ethical implications of including participants' photos in the published research, although it is stated that participants were asked to give consent for some, all, or none of their images to be included. This is particularly troublesome due to many pictures being clearly identifiable and with the paper being published in 2022 when facial recognition and image search technology (which could potentially enable future readers to identify individual participants) would already have been available.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes
Comments The data analysis process is described in detail and appears to have clear and rigorous steps. However, some of the results appear to summarise participants' quotes at face value rather than providing a deeper level analysis.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes
Comments The findings are clearly laid out and include an introductory paragraph explaining the overall findings clearly. There is no explicit link made between the research aims and the findings, however the structure of the findings clearly follow the aims.	
10. How valuable is the research? The discussion section clearly identifies how this research contributes to understanding of gender euphoria in a meaningful way as well as making several recommendations for future research such as with more ethnically diverse participants and transgender youth. The discussion section also includes explicit reference to the implications of the findings to clinical practice.	
Barborini, C., Goodyear, T., Kia, H., Gilbert, M., Ferlatte, O., & Knight, R. (2024). "To smoke feels gender": Exploring the transformative and emancipatory capacities of cannabis among transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming (TGNC) youth. <i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i>, 131, 104536. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2024.104536	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	yes

Comments	
The aim of the research is clearly defined at the end of the introduction section as being an exploration of transgender youth's experience with cannabis use in relation to specific areas of gender exploration, 'mobilizing of trans identities, gender euphoria and dysphoria.	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments	
The research is looking to explore the experience of a specific group not answer any question of objective truth, therefore qualitative methodology is most appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments	
In depth interviews using photo elicitation methods is in line with the aims of the research and is clearly justified and explained in the report.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments	
Purposeful sampling was appropriate to ensure participants met the inclusion criteria in line with the aims to explore transgender young people's cannabis use. There is no explicit justification for the recruitment method, but they are described in detail and used social media and access to participants in a larger 'at risk youth' study. There is also reflection in the strengths and limitations section with regard to the homogeneity of participants in terms of racial/cultural identity.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments	
Data collection is clearly described and justification is given for the use of photo elicitation. Semi-structured interviews also enabled the researcher to keep to their research question while also enabling the participants to guide the conversation/research through their contribution of photographs. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and field notes were taken for elements not captured in the transcript, in line with the chosen qualitative methodology.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments	
The methods section of the paper begins with the authors reflexive considerations and positionality, the method of photo elicitation is also described as being chosen in order to "shift authority away from the researcher...[aiming] to place focus on aspects of participants' experiences that were most important to them, rather than the data we were looking to collect."	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes
Comments	
There are several reflexive comments throughout the paper which suggest broad and research specific ethical issues have been considered deeply. E.g. <i>"This study takes place on the stolen, ancestral territories of the x̱məθkwə' yəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlil' wətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, colonially known as Vancouver, a setting where the non-medical use of cannabis has been legalized as of 2018."</i> The report does not explicitly state that consent was gained to include participants' photographs in the report, however the discussion mentions participants being given the opportunity to decide which if any	

photographs would be 'public' and where they could be shared. The methods also state that an initial meeting took place to explain the process and go through the consent form. Included photographs are all also non-identifiable with the one photograph which contains a person being edited to ensure anonymity.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	yes
Comments The process of data analysis is explained in detail including how codes were defined and identified.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes
Comments Findings are discussed in relation to the research question and clearly laid out with an introductory overview of the findings before moving into more detail.	
10. How valuable is the research? The research is described as 'the beginning of the story' and provides unique insight into the context of a community living within an area where cannabis smoking has become legal. There are mentions of areas that require further exploration throughout the discussion section, however there is not a specific 'future research' or 'implications for practice' section.	
Barras, A., & Frith, H. (2024). 'Cos not everyone wants to talk, they prefer to do, to move': Circuits of trans embodied pleasure and inclusion in sport and physical exercise. <i>Sport, Education and Society</i>, 29(9), 1070–1084. https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2023.2266755	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments There is no clear statement of declared research aims and utilises a sub-set of data from a previous study exploring the lived experience of transgender and non-binary participants participation in sport and physical activity. However, after the statement 'Our paper offers...' there is explanation of the purpose of the reanalysis of the data and the context of trans people's experiences of embodiment in the context of sport and exercise. There are also specific questions stated in relation to what the researchers looked for and sought to answer during the analysis.	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Can't Tell
Comments As the aims are not clearly stated it is not clear whether another method could have been used to achieve them. However, the overall concept of the paper in relation to exploring the experience of the trans community makes a qualitative methodology most likely the most appropriate methodology. The fact that the data analysed comes from a previous qualitative study also implies that qualitative methodology was appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments The explanation of the concept behind the paper does appear to fit the design, however it is possible that a more appropriate design would not have used secondary data. There is also limited explanation/justification of the decision to reanalyse existing data rather than create a new study, although it is stated this was in an effort to minimise 'research fatigue' reportedly experienced by the trans community.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments	

Again, the use of secondary data limits the ability to determine whether this was the most appropriate method or strategy, however the recruitment strategy for the original study is described and 'limitations' with regards to diversity within the sample are acknowledged alongside the inclusion criteria being those who take part in regular sport and exercise.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Can't Tell
Comments The data was collected for a different study as part of a PhD project during semi-structured interviews and then transcribed. The process of selecting and coding data for the current study is described in relation to the re-reading of all initial transcripts by both authors through the lens of "Wellard's concept of circuits of pleasure", and from this the researchers chose to focus on five transcripts in order to explore " <i>previously under-explored theme of embodied pleasures, gender euphoria, and joy.</i> ", which appears to be an appropriate method to explore the specific area the paper focuses on.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments The researchers acknowledge their role within the research and as outsiders to the community they are conducting their research about.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes
Comments Ethical issues are discussed throughout the paper and appear to be a motivating factor in it's creation in terms of providing voice to the trans community and a more positive focus than existing research. There is also a discussion related to the ethical decision making around giving participants the opportunity to use a pseudonym or their real names in the published paper.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can't Tell
Comments Although the process of coding the data is described in terms of how the data for inclusion in the current paper was included, there is limited information as to the specific process of analysing the data. It is stated that analysis " <i>draws on insight from interpretative and phenomenological methodology</i> " with reference to Larkin & Thompson (2012) in relation to Wellard (2012), but it is not explicitly stated that Interpretative Phenomenological analysis as described by Larkin & Thompson has been used.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Can't Tell
Comments The layout of the findings almost appear in the style of a review article, using participants' quotes to create a theoretical argument. Although the data analysis section states that the analysis of data involved organising data into "themes and sub-themes" the findings are presented as a discussion within the theoretical framework being explored (Wellard 2012).	
10. How valuable is the research? There are multiple mentions of the practical and theoretical implications of the research in the conclusion section. However, there are limited explicit recommendations for future research.	
Beischel, W. J., Gauvin, S. E. M., & van Anders, S. M. (2022). 'A little shiny gender breakthrough': Community understandings of gender euphoria. <i>International Journal of Transgender Health</i> , 23(3), 274–294. https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2021.1915223	

Appendix C

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The aims of the research are clearly and explicitly stated as: <i>“to utilize community knowledge and lived experiences to construct an understanding of gender euphoria that might be useful for researchers, clinicians, and communities.”</i>	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments The aim of constructing understanding through lived experience makes qualitative methodology most appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments The research design is described in detail at every step and appears appropriate to meet the aims of the research. However, there is no justification for chosen methods, beyond the statement <i>“Qualitative surveys are well-suited for investigating new and/or poorly understood topics among geographically dispersed participants (Braun et al., 2020).”</i> There is also no reflection on potential other methods that have not been chosen.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments It is stated that participants were recruited via social media and in the limitations section of the discussion there is a reflection on the lack of diversity in participants, however there is no discussion around the impact of recruitment strategy nor justification for the methods used within the paper.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments The use of an online survey is explained in detail and justified in the write up.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Can't Tell
Comments There is an identity-based statement regarding the authors, however there is not explicit discussion with regards to how this positions them within or alongside the community of their participants. (Potentially this is due to the online survey design meaning they did not directly meet or talk to their participants.)	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Can't Tell
Comments The report states that University Ethics board approval was granted and that informed consent was gained from participants before completing any survey questions. However, there is limited deeper reflection or discussion of ethical implications of the research and no explicit explanation of how the research was explained to the participants.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can't Tell
Comments There appear to be some methodological inaccuracies between the stated use of Braun & Clarke (2006) reflexive thematic analysis and the procedure described, e.g.	

The use of a 'coding scheme' and the use of inter-coder reliability checking. There is also no reflexivity of the researchers role within the analysis beyond a descriptive identity based positionality statement.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes
Comments Themes are clearly laid out after an overview is given. Themes use illustrative quotes to enhance the analysis.	
10. How valuable is the research? Clear implications for practice are described as well as potential areas for future research. The paper provides insight into the implications for the field of positive psychology within marginalised communities as well as building on the discussion and definition of gender euphoria within the LGBTQ community.	
Burkholder, C., Keehn, M., MacEntee, K., Hill, M., Beaumont, A., & Hunt, S. (2024). "There's a lot of DIY joy": Elevating queer joy through participatory visual research with 2SLGBTQIA+ folks in Atlantic Canada. <i>Journal of Gender Studies</i> , 0(0), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2024.2387192	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments In the abstract it states: <i>"our aim is to add to these conversations by exploring how participatory visual research production creates conditions for queer joy and euphoria to emerge."</i> In the main body of the text it is stated: <i>"As scholarship responds to the 'joy deficit' in sociological research (Shuster & Westbrook, 2022, p. 1), and also looks to complicate it (Morris et al., 2022; Stocks, 2023), our aim is to add onto these conversations by exploring how creative praxis and participatory visual research create conditions for dynamic queer joy and euphoria to emerge."</i>	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments The methodology is appropriate as the research is seeking to explore how a qualitative method (participatory visual research production) impacts participants in relation to queer joy and euphoria.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The research design was in line with the stated aims and context of the research. The research design is participatory throughout and uses two levels of creative production to explore the key topics of joy and euphoria.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Recruitment was appropriately via groups related to the target population and the researchers reflect on possible limitations to the recruitment strategy in terms of diversity of participants, particularly potential unintentional limitations for disabled potential participants.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments	

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Data was collected through creative workshops and conversations reflecting on them which explicitly explored the topics of queer joy and euphoria, in line with the research aims.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments There is reflection on the specific positionality of the researchers and how they are both members of and separate from the participant pool and especially the limitations in terms of ethnic diversity.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes
Comments There is deep reflection on ethical elements of the research, from the safety of participants in relation to anti LGBTQ protests to the unintentional exclusion of disabled participants and the limitations in terms of ethnic diversity. There is a statement to say that the research received ethical approval, but the name of the organisation where this was granted is redacted 'for peer review' - presumably an error in the final published version.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes
Comments There is not a clear description of the steps taken during analysis. However, there is a general statement of the process of participator analysis of the artwork during the discussion and a grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) approach to analysis of the discussion recordings and artwork by the researchers, inspired by Muñoz's (2019). The findings demonstrate a deeper analytical approach than simply summarising participants' words, while still keeping the participatory methods at the centre.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes
Comments The findings are presented in detail, however there is not an overview of the findings and individual themes before they are described individually.	
10. How valuable is the research? The research sheds new light and perspective on the topics of joy and euphoria in the Canadian 2SLGBTQIA+ community. The innovative creative participatory methods are also evaluated and discussed in detail enabling future researchers to build upon them.	
Burstall, J., Tan, K. J., Garcia, X. de la P., & Anderson, J. R. (2024). Experiences of body image in the gender non-binary community: A qualitative analysis. Body Image, 51, 101762. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2024.101762	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The introduction section ends with a clear statement that the aim of the paper is to develop knowledge of the experience of non-binary people in relation to body ideals and " <i>how sex-type features influence non-binary experiences of body image</i> ".	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes

Comments Qualitative methodology is in line with the aim to explore a particular lived experience within a specified community.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Justification is given for the use of in-depth photo elicitation interviews in reference to the participatory nature of the method and benefits for working with marginalised groups. Additional justification/explanation of the design is given throughout the methods section.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments The recruitment methods are briefly outlined as being via social media without detail or justification. The limitations section of the discussion refers to the limited diversity in demographics of the participants but does not associate this explicitly with the recruitment methods.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments Detailed description is given of how the interview schedule was created in line with the aims of the research. There is justification for the method of data collection being semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation alongside a description of the process through which theses were conducted and how data was collected in recordings and transcribed for analysis.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	yes
Comments There is an explicit positionality statement declaring the position of the research team within the community they are researching as well as acknowledging their position of privilege as researchers. There is mention of potential 'bias' in the discussion as a perceived limitation, which would make the research methodologically inconsistent due to the claim to have used Braun & Clarke (2006) reflexive thematic analysis, however, this is also mentioned alongside the statement in relation to 'bias' meaning it was potentially added in the review process or to pre-empt the critique of others.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments It is clearly stated that ethical approval was granted from the university ethics board and that participants were given detailed information about the study before completing signed consent forms. The location and procedure of interviews as well as debriefing procedure have also been considered in an ethical way.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can't Tell
Comments There is a clear explanation of the process of data analysis and transparency in regard to the process of coding and theme creation. However, there appears to be some methodological inconsistency in relation to the claim that reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2022) has been used but then the presentation of a code book with a count of codes. The themes also appear to present surface level summaries of participants' responses rather than providing deeper analysis.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes

Comments	
Findings are presented clearly and in detail, with an overview of themes at the beginning and several participant quotes throughout.	
10. How valuable is the research?	
The discussion section provides clear implications for clinicians, policy makers and future research. It also provides unique insight into a potentially overlooked community within both body image and transgender research. However, some recommendations although suggested tentatively may be viewed to go beyond the scope of the small qualitative study.	
Easterbrook-Smith, G. (2024). 'Boy smell': Transgender and nonbinary people's experiences of bodily smell. <i>Culture, Health & Sexuality</i> , 0(0), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2024.2379871	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments	
Although the aim of the research is not explicitly stated there is a clear statement of the intent behind the research which can be taken to represent the aims: "in this article I am interested in looking at how a group of trans people who have accessed gender affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) understand and explain changes in how their own bodies smell".	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments	
The research aims to explore trans people's experiences and understanding of a specific topic which is well suited to qualitative methodology.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments	
Interviews with transcripts analysed using reflexive thematic analysis and discourse analysis appears appropriate for the aims of the research.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	CT
Comments	
Targeted advertising followed by snowball sampling appears appropriate, however there are no participants who have taken feminising hormones, which was not an original aim of the study, so perhaps something about the places the study was advertised or the advert itself was exclusionary to potential female participants.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments	
Qualitative interviews with individual participants.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments	
It appears some thought has been placed upon the relationship between the researcher and participants as the researcher declares their position as a member of the community about whom the research is focused.	

7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes
Comments It is stated that the research was approved by Massey University's Human Ethics Committee, however there is no explanation of the process in which informed consent was gathered from participants.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	CT
Comments The interviews analysed in the study appear to have been selected from a larger pool of interviews forming part of a wider study, it is unclear exactly how the interviews for the current study were analysed. There is potentially some methodological confusion with the analysis as Braun and Clarke (2023) is referenced alongside discourse analysis and Gill (2000), and there is also discussion related to generalisability.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	CT
Comments Findings are presented under clear sub-headings, but there is no overview at the beginning of the findings section summarising the derived themes.	
10. How valuable is the research? There is some discussion related to the strengths and limitations of the study, however there is limited discussion in relation to potential areas for future research and there does not appear to be any discussion of the application of findings to policy and practice.	
Evans, S. (2023). <i>The Experience of Transitioning for the Transgender Person: An Appreciative Inquiry Approach to Advance Gender Affirming Care</i> [Ph.D., University of Windsor (Canada)]. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2774092696/abstract/303EA175F35D4E51PQ/5	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments There is a clear statement of the aims of the research to gain insight into the experience of transition and explicit research questions are also listed.	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments The research aims to explore the lived experience of a specific group of people which is in line with qualitative methodology.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	yes
Comments Clear descriptions and justifications of the research design are given and appear to align with the research aims.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments Although the recruitment strategy is clearly described as via purposeful sampling through a trans organisation's social media and snowball sampling, there is limited justification for the use of social media to recruit or reflection on how this impacted who the participants were. However, inclusion criteria appear	

appropriate for the stated aims of the research and there is some reflection on the recruitment strategy in the limitations section when discussing the homogeneity of participants from a racial/cultural perspective.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments There is a detailed description of the data collection method including how interview questions were developed. The location and format of interviews is also discussed and justified in detail.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments There is discussion throughout regarding the relationship between the researcher and the community being researched as well as specific ethical considerations with regards interview procedure.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments There is a clear section on ethical considerations and ethical approval has been granted by the university.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can't Tell
Comments There appear to be some methodological inconsistencies in that it is declared that reflexive thematic analysis using Braun & Clark (2006) have been used, however saturation, bracketing and bias are also discussed. However, there is a detailed description of how the steps of analysis were worked through including the coding and theme generation. Themes appear to be a summary of participants' responses with limited additional analysis.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes
Comments Findings are presented in detail including an overview table and participant quotes.	
10. How valuable is the research?	
There are clear recommendations for policy and practice as well as suggestions for future research.	
Goetz, T. G., & Arcomano, A. C. (2023). "Coming home to my body": A qualitative exploration of gender-affirming care-seeking and mental health. <i>Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health</i>, 27(4), 380–400. https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2023.2237841	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Although there is no explicit statement of aims or research question, the following statement can be taken to describe the overall aim of the research "Here we present qualitative research exploring TNG participants' interest in gender-affirming care and how such interventions impact identity formation."	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments The research is looking to explore the lived experience of a specific group of people in relation to a specific topic.	

Appendix C

3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Online interviews transcribed and coded digitally and analysed using a grounded theory approach to thematic analysis appears in line with the research aims.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The recruitment strategy through social media is justified in the report.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments Online interviews, recorded and transcribed.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments There is consideration in relation to the process of the research from the participants' perspective and the lead author who conducted interviews is described as 'an openly non-binary transmasculine person' with lived experience of the topic of the research.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes
Comments The research was approved by This Columbia University Irving Medical Center Institutional Review Board, it is not clearly stated how informed consent was gathered from participants, but it does say that they were able to turn off their cameras during interviews.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes
Comments There is a concise description of the process of coding and theme creation.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes
Comments Findings are presented clearly organised into sub-headings, but there is no overview of themes at the start of the findings section.	
10. How valuable is the research? There is some discussion in relation to the strengths and limitations of the research as well as potential areas for future research and practical applications.	
Hall, T., Rees, C., & Newnham, E. (2024). Pathways to euphoria: Deconstructing gender-expansive adults conceptualizations of wellbeing. <i>International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology</i>. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41042-024-00149-2	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	

Appendix C

A specific research question is given prior to the methods section: <i>“What processes foster wellbeing among TGDN adults residing in Western Australia?”</i> There is also discussion (although not explicitly stated as the aim of the researcher) related to the importance of moving away from a deficit/distress pathologizing model of transgender, gender-diverse, and non-binary (TGDN) identity and the importance of including gender identity beyond the binary within transgender research.	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments The qualitative methodology does seem to match the aim in that the researchers discuss the importance of understanding experiences which foster wellbeing within the specific population. However, the actual research question beginning with ‘what processes’ could also be addressed using mixed methods or quantitative methods.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	yes
Comments A participatory model using lived experience members of the community as members of the research team appears in line with the aim to move away from a pathologizing model and include a wider range of participants in research. Justification and explanation for other aspects of the design.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can’t Tell
Comments Although the recruitment strategy is described and justified in part as being related to gaining a broad range of participants there is a reflection in the limitations section of the discussion that the method used may have limited the diversity of the sample in terms of cultural background/ethnicity and place within the LGBTQ community.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments A semi-structured interview guide was developed alongside the lived experience research advisory committee and in relation to key themes relevant to the research question. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	yes
Comments Active participatory methods have been used and the community about which the research is conducted have been included and consulted throughout the process. The lead author acknowledges their position as outside of the community being researched. Participants are included in the process through checking of transcripts and interpretations (although the latter may make the analysis somewhat methodologically disjointed as it appears to have been done to ensure ‘accuracy’ rather than purely for the purpose of giving the participant power over what is included.).	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments Ethical approval has been granted by the university and moral and ethical issues related to the population the participants are from and the research is considered throughout.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can’t Tell
Comments	

Thematic analysis is stated as the method of analysis and Braun and Clarke (2006) is cited, however there appear to be some methodological inconsistencies as processes such as minimizing bias and checking for accuracy are mentioned in the 'quality practices' section of the paper. There are also several sub-themes. However, the process of moving from codes to themes is described and there is mention of the author completing a reflexive journal, so it is possible that word limit restrictions or the review process have not allowed for the full process to be described.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes
Comments Findings are described in detail and include an overview and thematic map for clarity. Each theme is described and emphasised with direct participant quotes.	
10. How valuable is the research? The are clear recommendations for future research and implications for practice in the discussion section. This includes positive lessons learned in terms of the research design as well as findings which could have a broader impact.	
Horton, C. (2022). 'euphoria': Trans children and experiences of prepubertal social transition. <i>Family Relations: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies</i>. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12764	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The paper clearly states the aim of the research is to address the gap in the literature in relation to the experience of trans children and their parents through social transition in preadolescence. There are also clear research questions.	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments The aim of the research is to explore the experience of a specified group making qualitative methodology appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments There is limited justification for the design explicitly, however there is detailed explanation and a clearly defined theoretical framework.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments There is a clear explanation and justification for the recruitment strategy in terms of keeping the population being researched safe. There is also a reflective discussion in the limitations section as to how the recruitment strategy could be altered to increase the diversity of participants.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments The data collection is described in detail, including example interview questions. Semi structured interviews took place online, which were recorded and transcribed.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes

Comments	
The research reflects throughout on their position as well as the individual needs of participants. There is clear statement positioning the researcher within the community being researched.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments	
Ethical approval was granted by the university. Ethical considerations are reflected upon and discussed throughout including the theoretical framework.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes
Comments	
The process of analysis, coding and theme generation is explained. There is some broader limited analysis in the findings section that goes beyond simply collating participants' responses. Themes are illustrated by participants' quotes.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes
Comments	
Themes are clearly described in an overview and then in detail.	
10. How valuable is the research?	
There are clearly defined implications for members of the community being researched and wider professional and policy implications in the discussion section. There are also some suggestions for future research within the strengths and limitations section.	
Jacobsen, K., & Devor, A. (2022). Moving from Gender Dysphoria to Gender Euphoria: Trans Experiences of Positive Gender-Related Emotions. Bulletin of Applied Transgender Studies, 1(1–2), 119–143. https://doi.org/10.57814/ggfg-4j14	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments	
The paper clearly states the aim of the research is to fill a gap in the literature in relation to studies of gender euphoria with the specific research question: How do trans individuals describe their experiences of euphoria, joy, affirmation, or positive affect in relation to their gender?	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments	
The research aimed to gain insight into the experiences of a specific group making qualitative methodology appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments	
Qualitative interviews with a grounded theory analysis is most appropriate for the exploration of meaning making in relation to gender euphoria.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments	

There is a clear explanation and justification of how participants were recruited including how participants were chosen when more people responded to the advert that there was capacity to include.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments Qualitative interviews are an appropriate way to collect data in relation to the topic.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments There is consideration throughout in relation to the participants including the status of the researcher within the trans community.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments The research was approved by the University of Victoria's human research ethics board and there is discussion regarding wider ethical issues throughout.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes
Comments There is a clearly defined and described process for data analysis within the methods section.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes
Comments Findings are described in detail and illustrated with appropriate quotes.	
10. How valuable is the research? There is a clear reflection on the implications of the research.	
Leitch, J., Nguyen, V., & Potter, S. (2025). Beyond dysphoria and stress: A theory of gender euphoria and gender fulfilment. <i>International Journal of Transgender Health</i>, 0(0), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2024.2447786	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments “This study aims to center positive experiences of TGNC people by using grounded theory to develop a framework to understand gender euphoria and related positive aspects of TGNC identity.”	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments The research aims to explore the perspective of a specific group of people and centre their voice and experience, making qualitative methodology appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	CT
Comments	

Overall the design appears appropriate, however the inclusion of 'interviews with mental health providers regarding TGNC clients' seems partially at odds with the declared aim of centring the experiences of trans people.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Flyers at queer and queer-affinity centres; mental health provider listservs; and word-of-mouth appear to be appropriate although potentially a more diverse group of participants in terms of race and ethnicity may have been recruited with a broader outreach of recruitment.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments Semi-structured interviews.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments There is a detailed reflexivity statement where the position of the researchers in relation to the participant population is considered.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	CT
Comments The studies ethical approval is clearly stated along with the procedure for collecting informed consent. However, it is stated that OtterAi has been used to transcribe some interviews and the ethical implications in terms of data security and participants' data being using to train the Ai are not discussed.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes
Comments There is a clear description of the analysis process as well as how the researcher's ensured rigour.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes
Comments Findings are presented under clear sub-headings with a general overview introducing them.	
10. How valuable is the research? There is a detailed consideration of the impact of the research in terms of policy and practice as well as ideas for future research.	
Levitt, H. M., Kehoe, K. A., Day, L. C., Nadwodny, N., Chang, E., Rizo, J. L., Hand, A. B., Alfatafta, R., D'Ambrozio, G., Ruggeri, K., Swanson, S. E., Thompson, A., & Priest, A. (2024). Being not binary: Experiences and functions of gender and gender communities. <i>Sex Roles: A Journal of Research</i> . https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-024-01543-5	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes

Appendix C

Comments The aims of the research are clearly stated in a ‘Study Objectives’ section. <i>“The current study seeks to document the ways in which people with gender identities that fall outside of the gender binary understand their gender and how it functions in their lives.”</i>	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments Qualitative methodology is appropriate as the study is seeking to explore how a specific group of people make sense of a specific topic.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Qualitative interviews with participants from the specific ‘not-binary’ community the researchers sought to explore the experiences of is appropriate and in line with the aims of the research.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The recruitment strategy appears to have focused appropriately on the population of interest and employed measures to enhance diversity within the sample.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments Semi-structured interviews conducted by researchers with specific training in qualitative interviewing and using a topic guide with appropriate questions related to the research aims, appears to have been an appropriate way to address the research issue.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments There is a clear statement of positionality in relation to the research team and their relationship with the community of participants. Furthermore there is a specific statement related to how the researchers reflected on their position throughout the process: <i>“In discussions, the research team used the framework of intersubjective recognition to support their in-group discussions (Levitt, 2021).”</i>	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Can’t tell
Comments It is stated that the study was approved by the University of Massachusetts Boston’s institutional review board and there is some consideration throughout around the context of the study and the participants, however there is no explicit explanation of how the study was explained to participants nor how consent was obtained other than in the ethical approval declaration at the end of the paper where it is stated that “There were human participants who completed informed consent forms”	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes
Comments The process and rationale for analysis is clearly described. The role of the researchers is reflected upon and described in detail.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes

Comments	
There is a clear overview of the findings including how interview transcripts relate to meaning units, categories and clusters. Each cluster is reported in detail with meaningful illustrative quotes.	
10. How valuable is the research?	
There is detailed discussion about the practical and research implications of the research as well as how limitations might impact on future research. The research brings new perspectives from the 'not-binary' community with particular contextual relevance to the time and place the research was conducted, which is described explicitly.	
Mann, T., Jones, T., Van Bergen, P., & Burns, E. (2024). Thriving not surviving: LGBTQ+ students', staff, and parents' experiences of schools as sites of euphoria. <i>Sexuality Research & Social Policy: A Journal of the NSRC</i>, 21(1), 44–61. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-023-00839-7	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	
The aim of the research is explicitly stated as: “to explore how and why LGBTQ+ community members experience euphoria in school contexts.” Specific research questions are also stated.	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments	
The research aims to explore the experience of the group making qualitative methods appropriate. However, the research questions which ask 'what' is associated with feelings of euphoria and seek to compare similarity in experience between students, staff and parents could potentially also be answered with quantitative methods.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments	
The design is clearly explained and justification is given for many aspects, including the use of qualitative survey with marginalised communities. The description of the design is also in line with the aims of the research in that questions see to explore the individual experiences of participants.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments	
The recruitment strategy is described as utilising 'paid and unpaid' adverts on social media websites and mailing lists of 'supportive organisations' (which are then named). However, as the research aims to specifically explore the experience of participants in relation to school it is interesting that schools or school systems have not been approached directly in the recruitment process. There is also no justification for this recruitment method.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments	
The use of an online qualitative survey is described and justified. Example questions appear to be in line with the research aims and qualitative methodology. Data is described as pseudonymised participant responses after initial responses have been 'cleaned or malicious responders and illegible responses'.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Can't Tell

Comments	
There is justification for the use of an online survey in relation to the marginalised nature of the participant group, however there is limited discussion of specific positionality of the researchers within the community they are researching beyond a statement that <i>“The research team included individuals with various sexual orientations, gender identities, and disciplinary backgrounds including sociology, psychology, and education.”</i>	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments	
The study has been approved by the university ethics board and ethical issues in relation to the participant group have been considered throughout.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	yes
Comments	
The analytical method of grounded theory is justified and explained in detail including the involvement of different researchers and the process of coding the data and generate themes.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes
Comments	
The findings are presented clearly with participant quotes used throughout.	
10. How valuable is the research?	
The discussion includes recommendations for future research as well as reflections on the implications for policy and practice.	
Meyer, H. M., Mocarski, R., Holt, N. R., Hope, D. A., & Woodruff, N. (2023). Transgender and gender diverse consumers on navigating the stigmatized process of gender affirmation in the Central Plains USA. <i>Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal</i>, 26(3), 185–213. https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-04-2021-0045	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	
Although an explicit aim of the research is not stated, specific research questions are given: <i>“RQ1 How do transgender and gender diverse individuals describe their gender affirmation journey? RQ2. What are some stigma management techniques that transgender and gender diverse individuals use? RQ3. Which consumption product categories are used throughout this process?”</i>	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments	
Research question one aims to explore the experience of individuals in a specific community, making qualitative methodology appropriate. However, research questions 2 and 3 could potentially also have been answered using quantitative methods.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	
The design of the research is described and at times justification is given as well as the use of an experts by experience panel during the design process.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can't Tell

Comments	
Convenience and snowball sampling was used, utilising members of the experts by experience panel with access to the community the participants were from. This process is described but no justification is given for the use of this method nor is there reflection as to the impact of this on the final participants. However, the participants included do meet the aim to explore the experience of transgender and gender diverse individuals.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments	
In depth interviews using a narrative/semi-structured approach appear in line with the aims of the research. Confidentiality of participants has been considered in the location of face-to-face interviews. Anonymised transcripts of interview audio recordings are described as the data for the purpose of analysis.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Can't Tell
Comments	
The research design is participatory in nature with a lived experience panel included at all stages and authors of the paper are declared as being members or founders of Trans Collaborations organisation. It is stated that the participatory design is intended to address " <i>the power asymmetry between researcher and subject</i> ", however there is not explicit reflection on the part of the lead author as to their position within or outside of the community they are researching and it is not clear who conducted this interviews and whether or how they considered their position during these.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments	
It is stated that " <i>an IRB application was submitted and approved by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board.</i> " and that " <i>informed consent</i> " was obtained from participants before commencing interviews. Ethical issues have also been considered in relation to working with the community throughout the design of the research and through the use of participatory methods.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	yes
Comments	
The process of data analysis is described including how data was coded, and themes were created using thematic analysis as described by Weiss (1994). The researchers also worked collaboratively with the lived experience panel during the analysis.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes
Comments	
A clear overview of findings is given alongside detailed descriptions of themes illustrated by participants quotes. An explanation and diagram of the proposed " <i>Transgender and gender diverse consumer model of gender affirmation</i> " is also given.	
10. How valuable is the research?	
The discussion presents clear implications for practice and recommendations for future research.	
Morrow, Q. J. (2023). <i>Looking for Signs of Trans Life: Rejecting Transnormativity to Explore Genderfluidity as Both Identity and Relational Process</i> [Ph.D., University of Minnesota]. https://www.proquest.com/docview/2917405562/abstract/77D6CF6BD3A4AC0PQ/1	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	yes

Comments Although the phrase 'aims of the research' is not used there is a clearly stated research question: <i>"What is the experience of being genderfluid?"</i> Followed by a description of the wider 'goal' of the thesis being to create a <i>"kind of compendium for genderfluid people"</i> .	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments The research looks to explore lived experience through the lens of their own experience which makes qualitative methodology most appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	yes
Comments Careful thought and justification for design is present throughout the thesis, including the choice to use hermeneutic phenomenology, where descriptions of lived experience are interweaved with reflections on their meaning.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	yes
Comments Participants were recruited via purposeful and snowball sampling utilising connections and relationship building between the researcher and transgender community organisations. Part of the recruitment process involved creating a website with additional information about the study including the researchers role within the genderfluid community enabling opportunity to build trust and enable more participants to feel safe to come forwards for the research.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments Online semi-structured interviews which were recorded, and audio described. Detailed description is provided of the data collection process and rationale.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	yes
Comments The style of the entire thesis and research method of hermeneutic phenomenology overtly places the researcher within the genderfluid community throughout. There is also reflective and thoughtful discussion of ethical issues in relation to participants and the importance of building trust. A member checking process was also offered to the participants in order to allow them to choose to be more involved in the research process if they wished to.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments The research was approved through the university ethics procedures and consent was gained from participants both formally before commencing and verbally throughout at each step. The interview process is described through an ethical lens and includes highlighting the debrief.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	yes
Comments There is a clear explanation and justification of the process of analysis in line with the overall design and epistemological perspective of the research. There is also a clear explanation of the process through which themes were created and the inclusion of member checking with participants.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes

Comments	
Findings are presented in detail and in line with the hermeneutic phenomenology methodology.	
10. How valuable is the research?	
The thesis is valuable for members of the genderfluid community to feel that they are not alone as well as for members of the wider LGBTQ community and beyond to learn from the experience of participants and ensure a welcoming and inclusive society for all. There are limited explicit recommendations for future research, policy or practice, but again the thesis as a whole provides important insight and perspective which would be useful to policy makers especially.	
Pehlivanidis, S. G., & Anderson, J. R. (2024). A qualitative exploration of the motivations and implications of chest binding practices for transmasculine australians. <i>International Journal of Transgender Health</i>. https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2024.2319792	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	
The aim is clearly stated as “to qualitatively explore chest binding motivations and implications experienced by transmasculine Australians.”	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments	
The research aims to gain insight into the experiences and perspectives of a specific group making qualitative methodology appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	
Overall the design appears to be in line with the research aims through seeking out participants from the transmasculine community, conducting interviews and using reflexive thematic analysis all of which would support the aim of gaining insight into the experience of this community. However, there is limited justification for the design/methods chosen or the impact these may have had on the findings compared to other methods available that were not chosen.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments	
Although the recruitment strategy is described and appears to have targeted the population of interest, there is no discussion of how the chosen method of using online advertising and university networks impacted the participant group. In the limitations section of the discussion there is reference to the homogeneity of participants in terms of age, but there is no reflection on how the recruitment strategy may have impacted this.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments	
The development of interview transcripts is described in detail and appears appropriate for addressing the aims of the research. Online interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis, however there is limited justification for the use of these methods.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	yes
Comments	

There is a clear positionality statement where the researchers consider their role alongside the community they are researching. There is also reflection on ensuring participants were comfortable and building rapport during the interviews and the opportunity for participants to check the transcripts before analysis began.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments Ethical approval was granted by the university and information about the study was shared with participants before consent was gained.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can't Tell
Comments The researchers state they have followed Braun and Clarke (2006) reflexive thematic analysis and do talk of using a reflexive journal, however they also discuss this alongside concerns regarding bias which would appear potentially methodologically incongruent with Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis. There is also limited explanation of how and by whom data was coded and themes defined.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes
Comments Themes are laid out clearly with an overview to introduce them and illustrated with participant quotes throughout.	
10. How valuable is the research? Implications for practice are clearly stated in the discussion section and broad recommendations for future research are given.	
Riggs, D. W., Rosenberg, S., Taylor, N., & Fraser, H. (2024). The Role of Animals in Buffering Against Cisgenderism in and Beyond Family Contexts for Trans Young People Living in Australia. <i>Journal of Family Violence</i>, 39(7), 1231–1240. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-023-00503-z	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The aim is clearly stated as “to further examine the role of animals who live in the home with trans young people, including in terms of buffering against violence or marginalisation both within, and from outside of, the family.”	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments Potentially a mixed methods or quantitative approach could have measured the impact of animals on the lives of trans young people, but the qualitative methodology is none the less still appropriate in exploring the subjective experience of a specific group of people.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Online interviews directly with trans young people, which were transcribed for analysis by reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Social media advertisements with partnership organisation who support trans young people and their families.	

5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments Online interviews with young people while their parents were present was appropriate both ethically and for the purpose of addressing the research aims.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments There is a clear statement of reflexivity considering the position of the researchers in relation to the participants.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes
Comments It is clearly stated how ethical approval and informed consent were obtained, as well as wider ethical considerations regarding research involving children and animals.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes
Comments The process of analysis is clearly described.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes
Comments The findings are clearly presented with appropriate illustrative quotes and a summary to begin the results section.	
10. How valuable is the research? Limitations and implications for future research and practice are discussed.	
Rosati, F., Pistella, J., Coletta, V., & Baiocco, R. (2024). Racialized Migrant Transgender Women Engaged in Sex Work: Double Binds and Identifications with the Community. <i>Archives of Sexual Behavior</i>, 53(3), 1153–1168. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02804-2	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments Research questions are clearly defined as: “ <i>What is the relationship of racialized trans migrant people with their communities? What specific risk and protective factors do they encounter?</i> ” with the stated aim to “ <i>gain insights into the dynamics and relationships among various communities, including those defined by religion, ethnicity, and gender.</i> ” However, the focus of the research appears to be more narrow than these questions and aims as it is focused specifically on the experience of migrant transgender women engaged in sex work. Before the research questions are defined there is mention of a gap in the current literature in relation to “ <i>experiences related to more specific communities, such as those of racialized migrant transgender women engaged in sex work.</i> ” But it is unclear if this example is given due to the findings of the research or whether this was linked to the original aims of the study. It is not inappropriate in qualitative research that seeks to work with communities for the original aim to be broad and then become more defined once participants’ voices are heard, however it would be beneficial for this to be stated more clearly in the paper.	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes

Comments The research aims to explore the experience of participants in the context of their identity within the wider community. The specific research questions as described may also have been answered through mixed methods or quantitative methods, but the overall aims are in line with qualitative methodology.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	yes
Comments The research design is described in detail including the theoretical frameworks which inspired it (gender minority stress (Hendricks & Testa, 2012) and intersectionality (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991)).	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments The recruitment strategy is explained and justified given the marginalised population, however the analysis and purpose of the study appears to have adapted to the participants being all transgender women with experience of sex work. Although this adaption is in line with the a broader qualitative study focused on giving participants voice, there appears to be limited reflection on how or why this participant group was recruited and whether it was intentional or as a result of the partnership organisations used for recruitment.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Can't Tell
Comments The creation of the interview schedule is described in detail however, there is no clear description or justification for the process of interviews i.e. where they took place; how they were recorded; who conducted them. In the description of the process of analysis there is mention of transcription, but it is not clearly explained.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	yes
Comments Much of the justification for the study and it's design is focused on the position of the participant group within the societal context and the relationship between the researchers and the participants. There is a clear positionality statement and efforts to build trust and rapport with the participant group are described.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments Ethical approval was granted from the university and informed consent was gained from participants before interviews commenced. Much of the research design and epistemology appears to be influenced by deep ethical reflection on the part of the researchers.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can't Tell
Comments The process of analysis is described in detail including the process of coding. However, there is a reference to Bran and Clarke (2006, 2022) papers on reflexive thematic analysis alongside a stated method of Codebook Thematic Analysis without justification or explanation of this apparent mismatch. There are also a considerable number of themes and a frequency percentage is provided to justify them, which would appear not to align with a reflexive thematic analysis method.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes

Comments	
Findings are presented clearly and in detail with a good balance of participants' quotes and deeper analysis.	
10. How valuable is the research?	
There do not appear to be any specific or explicit recommendations for future research in the discussion, however there is deep and reflective discussion of the implications of the research and in particular the moral and ethical considerations when working with and supporting the participant group, as well as implications for practice and policy.	
Skelton, S., Riggs, D. W., Pullen Sansfacon, A., Katz-Wise, S. L., Arora, M., & Thibeault, C.-A. (2024). 'It just feels really nice when people call me by my name': Accounts of gender euphoria among Australian trans young people and their parents. <i>Journal of Gender Studies</i> , 33(4), 470–482. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2023.2285984	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	
<i>"Due to an often damage-centred approach to understanding trans people's lives, gender euphoria remains an under researched topic, particularly with trans young people. This paper aims to address this gap by exploring the experiences of pre-pubertal trans young people and their families at the beginning of, or who were waiting to access, gender-affirming medical care, and how this relates to their sense of self, relationships with others, and views about the future."</i> The aim of the wider research the data was taken from is also explicitly stated as to <i>"explore how trans young people and their families experience the transition into and through the commencement of gender affirming medical care, and how this relates to their sense of self, their relationships with others, and their views about the future."</i>	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments	
The research aims to explore specific lived experience making qualitative methodology appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments	
There is limited justification for the design of the research, and it focuses more on the broader research aim than the specific aim of this paper due to the use of a sub-set of data from a wider study. It is also possible that the inclusion of parents does not address the 'gap' in the current research with regards to experiences of trans young people and perhaps a better way to address this would be a study designed specifically around the aim and with young people alone. However, overall the design does appear to match the overall aims of exploring lived experience through the use of interviews with participants.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Can't Tell
Comments	
Recruitment is stated as being predominantly via a charity which supports transgender young people and their families, however there is no justification for this method and limited reflection of the impact of using this method beyond a statement that parents were predominantly the ones who first viewed the advert.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Can't Tell
Comments	

There is limited information with regards to how the interview schedule was created although there are some example questions. It is stated that interviews were conducted virtually with parents and young people together and recordings were subsequently transcribed for analysis. There is reference in the discussion to the fact that interview questions were not designed to discuss the topic of gender euphoria and so perhaps an interview schedule or question more specifically focused on the topic would have better met the aims of the paper. The results may also have been altered by young people being involved independently from their parents, or by using participatory methods which is not reflected upon nor discussed beyond a statement that subsequent waves of the wider study will include separate interviews for parents and young people.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	yes
Comments There is a clear positionality statement that positions the researchers both within and alongside the community of participants. There is some discussion of the process through which participants were considered during the design and interview process, however there is no explicit discussion of the power balance between participants and researchers.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	yes
Comments Ethical approval was granted by the university and both informed formal consent was gained from parents as well as verbal assent from young people during interviews.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can't Tell
Comments The procedure for coding and developing themes is described in detail. There is some potential inconsistency with the stated method of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) in terms of words and phrases such as 'confirmed', and the creation of a high number of themes under 'thematic areas'. However, overall the analytic process is described clearly.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes
Comments The structure of the findings is clearly explained in an introductory paragraph and each theme is then presented in detail with appropriate illustrative quotes.	
10. How valuable is the research? There is not an extensive discussion section and there are no clearly laid out implications for practice and future research (although this could be due to the formatting of the Journal). However, there are some statements which make recommendations for future research such as: <i>"it is important to consider in the future research what gender euphoria might look like for young people who do not have access to gender affirming care"</i> as well as broad implications for practice.	
Tebbe, E. A., Greene, M., Love, D., Moradi, B., & Biskowitz, A. (2024). 'I am All My Identities at Once': A Qualitative Examination of the Connection of Gender and Sexuality with Trans and Nonbinary Adults. <i>PSYCHOLOGY OF WOMEN QUARTERLY</i>. https://doi.org/10.1177/03616843241304765	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes

Comments The aim of the research is clearly stated as: <i>“With the present study, we aimed to contribute to research on sexual fluidity among TNB people...Specifically, we explored two central research questions: (1) How do TNB individuals experience their gender, sexuality, and gender–sexuality connections? (2) How have TNB individuals experienced shifts in their sexuality over time and in connection with shifts in their gender?”</i>	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes
Comments The research aims to explore the personal experiences of a specific group making qualitative methodology appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments Semi structured interviews and the recruitment strategy and analysis fit with the aims to explore the experiences of specific individuals as described in the aims and research questions.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes
Comments The recruitment strategy is well explained and justified in line with the research aims.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes
Comments Interviews were conducted by researchers who identified as members of the transgender/non-binary community and were semi-structured with questions clearly relevant to the research question.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes
Comments There is an explicit reflexivity statement and comments throughout the manuscript reflect the thoughts of researchers with regard to their relationship within the population they are researching.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes
Comments It is clearly stated that the research was approved by “the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at a large midwestern university” and the process for gaining consent is described as is how information about the study was shared with potential participants.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can’t Tell
Comments Although there is a clear description of the analysis process, there is some methodological incongruence in that it is stated that reflexive thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke (2019;2021) was used but then this statement is shortly followed with reference to ‘trustworthiness’ of the analysis, ‘data saturation’ and a ‘codebook’ following consensus coding.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes

Comments	
There is a clear overview of the findings and each theme and subtheme is described in detail.	
10. How valuable is the research?	
The discussion clearly identifies the implications of the findings from this study for both future research and practice. There is also reflection on limitations which may be important when designing future studies.	
Ussher, J. M., Power, R., Allison, K., Sperring, S., Parton, C., Perz, J., Davies, C., Cook, T., Hawkey, A. J., Robinson, K. H., Hickey, M., Anazodo, A., & Ellis, C. (2023). Reinforcing or Disrupting Gender Affirmation: The Impact of Cancer on Transgender Embodiment and Identity. <i>Archives of Sexual Behavior</i>, 52(3), 901–920. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02530-9	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	
The aim is clearly stated as: “to examine the experiences of embodiment and identity of trans people with cancer and their informal carers, across a range of ages, tumor types and sexualities.” Specific research questions are also reported: “How does cancer and cancer treatment impact the embodiment and identity of trans people with cancer and trans cancer carers? How do interactions with healthcare professionals (HCPs) influence the negotiation of trans embodiment and identity in the context of cancer?”	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments	
The research aims to explore the lived experience of a specific group of people in a specific context making qualitative methodology appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	
The design is clearly explained and justified and appears to be in line with the aims of the research. There is also a clear explanation of the theoretical framework which influenced the design and the process of actively involving an experts by experience panel in all aspects of the research process.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	
The recruitment strategy utilised a variety of different methods to access the specific community the research was interested in. However, there is no explicit justification for specific aspects of this nor is there a reflection on the implications of the methods on the participants recruited.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments	
Detailed description of the open ended survey, semi-structured interview and photo elicitation interview process is given alongside explanation of how the interview schedule was created. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	yes
Comments	

The position of the researchers within and alongside the community being researched is declared and the study uses integrated knowledge translation (iKT) with a panel of experts by experience to ensure <i>“a dynamic, collaborative process between researchers and knowledge users to achieve actionable research outcomes”</i>	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Can't Tell
Comments The research is approved by the university and informed consent was gained from participants including for the use of photographs in the published research. However, no justification or reflection on the ethics of using identifiable photographs is given and no attempt has been made to obscure identities in included photographs.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can't Tell
Comments There is a clear description of the process of analysis including steps taken during coding and theme development. However, it is stated that reflexive thematic analysis is used (Braun & Clarke, 2019), but there are limited elements of reflexivity in the process described and included elements such as member checking and the use of a coding frame suggest some level of methodological inconsistency.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes
Comments Findings are presented clearly including an initial overview followed by detailed descriptions accompanied by participants' quotes and photographs.	
10. How valuable is the research? The discussion features reflections on the implications of the research in relation to healthcare practices and policy but there do not appear to be any explicit recommendations for future research.	
Ussher, J. M., Hawkey, A., Perz, J., Liamputtong, P., Sekar, J., Marjadi, B., Schmied, V., Dune, T., & Brook, E. (2022). Gender affirmation and social exclusion amongst trans women of color in Australia. <i>International Journal of Transgender Health</i>, 23(1/2), 79–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2021.1947432	
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	yes
Comments The aim of the research is clearly stated: <i>“There is a need for further research on gender transitioning and affirmation in a broader cross section of trans women of color living in Australia, including those who are migrants. This is the aim of the study on which this article is based.”</i> There are additional specific research question: <i>“How do trans women of color living in Australia negotiate gender transitioning and gender affirmation, in the context of the risk of social exclusion and violence?”</i>	
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	yes
Comments The research aims to explore the lived experience of a specific group in a specific context making qualitative methodology appropriate.	
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	yes
Comments	

The research was designed with the support of lived experience experts and using an intersectionality framework. Although there is limited justification for aspects of the design the use of photovoice is clearly explained and justified in relation to the participant group.	
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	yes
Comments Recruitment methods are clearly described and appear to be effective in recruiting participants from the group the research aims to learn more from.	
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	yes
Comments The use of photovoice is justified and explained. Other data was collected through semi-structured interview.	
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	yes
Comments The design of the research considers the position of the researchers within and alongside the community being researched. Interviews were conducted by a member of the research team who also identified as being a member of the community being researched. Methodological choices, such as photovoice, are justified in the context of considerations of power dynamics between researchers and participants.	
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Can't Tell
Comments The research was approved by the university ethics board and informed consent was gained from participants for their participation. Moral and ethical issues have also clearly been considered throughout the design process of the research. However, there is limited explanation or justification for the use of identifiable participant photographs within the published research while also changing real names and giving pseudonyms in the written quotes, beyond the statement: <i>"All participants provided permission for their photographs to be used in publication through being sent a copy of the images we selected and the accompanying descriptions from the interviews for approval."</i> The title of the paper also refers to 'trans women of colour' and yet many participants are listed as non-binary using they/them pronouns in the demographic table, which could be viewed as erasing these participants' identities in the title.	
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	yes
Comments There is a detailed description of the process of coding and generating themes, following the stated method of 'theoretical thematic analysis'.	
9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	yes
Comments There is a clear overview of the themes to introduce them and then they are explained in detail alongside participant quotes and photographs.	
10. How valuable is the research? There are limited recommendations for future research in the discussion in relation to research design (suggesting interviews may benefit from being in the first language of participants in future studies). Recommendations for policy and practice are weaved into the overall discussion.	

Appendix D Data Extraction Table

Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
Austin et al., 2022 (Academic Journal Article)	USA	To give voice to the experiences of diverse transgender participants in relation to the alleviation and/or mitigation of gender dysphoria, experiences of gender affirmation, and experiences of gender euphoria.	30 transgender and non-binary adults aged 18-62.	Semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews, with a grounded theory approach to analysis.	Four key processes associated with experiences of gender euphoria across participants: 1. being exposed to a gender affirming antecedent; 2. having an affirming thought; 3. feeling a positive emotion; 4. experiencing enhanced quality of life.
Barborini et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	Canada	An exploration of transgender youth's experience with cannabis use in relation to: gender exploration; mobilizing of trans identities; gender euphoria and dysphoria; as well as the challenging of mainstream notions of gender.	27 transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming young people aged 16-24 years.	Community based participatory research, using semi-structured interviews and photovoice-based activity, with a grounded theory approach to analysis.	Three thematic segments: 1. Cannabis as a "technology of the self": the purposeful and strategic use to enact gender expressions and forms of embodiment; 2. Cannabis as a "catalyst" for introspection: the use of cannabis to mobilize identity discovery and development; 3. "To smoke feels gender": cannabis offers a vehicle through which TGNC youth can access moments of gender euphoria and affirmation.
Barras & Frith, 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	UK	Exploration of the lived experiences of transgender and non-binary people's participation in everyday sport and physical activity in the UK, in reference to embodied pleasures, gender euphoria, and joy, and their relationship to Wellard's circuits of pleasure/body-reflexivity framework.	18 transgender and non-binary adults aged 23-70 years.	Re-exploration of data from semi-structured interviews conducted as part of a larger qualitative study. Analysis drawing on insight from interpretative and phenomenological methodology, through the perspective of Wellard's circuits of pleasure/body-reflexivity framework.	Findings are presented under two sub-headings: 1. Body-reflexive (trans) pleasures; 2. Body-reflexive (trans) displeasures.

² Sections of findings extracted as data as part of the synthesis are highlighted in yellow.

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Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
Beischel et al., 2022 (Academic Journal Article)	USA and Canada	To utilize community knowledge and lived experiences to construct an understanding of gender euphoria that might be useful for researchers, clinicians, and communities.	47 adults aged between 18 and 56, the majority of whom were transgender, non-binary, allogender (neither cisgender nor transgender) or agender.	Online mixed methods survey analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013).	Five themes: 1. gender euphoria describes a joyful feeling of rightness in one's gender/sex; 2. gender euphoric experiences can be external, internal, and/or social; 3. "gender euphoria" originated in and circulates in online and in-person gender/sex minority communities; 4. dysphoria describes a negative feeling of conflict between gender/sexed aspects of one's self; and 5. the relationship between euphoria and dysphoria is complex.
Burkholder et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	Canada	Exploration of how participatory visual research production creates conditions for queer joy and euphoria to emerge.	35 members of the Pride/Swell+ community which included "youth, adults, and elders who are trans and cis, queer, disabled, Indigenous and settler, racialized and white."	A fashion show on the theme of "queer joy and gender euphoria" followed by collage making and semi-structured discussion. Transcripts were analysed using grounded theory.	Findings are presented under three headings, with the third comprising of two subheadings: 1. Pursuing euphoria and wearing 'all the crazy silly things'; 2. Collage-production as disruptive, joyful practice; 3. 'Let's represent the sad folks also': failures in queer joy (subheadings: Black queer erasure in art production; Queer ambivalence)
Burstall et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	Australia	To develop qualitative knowledge regarding how non-binary people experience and relate to their bodies, how body ideals are conceptualised by members of the non-binary community, and how sex-typed features influence non-binary experiences of body image.	13 non-binary adults aged 18-50 years.	Semi-structured interviews using photo-elicitation. Transcripts analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022a)	Six themes: 1. Expansive Understandings of Body Image; 2. Body Image can be Linked to Gender Dysphoria; 3. Cultivating a Preferred Body can Lead to Gender Euphoria; 4. Appreciating Diversity in Non-Binary Body Ideals; 5. The Androgynous Body Ideal is not Universally Accepted; and 6. Experiencing the Body as Functional rather than Aesthetic.

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Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
Easterbrook-Smith, 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	New Zealand	To explore how a group of trans people who have accessed gender affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) understand and explain changes in how their own bodies smell.	11 trans adults.	Face to face and online interviews. Transcripts analysed using discourse analysis Gill (2000).	Two main themes the latter of which contained three subthemes: 1. No one talks about it; 2. Reacting to the change (with subthemes: 'neutral, mixed or surprised reactions', 'negative reactions', and 'positive reactions')
Evans, 2023 (Doctoral Thesis)	Canada	To gain insight into the experience of the transitioning process for transgender people through the appreciation of their shared reflections.	14 trans young people and adults aged 17-40 years.	Semi-structured interviews based on appreciative inquiry method of unconditional positive questioning. Analysis with thematic formulation following Braun & Clarke, 2006.	Four themes, each with multiple subthemes: 1. Having Responsive Gender-affirming Health Care (subthemes: Access to reliable information; Timely care; Local access to resources – financial barriers; Trans inclusive care – Nurses doing it right); 2. Social Gender Affirmation (subthemes: Respectful language; Recognition from others); 3. Support (subthemes: Family, friends or community resources); 4. Transitioning on My Own Terms (subthemes: The nonbinary identity; Transitioning may not be what you think; New norms = no need for safe spaces).
Goetz & Arcomano, 2023 (Academic Journal Article)	USA	To explore TNG participants' interest in gender-affirming care and how such interventions impact identity formation	54 trans adults aged 18-59.	Online interviews, with transcripts analysed using grounded theory thematic analysis.	Four main themes the first of which comprised of six subthemes: 1. What constitutes gender-affirming care? (subthemes: Gender-affirming hormone therapy; Chest gender-affirming surgery; Genital gender-affirming surgery; Reproductive care; Facial gender affirmation; Vocal gender affirmation); 2. Goals of Care; 3. Barriers to care; 4. Psychological impacts.
Hall et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	Australia	To explore the question, 'What processes foster wellbeing among transgender, gender-diverse, and non-binary (TGDN) adults residing in Western Australia?' through a positive psychology lens.	12 transgender, gender-diverse, and non-binary adults, aged 21-68 years.	Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) methods including a research advisory committee. Semi-structured interviews analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	Three main themes, comprising of two to three sub-themes, with an overarching theme of gender euphoria: 1. Achieving Gender Congruence (subthemes: Exploring and experimenting with gender expression; Being correctly perceived by the public); 2. Collectively Healing (subthemes: Displaying generativity through advocacy; Helping oneself by helping others); 3. Finding Gender Pride (subthemes: Developing and experiencing pride; The role of support networks; Role models).

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Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
Horton, 2022 (Academic Journal Article)	UK	To explore the experiences of prepubertal social transition for trans children and their parents, guided by the research questions: What are parents' and trans children's experiences of prepubertal social transition; What can we learn from parent and child accounts of their experiences before and after a prepubertal social transition?	10 transgender children aged 9-16 and 30 parents of transgender children.	Semi-structured interviews underpinned by a trans-emancipatory theoretical framework (Noel, 2016), analysis using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	Two main themes, each comprising of multiple subthemes: 1. Challenging experiences pretransition (subthemes: Children correcting assumptions; Becoming distressed; Struggling alone; Reaching crisis; Growing withdrawn and frustrated.); 2. Experiences post transition (subthemes: A weight lifted; Validation at school; Well-being)
Jacobsen & Devor, 2022 (Academic Journal Article)	Canada	To fill a gap in the literature in terms of qualitative studies exploring the concept of 'gender euphoria' within the trans community, guided by the research question: How do trans individuals describe their experiences of euphoria, joy, affirmation, or positive affect in relation to their gender?	5 trans adults aged 21 - 27	Semi-structured interviews, analysed using grounded theory.	Findings are divided into seven subheadings: 1. Defining euphoria; 2. Intensity and frequency; 3. Prompting events; 4. Changes in euphoria and dysphoria over time; 5. The importance of euphoria; 6. Euphoria and mental health; 7. Importance of trans community; 8. Impact of transnormativity and medicalization
Leitch et al., 2025 (Academic Journal Article)	USA	To center positive experiences of TGNC people by using grounded theory to develop a framework to understand gender euphoria and related positive aspects of TGNC identity.	36 participants in total: 25 trans adults aged 21-49. 11 mental health providers working primarily with trans clients (some of whom were also trans)	Semi-structured online interviews conducted in three groups, the first two with trans participants and the third with mental health providers. Interview transcripts were analysed using inductive grounded theory.	The results are presented under a framework of understanding gender fulfilment through the 'Gender Exploration Pathway' with ten subheadings: 1. Identity exploration; 2. Identity awareness; 3. Identity enactment; 4. The fallacy of gender abandonment; 5. Identity assessment; 6. Gender fulfilment; 7. Gender contentment; 8. Gender frustration; 9. Gender depression; 10. Revisiting the pathway.

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Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
Levitt et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	USA	To document the ways in which people with gender identities that fall outside of the gender binary understand their gender and how it functions in their lives, with particular focus on the psychological processes through which not-binary gender identity is shaped and the social functions of that identity for nonbinary people.	17 adults aged 22-73 years, “who do not identify their genders as exclusively either man or woman” referred to in the paper as “not-binary”.	Semi-structured interviews analysed using critical-constructivist grounded theory.	One core category subsuming 20 categories contained within seven clusters: Core Category: Being Not-Binary Allows for the Intentional Construction of Gendered; Cluster 1. Unlearning Cisnormativity as a Developmental Journey (categories: Gender exploration and unlearning cisnormativity and sexism; Distinctive cultural understandings of gender and pressure to conform; Living authentically in relation with others is an active choice); Cluster 2. Strategic Use of Pronouns and Identity Terms to Create Safety or Correct Assumptions (categories: People want to force my gender into boxes; Gender identity labels and pronouns depend on the context and person); Cluster 3. Constant Chafing Occurs via Microaggressions (categories: The conflation of gender identity and expression erases the complexities of gender; In familial and romantic relationships expectations can shroud of my gender; Accepting workplace or educational settings allow me to be authentic and successful; My not-binary gender experiences allow me to see gender dynamics clearly); Cluster 4. LGBTQ/Not-Binary Community Provides Connection and a Counternarrative (categories: Queer relationships and communities that offer refuge from gender expectations; Gender identification results from exploring varied gender identities in community; Expectations around my gender could force me to choose between communities); Cluster 5. Revolutionary Forms of Resistance to the Structures That Want Us Dead (categories: I experience an immense amount of joy from my gender; I have felt disconnected from my body and sexuality; Expressing my gender via my appearance helps me to claim my identity); Cluster 6. My Identities and Statuses are Politicized and Interact With My Culture or Context (categories: Being a political target across regional and national contexts; My culture,

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Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
					knowledge about it, and organizing helps me resist cisnormativity); Cluster 7. Not-Binary Gender Affirming Care Validates My Existence, But Access is Challenging (categories: Gender affirming care feels like science is validating my existence; Gender affirming healthcare involves taking a leap of faith to feel authentic; Gender affirming healthcare allows me to be read as my gender).
Mann et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	Australia	To explore how and why LGBTQ+ community members experience euphoria in school contexts, with the specific research questions: What events in schools are associated with feelings of euphoria for LGBTQ+ community members; Are euphoric-inducing events similarly shared by students, staff, and parents, and do they occur in similar or different ways across cisgender and gender-diverse identities within the LGBTQ+ community?	706 students aged 14-25; 107 members of school staff, and 57 parents, all of whom identified as being part of the LGBTQ+ community. Including 430 transgender or non-binary participants: students n=398 (non-binary n=337; transgender n=61); school staff n=14; parents n=18.	Online survey analysed using grounded theory.	Three broad sources of euphoric events: 1. Social Supports (including: social climate; LGBTQ+ community; and correct gendering); 2. School Practices (including: LGBTQ+ representation; LGBTQ+ inclusive practices; and gender affirmative practices); 3. Internal Experiences (including: pride; advocacy; and appearance).
Meyer et al., 2023	USA	Consumer research seeking to obtain a better understanding of transgender and gender diverse individual's identity transformation	27 transgender and gender diverse adults	Community-based participatory research. In-depth interviews, analysed using inductive analysis, thematic coding.	Seven themes: 1. Awakening: identity ambivalence and the eve of new consumption habits; 2. Exhibiting: information control with clothing and appearance; 3. Shifting: covering through new name and/or pronouns;

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Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
(Academic Journal Article)		within the consumption context, in order to answer three research questions: How do transgender and gender diverse individuals describe their gender affirmation journey; What are some stigma management techniques that transgender and gender diverse individuals use; Which consumption product categories are used throughout this process?	aged 22-64 years.		4. Remaking: identity pegs and medical procedures; 5. Disclosing: reference groups, the wise and courtesy memberships; 6. Rebelling: non-conformity, eccentricity and quirk with media and leisure activities; 7. Releasing: affiliation cycles and the stabilizing of consumption patterns.
Morrow, 2023 (Doctoral Thesis)	USA	To explore the question 'What is the experience of being genderfluid?' with the goal of creating a compendium for genderfluid people to facilitate validation and connection.	16 genderfluid adults, aged 20-36 years.	Hermeneutic phenomenological study using semi-structured interviews.	Findings are presented under nine chapter headings: 1. Stitchwork: A community Definition of Genderfluidity; 2. If You're Looking for a Sign that You're Trans, this is it; 3. Defining Gender: A Glossary of Sorts; 4. Mind the Gaps: The Violence of Invisibility; 5. Play Your Part: The Limits of Agency (subheadings: Interlocking systems of oppression; "Sticky" femininity and interactions between transphobia and misogyny; Why this matters: with some important caveats and complications); 6. Deconstructing Whiteness is Queer Activism (subheadings: Conceptualising whiteness as ownership; Consumption; Containment; Queer rage; 7. Genderfluid People of Colour Resist Colonization; 8. You're Not Asking for Too Much: Supporting Genderfluidity in Interpersonal Relationships (subheadings: Safety; Acceptance of authenticity and facilitation of agency; Respect; Protection and caregiving; A reminder); 9. Permission to Exist: Queer Community and T4T (subheadings: The significance of T4T; Asexuality, aromanticism, and amatonormativity; A little bit of magic)

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Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	Australia	To explore chest binding motivations and implications experienced by transmasculine Australians.	15 transgender and gender diverse adults aged 20-37 years.	Semi-structured interviews analysed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	Six themes, three defined binding motivations: 1. Chest Binding's Role in Euphoric Experiences of Gender; 2. Alleviating Distress and Improving Wellbeing; 3. Interacting with the Social World; and three characterising binding implications: 1. Baseline Experiences of Negative Physical Discomfort; 2. Contextual and Environmental Complexities of Negative Experiences; 3. Binding's Relationship with Clothing and Dress.
Riggs et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	Australia	To further examine the role of animals who live in the home with trans young people, including in terms of buffering against violence or marginalisation both within, and from outside of, the family.	17 trans children and young people aged 10 – 17 interviewed alongside their parents.	Online interviews with transcripts analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	Three themes: 1. 'Having them there to vent to beforehand was really helpful': Animals Buffering Psychological Stressors; 2. "I love how they're not judgemental": Animals as Providing a Safe Space in the Context of Fraught Interpersonal Relationships; 3. 'Animals don't have any biases that humans might have': Animals Provide a Counterpoint to Social Norms.
Rosati et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	Italy	To explore the experiences of racialized migrant transgender women engaged in sex work, with the specific research questions: What is the relationship of racialized trans migrant people with their communities; What specific risk and protective factors do they encounter?	20 migrant (to Italy from South America) transgender women aged 28-66 years.	Semi-structured interviews analysed using inductive codebook thematic analysis.	Two thematic areas each containing five subthemes: 1. The Double Bind of Community (subthemes: Sex work between emancipation and exploitation; Nonprescribed treatments for gender affirmation; Negative experiences with the community; Positive impact of trans organizations; Practical and economic support and exploitation); 2. The identification with the community (subthemes: Awareness of one's privileges and oppressions; Internalized cisgenderism and assimilation; Gender euphoria; Sexual objectification; Trans-generativity).
Skelton et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	Australia	To explore the gender euphoria experiences of pre-pubertal trans young people and their families at the beginning of, or while waiting to access, gender-affirming medical care, and how this relates to their	12 transgender and gender diverse children aged 9-14 years, and their	Individual interviews with child parent dyads, analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	Four thematic contexts: 1. 'I'm glad I am trans': euphoria as a product of self-understanding; 2. 'I hope to be a little bit more confident': euphoria as a product of receiving affirming care; 3. 'They just act like they would normally do to a boy': euphoria as a product of close interpersonal relationships; 4. 'Whenever random

Appendix D

Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
		sense of self, relationships with others, and views about the future.	parents aged 33-51 years.		people use my correct name': euphoria as a product of interactions in the broader community. Within the thematic contexts five overlapping themes were developed: 1. Unique and positive aspects about being trans; 2. Resisting (trans)normative gendered understandings of identity and embodiment; 3. Euphoria as a result of reduced emotional labour and increased safety and comfort; 4. Euphoria through transnormativity; 5. Euphoria through a hope or promise about an imagined future.
Tebbe et al., 2024 (Academic Journal Article)	USA	To explore transgender and nonbinary people's understanding of how their gender, sex, and sexuality evolve over time, with the specific research questions: How do TNB individuals experience their gender, sexuality, and gender–sexuality connections; How have TNB individuals experienced shifts in their sexuality over time and in connection with shifts in their gender?	12 transgender and non-binary adults aged 19-47.	Semi-structured interviews analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012;2021).	Three themes each containing multiple subthemes: 1. Language and terminology are helpful in the development of both sexual and gender identities (subthemes: Exposure to gender and sexuality language and community provides avenues for self-awareness; Sexual identity label captures various dimensions of sexuality; Identifying with a specific identity label has been a fluid process); 2. Changes in gender identity correspond to changes in sexual experiences (subthemes: Gender dynamics of sex and sexuality; Differences in the felt experience of sex and sexuality after transition; Attraction on the basis of gender and/or sexuality shifted after transition); 3. Identity and self-concept coevolve around gender and sexuality (subthemes: Gender and sexuality feel connected socially; Felt connection of gender and sexuality facilitates identity integration; Navigating intersections of trauma and sexuality; Navigating intersections of race, culture, and sexuality).
Ussher et al., 2022	Australia	To explore the experiences of gender transitioning and affirmation for trans women of colour living in Australia, including those who are migrants, with the specific research question:	31 transgender (including, non-binary; genderfluid; and fa'afafine)	In-depth semi-structured interviews and photovoice activity, analysed using	Three themes, with six subthemes across the first two themes: 1. Gender Affirmation: A Bittersweet Experience (subthemes: Self-empowerment tempered by family rejection; Migration facilitates gender affirmation; Gender affirmation and social support); 2.

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Study	Location	Aim	Participants	Design	Findings ²
(Academic Journal Article)		How do trans women of colour living in Australia negotiate gender transitioning and gender affirmation, in the context of the risk of social exclusion and violence?	women of colour, aged 18-54.	theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013).	Being a Trans Woman of Colour (subthemes: Bodily agency and passing; Femininity as pleasure and cultural self-expression ; Resisting archetypal white hetero-femininity); 3. Hormones, Surgical Intervention and Navigating the Health System.
Ussher et al., 2023 (Academic Journal Article)	Australia and New Zealand	To examine the experiences of embodiment and identity of trans people with cancer and their informal carers, across a range of ages, tumour types and sexualities, with the following research questions: How does cancer and cancer treatment impact the embodiment and identity of trans people with cancer and trans cancer carers; How do interactions with healthcare professionals (HCPs) influence the negotiation of trans embodiment and identity in the context of cancer?	86 transgender and gender diverse young people and adults aged 17-72. (international participants from: Australia; USA; UK; New Zealand; Austria; Canada; Denmark; Russia; Serbia; and Germany)	Integrated Knowledge translation (iKT; Graham et al., 2006) steering committee of LGBTQI people. Online survey and in-depth interviews with a subset of participants and additional photo-elicitation activity. Analysis with reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019)	Three themes, with four subthemes across the first two themes: 1. Cancer Enhances Trans Embodiment (subthemes: Gender euphoria following cancer treatment ; Cancer accelerates decisions about gender affirmation); 2. Cancer Erases or Inhibits Gender Affirmation (subthemes: Cancer disrupts trans embodiment; Cancer caring interrupts gender affirmation); 3. Trans Embodiment Invisible or Pathologized in Cancer Care.

Appendix E Table of Descriptive Themes with Original Codes and Exemplar Quotes

Descriptive Theme	Codes	Exemplar Quotes
A journey of Self-Discovery	<p>A weight is lifted.</p> <p>Accomplishment after a journey.</p> <p>Acts of revelation.</p> <p>An epiphany.</p> <p>Connection to who I am.</p> <p>I have the power to overcome the challenges.</p> <p>Part of the journey.</p> <p>My gender is personal to me.</p> <p>To be transgender is to live two realities: euphoria and dysphoria.</p> <p>Fitting the role matching stereotypes.</p> <p>Transcending difficulties and feeling light and congruent.</p>	<p><i>In sharing this image during the interview, she used the following metaphor to recount her emotional response to seeing this image of herself for the first time: 'It makes you feel like you finally saw the glass of water at the other end of the desert'. (Austin et al., 2022, p. 1413)</i></p> <p><i>"Oh, this is what this feels like to feel good in your body!" They continued moving toward that sense of euphoric embodiment by pursuing bottom surgery and hoped to get hip masculinization (liposuction) in the future, if able to afford it. (Goetz & Arcomano, 2023, p. 389)</i></p> <p><i>Being trans has improved my self-image immensely...I went from someone who literally didn't care if I lived or died, to someone who's actually happy every day and can take a photo of themselves and not despise it (Max, 29, Female). (Hall et al., 2024, p. 16)</i></p> <p><i>I told a friend of mine that when I started testosterone, when I could feel that, like, I felt it almost pulsing through my body. I felt like, "Wow, this is how it always should have felt." I always felt like I kind of walked around in a fog, and it just was like the fog lifted. (H. M. Meyer et al., 2023, p. 197)</i></p>
Activism and Collective Identity	<p>I am part of something bigger.</p> <p>Euphoria through defiance.</p> <p>Identity as activism.</p>	<p><i>It's recognizing that currently I'm living in a space where there is a lot of transphobia and difficulty and struggle, and the best I can do to engage with that and to make that a better place...the more useful I am being to the overall arc of society (Ali, 30, Female) (Hall et al., 2024, p. 13)</i></p> <p><i>I get gender euphoria helping other people out with their impostor syndrome and gender dysphoria. (Jacobsen & Devor, 2022, p. 134)</i></p> <p><i>...creating a life that I want and that wants me feels like resistance to like you know, all of these structures, that like, want us dead. (Levitt et al., 2024, p. 1777)</i></p> <p><i>one person said that "reading and writing about being trans and non-binary" (nonbinary, 21) was euphoric for them. (Beischel et al., 2022, p. 283)</i></p>

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Descriptive Theme	Codes	Exemplar Quotes
Acts of gender affirmation by others	<p>Being called by my name.</p> <p>Being correctly gendered.</p> <p>Euphoria is given by others interacting with me as I see me.</p> <p>The joy at being seen as me.</p> <p>The joy of passing.</p> <p>When friends or family affirm my gender identity.</p> <p>When others don't question my gender expression.</p> <p>When others see me, I see me.</p> <p>When others use language typically associated with my gender.</p> <p>When strangers use my correct pronouns.</p>	<p><i>"I remember looking back and being absolutely euphoric when...a salesperson called [me a] dude, like he thought I was a guy." Participant #4 (Burstall et al., 2024, p. 7)</i></p> <p><i>A child interviewee was asked how they felt when their parents used affirming language: "It felt right, and it gave me the biggest feeling of euphoria" (Horton, 2022, p. 10)</i></p> <p><i>But in a way, it ended up being a source of gender euphoria, because they didn't fully forget who I was, and I could tell they didn't think I was a totally different person, but they were like, "Something's different." (Riggs et al., 2024, p. 1235)</i></p> <p><i>They're not gendered terms, but people calling me 'mate' or 'buddy' especially old – you know with the bus drivers? They're always old, dying men with grey hair and I'm like, 'Thank you', and they're like, 'No problem, mate'. And yeah, that's nice. And people using the correct pronouns. I guess I'm more used to it now, but it still feels good. (Skelton et al., 2024, pp. 478–479)</i></p>
Being a part of the LGBTQ+ Community	<p>I am not alone.</p> <p>Being with others who share my experience and my identity journey.</p> <p>A language of the community.</p> <p>I belong.</p> <p>My experience is real.</p> <p>'Queer' as protective supportive.</p> <p>Queer spaces let me be free.</p>	<p><i>Discovering that there was a whole community of people who don't fit the mold of "male" and "female" and that I wasn't alone in my experience was incredibly euphoric for me. I went from feeling like nothing about me fit to feeling much more settled within my own experience. (nonbinary/genderqueer, 34) (Beischel et al., 2022, p. 284)</i></p> <p><i>...everyone in the room came into the space with their own particular sense of queer and trans style, and one of the defining features of our workshop is the way in which we celebrated and affirmed them all. As one participant, Katy, tells the group, 'there's a lot of DIY joy' and we feel inclined to agree. (Burkholder et al., 2024, p. 10)</i></p> <p><i>'The presence of LGBTQ+ students and staff (particularly staff) has provided a safe space on which I can be myself. I find that in particular, being around LGBTQ+ teachers has meant that I have positive LGBTQ+ role models' (Mann et al., 2024, p. 51)</i></p>
Being Part of a Diverse Community or Group	<p>Being part of a diverse community where freedom of expression is valued.</p> <p>Community gives me permission to be me.</p>	<p><i>The alternative, the goth punk, all of those sort of crowds, they're already used to being against the larger concept of what is 'normal'...so, they've already got this like, 'well, I'm weird for doing stuff, so there's nothing wrong with other people being weird for doing stuff' (Alex, 39, Genderqueer, gender nonconforming, non-binary, transmasculine). (Hall et al., 2024, p. 11)</i></p>

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Descriptive Theme	Codes	Exemplar Quotes
		<i>This is illustrated in Maya's photograph "half face mask", which is described as using "performance as the way to explore my culture and my gender at the same time. It's a safe space for me to be able to be Sri Lankan and be visibly queer" (Ussher et al., 2022, p. 88)</i>
Clothing and Style	Clothing that 'fits'. Euphoria through adornment. Styling hair to match gender identity.	<p><i>When it's summertime and I wear overalls and dress what some would consider to be "visibly queer" that is gender euphoric. When I can wear a dress without feeling like I have to be wearing the dress, knowing I can be non-binary but still wear a dress, that's gender euphoric for me. (Beischel et al., 2022, p. 283)</i></p> <p><i>Gender euphoria to me is wearing things that I wanted to wear when I was younger but I was too insecure to wear, so now I wear all the crazy silly things and I do it with pride. (Burkholder et al., 2024, p. 8)</i></p> <p><i>I was riding on a bit of a... euphoria high... I don't know what it is about body modifications, but anytime I get a piercing or tattoo, I just feel more control with my gender identity and with my body as a whole. (Burstall et al., 2024, p. 6)</i></p> <p><i>"Waking up, doing my hair, putting on mascara, which are things that are not necessarily gendered, but they have become an expression of my gender are definitely things that like give me a small sense of euphoria." (Leitch et al., 2025, p. 9)</i></p>
Freedom of Self-Expression	Doing things my way. Finding freedom to be yourself. I am confident to be me. Confident to be who I am. I am who I know myself to be. I can be me in the world, and I want to. I feel like me. Empowerment.	<p><i>... it's been a lot more liberating and a lot of flexibility just to have the space to practice who I am. And I have a lot of pride about it, and [I'm] sick of internalized shame or like transphobia or any kind of stigma. And it's just a really nice way of saying, "fuck you" to traditional roles. So, it makes me feel a lot more fluid and limitless and just very open. (Tebbe et al., 2024, p. 8)</i></p> <p><i>[Is there something that makes you feel proud of yourself?] What I am, my gender identity: that I am a chica! It makes me feel proud. I feel good about being a trans woman. (Rosati et al., 2024, p. 1158)</i></p>
Hope for the Future	A glimpse of what life could be. Hope for a better future. A reason to keep going.	<p><i>Eleven participants described visualising their desired gender-affirming surgery or hormone results as a source of gender euphoria: "Sometimes I cry [thinking] about it. I'm like, fuck yeah, this is gonna be so good." – Participant #5 (Burstall et al., 2024, p. 7)</i></p> <p><i>When I found out that there was a clinic right here in [city name] and I wouldn't have to travel and figure that out, that was like a kind of a euphoric moment. Just to know that</i></p>

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Descriptive Theme	Codes	Exemplar Quotes
		<i>there's even the ability to access care in my town and without having to travel to Toronto or Montreal or Ottawa. (Evans, 2023, p. 62)</i>
Non-judgemental Spaces	<p>A gendered space where I can belong.</p> <p>The environment gives me permission to be me.</p> <p>Having permission to explore and be who you are.</p> <p>Just doing 'normal' things in the world without judgement.</p>	<p><i>it's so much better to live in communities that are freed from things like cisnormative ideals. It's liberating in ways that are hard to describe...(Hall et al., 2024, p. 16)</i></p> <p><i>I haven't really found a good way to explain it quite yet, but I think that we're just so comfortable with each other that they feel comfortable wearing cardigans around me and I can talk in a higher pitched voice and not feel weird about it around them because I know that they still view me the way that I view myself. (Morrow, 2023, p. 282)</i></p> <p><i>'I think I go to the gym because I enjoy it, but I also go there to try and craft, er, a kind of more masculine physique.' Being in the (masculine) space of the gym, and building a masculine physique (presumably muscles), is a body-reflexive process through which Craig achieves gender euphoria. (Barras & Frith, 2024, p. 1078)</i></p>
People Who Support and Accept Me	<p>A place full of allies.</p> <p>Gender euphoria exists in relationships.</p> <p>Having allies on my team.</p> <p>Having supportive friends and family.</p> <p>I am supported and understood.</p> <p>Social acceptance gives a sense of warmth fulfilment.</p> <p>Supportive friends and family.</p> <p>The protection of friends and allies.</p> <p>When other people are 'on your team'.</p>	<p><i>...I had like co-workers who were very affirming and embraced me and validated me as myself, and also the importance of the work that I was doing. (Austin et al., 2022, p. 1419)</i></p> <p><i>One woman said she feels gender euphoria when "women talk to me like I'm their close friend or confidante, when I resonate with speech or media by women for women, when women compliment aspects of my womanhood or femininity, when I'm included among women. (Beischel et al., 2022, p. 284)</i></p> <p><i>I have a really good team. They've been very supportive. Most of them know that I'm trans and they think nothing of it. They don't talk about it. They act like I'm one of them, yeah, and I guess don't – they don't act different to me, my team. They just yeah, act like they would normally do to a boy. (Skelton et al., 2024, p. 477)</i></p>
Personal views related to external appearance	<p>Embodied experience.</p> <p>External reminders of who you are inside.</p> <p>Feeling of congruence between appearance and internal self.</p> <p>Finding a way to 'fit' into the body I have.</p> <p>Having control over external appearance.</p> <p>I am content with my body.</p>	<p><i>I shaved that night and immediately it was like a veil had been lifted and, and I just felt immediately better. Just like, even though I wasn't like seeing and like consciously aware of the hair, having it gone made moving and lying down and talking and thinking clearer and easier. It was it was incredible. (34-year-old, White, transgender woman) (Austin et al., 2022, p. 1418)</i></p> <p><i>...cannabis just magically like makes me forget about certain things, but just like, like I said, like I get hyperaware of like, 'Oh, I have a beard, ' or, 'Oh, like I have this, these male features. (Barborini et al., 2024, p. 8)</i></p>

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Descriptive Theme	Codes	Exemplar Quotes
	<p>I can tune into what is good about my body.</p> <p>I look like me.</p> <p>Look there I am (finding yourself).</p> <p>Looking 'right' in the mirror.</p> <p>Seeing myself for the first time.</p> <p>A sensory experience.</p> <p>Being comfortable to be me without 'props'.</p>	<p><i>These affirming experiences were oftentimes then discussed in regards to self-perception, with binding having acutely personal implications in how participants physically saw themselves as they knew they were internally: "I would be able to not only just see my reflection, I'd actually be able to stop and look at it and be at peace basically. It made me able to be at peace with myself" (Pehlivanidis & Anderson, 2024, p. 6)</i></p>
Physical Changes to Body	<p>Gender affirming surgery.</p> <p>Impact of hormones.</p> <p>Self-expression through body modification.</p> <p>Non-medical changes to body.</p> <p>Physical changes.</p>	<p><i>I feel like smells more masculine on testosterone and that's like, weirdly euphoric (Easterbrook-Smith, 2024, p. 9)</i></p> <p><i>...that 'we are sorry to say that one possible unpleasant side effect of chemo is that you may...'was very confusing, as all the 'negative' de-feminising side effects caused internal gender euphoria. (Ussher et al., 2023, p. 908)</i></p> <p><i>For Higgs, the increased range and intensity of emotions that taking estrogen brought about was euphoric. They explained it affirmed their sense of themselves as a woman and "an estrogen-powered individual": "It feels like my brain is working how it's always supposed to be working, or how I've always wanted to be." (Jacobsen & Devor, 2022, p. 127)</i></p> <p><i>"I was riding on a bit of a... euphoria high... I don't know what it is about body modifications, but anytime I get a piercing or tattoo, I just feel more control with my gender identity and with my body as a whole." (Burstall et al., 2024, p. 6)</i></p>
Wellbeing	<p>A change in state of mind through affirmation.</p> <p>An emotional experience.</p> <p>Being at peace.</p> <p>Feeling at peace.</p> <p>In this moment nothing else matters.</p> <p>Joy leading to fear of what that means.</p> <p>'Just right'.</p> <p>'Life saving'.</p> <p>No longer 'wrong'.</p>	<p><i>And yoga I found was really helpful in me being able to find a way to be present in my body, because that's, you know, not something that that felt safe for a long time. And so being able to do a practice where I was able to, you know, be in my body again, and feel presence, and have some sort of mindfulness about what that felt like was really strange initially. But then being able to feel powerful, knowing I could do certain positions or moves was incredibly empowering and healing at the same time. (Austin et al., 2022, p. 1419)</i></p> <p><i>It's literally life saving. I wish I could describe it to those of you who haven't had it before, but existing in a space, in a moment where your body and gender align [and] feel right with each other when so often that is not the case is ELECTRIC. It's what keeps trans folks alive, those moments of feeling fully and euphorically ourselves. (Beischel et al., 2022, p. 282)</i></p>

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Descriptive Theme	Codes	Exemplar Quotes
	<p>Moments of euphoria reveal the true pain.</p> <p>You feel complete and whole.</p> <p>A positive experience of gender.</p> <p>Having a secure self-concept.</p> <p>A precious treasure.</p> <p>Core memories.</p> <p>Fleeting moments.</p>	<p><i>... gender euphoria and it's like a very unique feeling.... It's like a very distinct feeling for me.... I looked at myself in the mirror and I was like "Damn!" I guess like this mix of like happiness and like gratification.... I was just smiling, and it was just like, I guess I could explain it like a warmth in my... chest area and like spread out and just like contentment....</i> (Levitt et al., 2024, p. 1778)</p> <p><i>"I wouldn't say it's euphoria, but it's like gender contentment, which is as important, I think, that feeling of just like security in my gender."</i> (Leitch et al., 2025, p. 10)</p>
When Others Notice Effort I have Made (appearance)	<p>Desirability.</p> <p>I am in control of how I am perceived.</p> <p>Something I did.</p>	<p><i>I often get 'clocked' for being queer because of how I dress and present myself. As long as it's not in a derogatory way, I feel seen for who I am.</i> (Beischel et al., 2022, pp. 281–282)</p> <p><i>And I was really happy because the day I came to school with my hair cut, one of the – a couple of my friends ran up and gave me a hug and it was nice.</i> (Skelton et al., 2024, p. 478)</p>

Appendix F Initial Questionnaires

Demographic Questionnaire Screening Questions

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research study.

The following questions are about you and relate to our research topic. It is important that you answer these questions to check that you are eligible to take part in the study. If you would like to see all of the questions before giving your answers, please [click here](#).

1. How old are you?

If you are unsure what this question means please [click here](#) for more information.

- i. Under 18
- ii. 18-25
- iii. 26-35
- iv. 36-50
- v. 51 or older

2. Where did you attend school when you were between the ages of 4 to 18 years old? (select all that apply)

If you are unsure what this question means please [click here](#) for more information.

- i. England
- ii. Northern Ireland
- iii. Scotland
- iv. Wales
- v. I was home educated in the United Kingdom
- vi. I did not live in the United Kingdom at any time between the ages of 4 and 18.

3. Do you have a diagnosis of autism or identify as autistic?

If you are unsure what this question means please [click here](#) for more information.

- i. Yes
- ii. No

4. Is your gender now different from the one you were assigned at birth? (If you currently identify as non-binary or agender you should select 'yes' for this question)

If you are unsure what this question means please [click here](#) for more information.

- i. Yes
- ii. No

Further Explanation of Screening Questions

1. How old are you?

This is the age you are today in years. For example, if you are 18 years and 11 months old today you would select '18-25'. If you are 51 years and 2 days old, you would select '51 or older'.

2. Where did you attend school when you were between the ages of 4 to 18 years old? (select all that apply)

This is the country within the United Kingdom where the school you went to was located, when you were younger than 19 years old. If you did not live in the United Kingdom at all between the age of 4 and 18 you should select 'I did not live in the United Kingdom at any time between the ages of 4 and 18. If you are not sure whether you went to school at this age you can select the country you lived in at this time. If you moved house and went to school in more than one country before the age of 18 then you can select all of the countries you lived in, but do not select 'I did not live in the United Kingdom at any time between the ages of 4 and 18'.

3. Do you have a diagnosis of autism or identify as autistic?

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You should select 'yes' to this question if you are autistic, or if anyone has ever told you that you are autistic. You should also select 'yes' to this question if you think that you might be autistic but you have not shared this with anyone else or had a formal diagnosis.

4. Is your gender now different from the one you were assigned at birth?

If you identify as any gender that is not the same as the one you were given as a baby, then you would select 'yes' to this question. If you have not told everyone in your life that your gender is different from the one you were given as a baby, you can still select 'yes'.

Additional Demographic Information

The following questions are about you. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. The information you give will help us to know who our participants are. If you would like to see all of the questions before giving your answers, please [click here](#).

5. At what age were you diagnosed as autistic?

- i. Under the age of 5 years.
- ii. Between the age of 5 and 12 years old.
- iii. Between the age of 13 and 18 years old.
- iv. Between the age of 19 and 25 years old
- v. Over the age of 26 years old.
- vi. I have not received a formal autism diagnosis, but I have identified as being autistic since I was a child or teenager.
- vii. I have not received a formal autism diagnosis, but I have identified as being autistic since I was an adult.
- viii. I have a formal autism diagnosis, but I do not know when I was diagnosed.
- ix. I do not want to share that information.

6. What gender were you assigned at birth?

- i. Female
- ii. Male
- iii. I do not want to share that information

7. What is your current gender identity? (Select all that apply)

- i. Female
- ii. Male
- iii. Transgender
- iv. Trans feminine
- v. Trans masculine
- vi. Non-binary
- vii. Gender fluid
- viii. Genderqueer
- ix. Genderflux
- x. Two-Spirit
- xi. Gender neutral
- xii. Agender
- xiii. Androgynous
- xiv. Autigender
- xv. Demigender
- xvi. Pangender
- xvii. Intersex
- xviii. Bigender
- xix. Other (please write your gender identity in the box below if it is not listed above)
- xx. I do not want to share that information

8. What is your ethnicity or cultural heritage? (please select all that apply to you)

- i. Asian or Asian British
 - Indian
 - Pakistani

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- Bangladeshi
 - Chinese
 - Any other Asian background
 - ii. Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
 - Caribbean
 - African
 - Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background
 - iii. Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
 - White and Black Caribbean
 - White and Black African
 - White and Asian
 - Any other mixed of multiple ethnic background
 - iv. White
 - English
 - Welsh
 - Scottish
 - Northern Irish
 - British
 - Irish
 - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
 - Roma
 - Any other white background
- Any other ethnic group
- I do not want to share that information.

9. How do you describe your sexuality? (select all that apply)

- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Straight
- Asexual
- Pansexual
- Abrosexual
- Other
- I do not want to share that information.

10. When talking about autism, do you prefer to be called: (select all that apply)

- Autistic
- An autistic person.
- A person with autism
- A person with a diagnosis of autism
- Neurodiverse.
- Neurodivergent.
- Neuroqueer
- Other.
- I do not want to share that information.

11. Where do you currently live?

- England
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- Outside of the United Kingdom
- I do not want to share that information.

Appendix F

Qualitative Questionnaire

The following questions ask you to write about your own experiences. Please answer honestly and with as much detail as possible to help us to understand your experience. However, you do not need to write more than a paragraph for each question. You can go back and change your answers at any point until you click on the final 'submit' button. If you would like to see all of the questions in advance, please [click here](#).

1. How would you describe yourself to someone you had never met before, without telling them your name?
2. Please describe a time in your life when you felt most able to be yourself and what it felt like. This could be a specific event or period of time. It could be very recent or something from when you were younger.
3. Please describe the first time you knew you were autistic.
4. Please describe how you decided to tell the first person you told you were autistic, and what happened when you told them. If you have never told anyone you are autistic, please write about why you have not told anyone you are autistic.
5. Please describe the first time you knew your gender was different from the one you were given when you were born.
6. Please describe how you decided to tell the first person you told you were a different gender from the one you were given at birth, and what happened when you told them. If you have never told anyone you are a different gender, please write about why you have not told anyone.
7. Without naming specific people, dates, or locations, please describe something you are looking forwards to this year.
8. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Post-Questionnaire Evaluation Questions

The next questions ask you for your feedback on the questionnaire you have just completed. You do not have to answer any of these questions if you do not want to.

Your answers to these questions will not be analysed as part of the main research but will instead be used to make changes to the questionnaire for future participants in this study. Your answers may help us to think about things that are important for research in the future, but nothing you write in this section will be directly quoted in any write ups or reports.

If you would like to see all of the questions before giving your answers, please [click here](#).

1. Were there any questions in this questionnaire that you did not understand?
2. Were there any questions in this questionnaire that you wish you had not been asked?
3. Are there any new questions you think we should ask?
4. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the process of completing the questionnaire or the questions you were asked?

Thank you for completing our questionnaire. If you would like to go back through the questions and edit any of your answers, please use the 'back' and 'forwards' buttons to move through the questions. If you are happy with what you have written, please tick (check) the box below to indicate you are still happy for to take part in this research and then click 'submit'. If you do not tick (check) the below box and do not click 'submit' then any information you have completed so far will not be included in the study, your data will be deleted, and you will not receive any payment or reward for your participation.

☐ Please tick (check) this box to indicate that you are aged 18 or over and agree to take part in this survey.

Appendix G Amended Questionnaires Following Participant Feedback

Additional Demographic Information

The following questions are about you. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. The information you give will help us to know who our participants are. If you would like to see all of the questions before giving your answers, please [click here](#).

At what age were you diagnosed as autistic?

Under the age of 5 years.

Between the age of 5 and 12 years old.

Between the age of 13 and 18 years old.

Between the age of 19 and 25 years old

Over the age of 26 years old.

I have not received a formal autism diagnosis, but I have identified as being autistic since I was a child or teenager.

I have not received a formal autism diagnosis, but I have identified as being autistic since I was an adult.

I have a formal autism diagnosis, but I do not know when I was diagnosed.

I do not want to share that information.

What gender were you assigned at birth?

Female

Male

I do not want to share that information

What is your current gender identity? (Select all that apply)

Female

Male

Transgender

Trans feminine

Trans masculine

Non-binary

Gender fluid

Genderqueer

Genderflux

Two-Spirit

Gender neutral

Agender

Androgynous

Autigender

Demigender

Pangender

Intersex

Bigender

Other (please write your gender identity in the box below if it is not listed above)

I do not want to share that information

If you would like to tell us more about your gender identity or describe it in more detail, you can do so here:

What is your ethnicity or cultural heritage? (please select all that apply to you)

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Any other Asian background

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Caribbean
African
Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background
White and Black Caribbean
White and Black African
White and Asian
Any other mixed of multiple ethnic background
English
Welsh
Scottish
Northern Irish
British
Irish
Gypsy or Irish Traveller
Roma
Any other white background
Any other ethnic group
I do not want to share that information.

How do you describe your sexuality? (select all that apply)

Gay
Lesbian
Bisexual
Queer
Straight
Asexual
Pansexual
Abrosexual
Other
I do not want to share that information.

When talking about autism, do you prefer to be called: (select all that apply)

Autistic
An autistic person.
A person with autism
A person with a diagnosis of autism
Neurodiverse.
Neurodivergent.
Neuroqueer
Other.
I do not want to share that information.

Where do you currently live?

England
Northern Ireland
Scotland
Wales
Outside of the United Kingdom
I do not want to share that information.

Do you have a long-term health condition or physical disability?

Yes
No
I do not want to share that information.

What is your highest level of education?

Qualifications often gained at school before the age of 16 (e.g. O levels/CSEs/GCSEs/BTEC)
Qualification often gained at school or college after the age of 16 (e.g. NVQ/GNVQ/Diploma/BTEC/AS level/A level/Higher School Certificate)

Appendix G

Apprenticeship

Degree or higher degree (for example BA, BSc, MA, PhD, PGCE, etc.)

Other qualifications (e.g. entry level English, functional skills, ASDAN qualifications, etc.)

No qualifications

I do not want to share that information.

Qualitative Questionnaire

The following question ask you to write about your own experiences. Please answer in a way that is true for you, with as much detail as possible to help us to understand your experience. However, you do not need to write more than a paragraph for each question. You can go back and change your answers at any point until you click on the final 'submit' button. If you would like to see all of the questions in advance, please [click here](#).

How would you describe yourself to someone you had never met before, in an informal setting, without telling them your name?

For this question you could be describing yourself in an introduction or profile online, or in-person at a new social group or event. It is OK to write a list of things you might share, or to write it as you might write or say it in real life (e.g. 'I would tell them about my...' or 'Hi! I am...')

Please describe a time in your life when you felt most able to be yourself and what it felt like. This could be a specific event or period of time. It could be very recent or something from when you were younger.

Please write about your experiences of realising you are autistic.

For this question you can write about a specific event or time when you first realised you were autistic, or you can write about lots of small events that together made you realise or understand that you are autistic. We would also like to know what being autistic means to you, so please write about how it felt when you realised and whether you still feel that way now.

Please write about your experiences of realising your gender was different from the one you were assigned at birth.

For this question you can write about a specific event or time when you first realised your gender identity was different from your gender assigned at birth, or you can write about lots of small events that together made you realise or understand that you are non-binary/transgender/any other gender-diverse identity. We would also like to know what being gender diverse means to you, so please write about how it felt when you realised and whether you still feel that way now.

Please describe when and why you felt it was important to tell other people that you are autistic and/or a different gender from the one you were assigned at birth.

For this question we would like to know who you shared this information with first (without writing their names), how you shared it (e.g. in a letter or by telling them verbally), what it felt like to share this information, and if the experience was the same or different for you when sharing your gender and autistic identity. If you have never told anyone you are autistic or a different gender, please write about why you have not told anyone.

How has your experience of sharing your autistic and gender identity with other people impacted your relationships with them and/or your own identity?

Without writing any names, dates, or locations, please describe something you are looking forwards to this year.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Appendix H Research Advert



Are you autistic?

Do you identify as transgender, gender fluid, non-binary or another gender diverse identity?

Then You may be interested in taking part in this research!

Who am I?
My name is Julia and I am a trainee educational psychologist at the University of Southampton. I am doing this research project as part of my doctoral thesis.

Who can take part?
You can take part if you are:

- Over 18 years of age.
- Autistic (with or without a formal diagnosis).
- Transgender, gender fluid, non-binary, or any other gender different to the one you were assigned at birth.
- Spent some of your education before the age of 18 in the United Kingdom.

What would you need to do?
If you decide to take part you will need to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire should not take you more than one hour to complete and asks questions about your experience of being autistic and gender diverse.

What are the benefits of taking part?
By taking part in my study you will be contributing to knowledge in the area of gender diversity and autism research. Everyone who completes the questionnaire fully will also be given a £10 voucher as a thank you for taking part.

How do you take part?
If you are interested in taking part and would like to find out more, please go to:
https://southampton.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_OGGpMyQOXsopEfl
or scan the QR code opposite.



 **University of Southampton**

The University of Southampton Ethics Committee has granted ethical approval for this research study.
ERGO number: 92802 Date 20.04.2024 Version 1.0

Appendix I Individual Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Formal autism diagnosis?	Current gender	Sex assigned at birth	Age
Kiran	adulthood	non-binary/gender non-conforming	Do not wish to share	18-25
Alyx	adolescence	Unsure/male/non-binary	Male	18-25
Avery	no	non-binary/ agender	Female	26-35
Elliot	no	trans masculine	Female	26-35
Baily	adulthood	agender	Female	26-35
Jade	adolescence	Female/ trans feminine	Male	26-35
Brecken	adulthood	non-binary	Male	26-35
Brooke	awaiting assessment	non-binary / gender fluid/ gender queer/ androgynous	Female	18-25
Lilly	no	Other' - I feel that 'lesbian' is my gender identity	Female	18-25
Cai	no	trans masculine / non-binary	Female	26-35
Charlie	adolescence	trans masculine/ non-binary/ agender/ bigender	Female	18-25
Dakota	no	non-binary	Male	18-25
Dana	no	non-binary / androgynous	Female	26-35
Noah	no	male/ transgender	Female	26-35
Oliver	no	male/ transgender	Female	26-35
Drew	no	non-binary	Female	51 and over
Daryl	no	trans masculine/ non-binary	Female	18-25
Eden	adulthood	autigender	Female	36-50
Ember	no	non-binary	Female	18-25
Fallon	childhood	male/ non-binary	Male	26-35
Liam	no	female to male transgender	Female	36-50
Harley	adulthood	transgender	Do not wish to share	36-50
Latika	childhood	female	Male	18-25
James	awaiting assessment	male/ trans masculine/ agender	Female	26-35
Harper	no	non-binary/ agender	Male	26-35
Jaden	adulthood	male/ non-binary/ genderflux	Female	18-25
Jay	no	non-binary/ gender fluid	Female	26-35
Lucas	adolescence	male/ trans masculine	Female	18-25

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Kendall	adulthood	non-binary/ agender/ autigender	Female	36-50
Kit	awaiting assessment	non-binary	Female	26-35
Luna	adulthood	non-binary/ gender fluid/ genderqueer/ intersex	Female	26-35
Marley	no	trans masculine/ non-binary	Female	26-35
Byron	no	male/trans masculine	Female	18-25
Morgan	adolescence	transgender/ non-binary	Female	18-25
Ocean	childhood	non-binary/ gender fluid/ genderqueer	Female	18-25
Parker	adulthood	non-binary/ gender fluid	Male	18-25
Quin	no	agender	Do not wish to share	18-25
Elijah	no	trans masculine	Female	18-25
Zayn	adolescence	male/ transgender	Female	18-25
Willow	childhood	non-binary/ genderqueer/ gender neutral/ agender	Female	18-25

Appendix J Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Advert Recruited Participants

Study Title: The Journey to Authenticity: The experiences of unmasking and coming out for gender diverse autistic individuals.

Researcher: Julia Thomson

University email: J.Thomson@soton.ac.uk

Researcher's Supervisors: Dr Cora Sargeant, Senior Teaching Fellow, School of Psychology, c.c.sargeant@soton.ac.uk

Dr Sarah Wright, Programme Director of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology, S.F.Wright@soton.ac.uk

Ethics/ERGO no: 92802

Version and date: v.2 11/05/2024

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Please read all of the information below carefully and ask questions by emailing J.Thomson@soton.ac.uk if anything is not clear or you would like more information. You can talk to other people about the research when you are deciding if you want to take part. However, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part.

What is the research about?

My name is Julia. I am a trainee educational psychologist at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom. I am inviting you to take part in a research study for my thesis.

I am researching the experience of people who identify as autistic and gender diverse. This includes people who identify as transgender, non-binary, gender fluid, and all other gender identities different from the one assigned at birth.

The purpose of this research is to find out more about what is important to people who identify as autistic and gender diverse. We want to find out more about how people discovered they were autistic and if this is the same or different to how they discovered they were gender diverse. Current research has found that being gender diverse is more common amongst autistic people than non-autistic people. We believe everyone's individual identities are valid. Through this research we hope to be able to hear about your experiences and perspective so that we can work towards the best ways to support other autistic gender diverse people in the future.

This study was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Southampton (Ethics/ERGO Number: 92802).

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been asked to take part because you meet the inclusion criteria for this research study. This means that you are over the age of 18; identify as autistic and gender diverse; and that you have also spent some of your education when you were under 16 in the United Kingdom.

I hope that around 60 people who meet the inclusion criteria will take part in the study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you take part in this research study you will complete a questionnaire online. The questionnaire should take you approximately one hour to complete. If you start the questionnaire and would like to take a break you can come back later, you will be able to save your answers and complete the survey in stages. If you are happy to complete this questionnaire, you will need to click on the boxes below to show your consent.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

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By taking part in this study you will be contributing to knowledge in the area of gender diversity and autism research.

If you decide to take part in this study and complete the questionnaire fully, you will be given a £10 Amazon voucher to say thank you for taking part. You will need to enter an email address for the voucher to be sent to on the page that comes up after you click 'submit' on the final page of the questionnaire to be sent a voucher. If you decide to take part but then change your mind and stop halfway through, or do not reach the final 'submit' page of the survey, your answers will not be included in the research and you will not be given a voucher.

It is important that only genuine answers from people who are eligible are included in research so that the voice of the autistic gender diverse community can be authentically represented and heard. Therefore, answers that appear obviously non-genuine or malicious, for example by not completing all required questions in full or giving answers that don't relate to the question asked, will not be included in the research and will not receive a £10 Amazon voucher.

Are there any risks involved?

I hope that taking part in this study will not cause you any psychological discomfort or distress. However, for some people thinking back on their past experiences can be upsetting. If you feel upset or uncomfortable at any point while completing the survey you can stop and close your browser. You can also contact the following organisations for support:

- Beyond Reflections (<https://beyond-reflections.org.uk/>) a charity supporting trans, non-binary and questioning adults in England and Wales.
- The LGBT Foundation (<https://lgbt.foundation/>) a national charity supporting LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing
- The National Autistic Society (www.autism.org.uk) a charity supporting autistic people across the UK
- Mind (www.mind.org.uk) a charity supporting people with their mental health across the UK
- Shout (<https://giveusashout.org/>) a free confidential mental health text messaging service for anyone in the UK who feels sad, worried, lonely, suicidal, or needs urgent in the moment support from trained volunteers. Text Shout to **85258** to start a text-based conversation with a trained volunteer.
- The Samaritans (www.samaritans.org) Call 116 123 from any UK phone to talk to someone for free 24 hours a day every day of the year.

What information will be collected?

The first questions in this survey are multiple choice check box questions that ask information about you and relate to my research topic. If you agree take part you will have to answer these questions to check that you are eligible to take part in the study. The second set of questions in the survey are also multiple choice and ask for information about you to help me know a little bit more about who is taking part in my research study. For example, how old you are and the country you live in. You will not have to answer these questions if you do not want to.

The final set of questions in the survey contain textboxes where you will be asked to type your own answers. If you take part you will need to make sure that you do not include any information that could identify you or other people, like your name or the name of the place you live or went to school. This is to make sure that you and the people you know cannot be directly identified by your answers. However, because we will ask for an email address at the end of the questionnaire, this is not an anonymous online survey.

Before each set of questions, you will be given the option to view all of the questions you are going to be asked before you are asked them.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation in the research and all information collected about you during the research project will be kept strictly confidential. All information collected for this study will be stored securely on a password protected computer and backed up on a secure server. Only my research team and I will have access to this information.

Some quotes from questions with a text box answer may be used in the final write up of this research project. If quotes are used the participant they are from will be referred to by a pseudonym in the report.

When you give your email at the end of the questionnaire you will be asked if you would like to be contacted about similar future research opportunities. If you agree to this your email address will be stored securely on a password protected database only accessible by supervisors of this project for the purpose of notifying you of future research opportunities.

For information about how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal information when you take

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part in one of our research projects, please see our Privacy Notice:

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

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this study. If you decide you would like to take part, you will have to click the boxes at the bottom of this form to show you agree to take part.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time until you click submit on the questionnaire. You will not have to give a reason if you decide to stop taking part and all information you have submitted up to that point will be removed from the research.

Once you have clicked 'submit' on the questionnaire the information you have provided will be anonymised and so it will not be possible for you to withdraw from the study.

What will happen to the information collected?

Your personal information will remain strictly confidential. No information that can directly identify you will be included in any reports or publications related to the research project.

The information collected will be analysed and written up as part of my doctoral thesis. It may also be published in an academic journal and presented at conferences.

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of ethics and research integrity. In accordance with our Research Data Management Policy, data will be held for 10 years after the study has finished when it will be securely destroyed.

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information about the research please email me on: J.Thomson@soton.ac.uk

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have any concerns about this study you can contact my supervisors Dr Cora Sargeant, c.c.sargeant@soton.ac.uk or Dr Sarah Wright, S.F.Wright@soton.ac.uk

If you are unhappy about any aspect of this study and would like to make a formal complaint, you can contact the Head of Research Integrity and Governance, University of Southampton, on the following contact details: Email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk, phone: + 44 2380 595058.

Please quote the Ethics/ERGO number above. Please note that by making a complaint you might be no longer anonymous.

More information on your rights as a study participant is available via this link:

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/governance/participant-information.page>

Data Protection Privacy Notice

For information about how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal information when you take part in one of our research projects, please see our Privacy Notice:

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

Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in this research.

☐ Please tick (check) this box to indicate that you have read and understood information about this online

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survey, are aged 18 or over and agree to take part in this study.

- ☐ Please tick (check) this box to indicate that you understand that this online survey is not anonymous.
- ☐ Please tick (check) this box to indicate that you have been given the opportunity to consider the information about this online survey, ask questions about the study, and that any questions you have asked have been answered.
- ☐ Please tick (check) this box to indicate that you understand that your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any point during the completion of the questionnaire without giving a reason.

Appendix K Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Prolific Recruited Participants

Study Title: The Journey to Authenticity: The experiences of unmasking and coming out for gender diverse autistic individuals.

Researcher: Julia Thomson

University email: J.Thomson@soton.ac.uk

Researcher's Supervisor: Dr Cora Sargeant, Senior Teaching Fellow, School of Psychology,
c.c.sargeant@soton.ac.uk

Dr Sarah Wright, Programme Director of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology, S.F.Wright@soton.ac.uk

Ethics/ERGO no: 92802

Version and date: v.2 11/05/2024

What is the research about?

My name is Julia. I am a trainee educational psychologist at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom. I am inviting you to take part in a research study for my thesis.

I am researching the experience of people who identify as autistic and gender diverse. This includes people who identify as transgender, non-binary, gender fluid, and all other gender identities different from the one assigned at birth.

The purpose of this research is to find out more about what is important to people who identify as autistic and gender diverse. We want to find out more about how people discovered they were autistic and if this is the same or different to how they discovered they were gender diverse. Current research has found that being gender diverse is more common amongst autistic people than non-autistic people. We believe everyone's individual identities are valid. Through this research we hope to be able to hear about your experiences and perspective so that we can work towards the best ways to support other autistic gender diverse people in the future.

This study was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Southampton (Ethics/ERGO Number: 92802).

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you take part in this research study you will complete an anonymous questionnaire online. The questionnaire should take you approximately one hour to complete. If you are happy to complete this survey, you will need to click on the box below to show your consent. As this survey is anonymous, I will not be able to know whether you have participated or not. I will also not be able to link your answers to you directly.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You have been asked to take part because you meet the inclusion criteria for my research study. This means that you are over the age of 18; identify as autistic and gender diverse; and that you have also spent some of your education when you were under 18 in the United Kingdom.

I hope that around 60 people who meet the inclusion criteria will take part in my study.

What information will be collected?

The first questions in this survey are multiple choice check box questions that ask information about you and relate to my research topic. If you agree take part you will have to answer these questions to check that you are eligible to take part in the study. The second set of questions in the survey are also multiple choice and ask for information about you to help me know a little bit more about who is taking part in my research study. For example, how old you are and the country you live in. You will not have to answer these questions if you do not want to.

The final set of questions in the survey contain textboxes where you will be asked to type your own answers. If you take part you will need to make sure that you do not include any information that could identify you or other

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people, like your name or the name of the place you live or went to school. This is to make sure that the survey is anonymous.

Before each set of questions, you will be given the option to view all of the questions you are going to be asked before you are asked them.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By taking part in this study you will be contributing to knowledge in the area of gender diversity and autism research.

If you decide to take part in this study and complete the survey in full, you will be paid £12, as stated on your Prolific account when you were invited to take part. If you decide to take part but then change your mind or do not reach the final 'submit' page of the survey, you will not be given any money. Once you submit the final question and read the debrief form you will need to click on the link to return to the main Prolific website in order to receive payment for your participation.

It is important that only genuine answers from people who are eligible are included in research so that the voice of the autistic gender diverse community can be authentically represented and heard. Therefore, you may be asked to return a submission or rejected for payment, in line with Prolific participant rules, if a large section of the questionnaire is not completed; or answers given show a low level of engagement for example through the use of single word answers or 'gibberish'.

Are there any risks involved?

I hope that taking part in this study will not cause you any psychological discomfort or distress. However, for some people thinking back on their past experiences can be upsetting. If you feel upset or uncomfortable at any point while completing the survey you can stop and close your browser. You can also contact the following organisations for support:

- Beyond Reflections (<https://beyond-reflections.org.uk/>) a charity supporting trans, non-binary and questioning adults in England and Wales.
- The LGBT Foundation (<https://lgbt.foundation/>) a national charity supporting LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing
- The National Autistic Society (www.autism.org.uk) a charity supporting autistic people across the UK
- Mind (www.mind.org.uk) a charity supporting people with their mental health across the UK
- Shout (<https://giveusashout.org/>) a free confidential mental health text messaging service for anyone in the UK who feels sad, worried, lonely, suicidal, or needs urgent in the moment support from trained volunteers. Text Shout to **85258** to start a text-based conversation with a trained volunteer.
- The Samaritans (www.samaritans.org) Call 116 123 from any UK phone to talk to someone for free 24 hours a day every day of the year.

What will happen to the information collected?

All information collected for this study will be stored securely on a password protected computer and backed up on a secure server. Only my research team and I will have access to this information.

All of the answers given in the survey will remain anonymous. However, some quotes from questions with a text box answer may be used in the final write up of this research project. If quotes are used the participant they are from will be referred to by a pseudonym in the report.

The information collected will be analysed and written up as part of my doctoral thesis. It may also be published in an academic journal and presented at conferences.

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of ethics and research integrity. In accordance with our Research Data Management Policy, data will be held for 10 years after the study has finished when it will be securely destroyed.

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this study. If you decide you would like to take part, you will have to click the boxes at the bottom of this form to show you agree to take part.

What happens if there is a problem?

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If you have any concerns about this study you can contact my supervisors Dr Cora Sargeant, c.c.sargeant@soton.ac.uk or Dr Sarah Wright, S.F.Wright@soton.ac.uk

If you are unhappy about any aspect of this study and would like to make a formal complaint, you can contact the Head of Research Integrity and Governance, University of Southampton, on the following contact details: Email: rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk, phone: +44 (0) 2380 595058.

Please quote the Ethics/ERGO number above. Please note that by making a complaint you might be no longer anonymous.

More information on your rights as a study participant is available via this link:
<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/about/governance/participant-information.page>

Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering taking part in this research.

☐ Please tick (check) this box to indicate that you have read and understood information on this form, are aged 18 or over and agree to take part in this survey.

☐ Please tick (check) this box if you do not agree to take part in this survey and wish to return to Prolific to return your submission.

Message Displayed to Participants Who Consent

What is your Prolific ID?

Please note that this response should auto-fill with the correct ID

Message Displayed to Participants Who Do Not Consent

As you do not wish to participate in this study, please close this survey and return your submission on Prolific by selecting the 'Stop without completing' button.

Appendix L Advert Recruited Participant Debrief Form

Debriefing Form

Study Title: The Journey to Authenticity: The experiences of unmasking and coming out for gender diverse autistic individuals.

Ethics/ERGO no: 92802

Researcher: Julia Thomson

University email: J.Thomson@soton.ac.uk

Researcher's Supervisors: Dr Cora Sargeant, Senior Teaching Fellow, School of Psychology, c.c.sargeant@soton.ac.uk

Dr Sarah Wright, Programme Director of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology, S.F.Wright@soton.ac.uk

Version and date: v.1 20/04/2024

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

Purpose of the study

The aim of this research was to find out more about what is important to people who identify as autistic and gender diverse. We wanted to find out more about how you discovered you were autistic and if this is the same or different to how you discovered that you were gender diverse. We wanted to find out more about this so that we can explore what helps people to feel happy and confident to be themselves.

Confidentiality

Results of this study will not include your name or any other identifying information. Some quotes from questions with a text box answer may be used in the final write up of this research project. If quotes are used, then a pseudonym will be used in the report and not your real name.

Study results

If you would like to receive a copy of the final report please email J.Thomson@soton.ac.uk. It is up to you whether you would like to receive study results. Please note that by contacting me and providing your contact details, your participation in the study might be no longer anonymous, but I will not know what information you provided.

Further support

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

- Beyond Reflections (<https://beyond-reflections.org.uk/>) a charity supporting trans, non-binary and questioning adults in England and Wales.
- The LGBT Foundation (<https://lgbt.foundation/>) a national charity supporting LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing
- The National Autistic Society (www.autism.org.uk) a charity supporting autistic people across the UK
- Mind (www.mind.org.uk) a charity supporting people with their mental health across the UK
- Shout (<https://giveusashout.org/>) a free confidential mental health text messaging service for anyone in the UK who feels sad, worried, lonely, suicidal, or needs urgent in the moment support from trained volunteers. Text Shout to **85258** to start a text-based conversation with a trained volunteer.
- The Samaritans (www.samaritans.org) Call 116 123 from any UK phone to talk to someone for free 24 hours a day every day of the year.

Further reading

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

Appendix L

Cooper, K., Mandy, W., Butler, C., & Russell, A. (2022). The lived experience of gender dysphoria in autistic adults: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Autism*, 26(4), 963–974.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613211039113>

McAuliffe, C., Walsh, R. J., & Cage, E. (2023). “My whole life has been a process of finding labels that fit”: A Thematic Analysis of Autistic LGBTQIA+ Identity and Inclusion in the LGBTQIA+ Community. *Autism in Adulthood*, 5(2), 127–138. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2021.0074>

Further information

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Julia Thomson at J.Thomson@soton.ac.uk and I will do my best to help.

If you have any concerns about this study you can contact my supervisors Dr Cora Sargeant, c.c.sargeant@soton.ac.uk or Dr Sarah Wright, S.F.Wright@soton.ac.uk

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 (0)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.

Please now click ‘next’ below to enter your email address in order to receive your £10 Amazon voucher as a ‘thank you’ for your participation.

Please be aware that if you do not click next and enter your email address you will not receive a £10 Amazon voucher.

It is important that only genuine answers from people who are eligible are included in research so that the voice of the autistic gender diverse community can be authentically represented and heard. Therefore, answers that appear obviously non-genuine or malicious, for example by not completing all required questions in full or giving answers that don’t relate to the question asked, will not be included in the research and will not receive a £10 Amazon voucher.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please type your email address in the box below so that you can be sent a £10 gift voucher as a thank you for taking part.

If you would like to be contacted about future similar research opportunities please tick (check) the below boxes. If you do not tick these boxes your email address will only be used for the purpose of sending you the gift voucher.

- ☐ I understand that my contact details will be retained by Dr Cora Sargent (C.C.Sargeant@soton.ac.uk), senior teaching fellow and research coordinator DEdPsych Programme and Sarah Wright (S.F.Wright@soton.ac.uk), programme director of educational psychology, at the University of Southampton, so that I can be contacted about future research studies relevant to this project/research filed, for which I may be suitable. I understand that agreeing to be contacted does not oblige me to participate in any further studies.
- ☐ I understand that my personal data will be kept for five years and that I can access my details or ask for them to be removed from the contact list at any time by contacting Dr Cora Sargent (C.C.Sargeant@soton.ac.uk) or Dr Sarah Wright (S.F.Wright@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

For information about how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal information when you take part in one of our research projects, please see our Privacy Notice:

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

Appendix M Prolific Recruited Participant Debrief Form

Debriefing Form

Study Title: The Journey to Authenticity: The experiences of unmasking and coming out for gender diverse autistic individuals.

Ethics/ERGO no: 92802

Researcher: Julia Thomson

University email: J.Thomson@soton.ac.uk

Researcher's Supervisors: Dr Cora Sargeant, Senior Teaching Fellow, School of Psychology, c.c.sargeant@soton.ac.uk

Dr Sarah Wright, Programme Director of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology, S.F.Wright@soton.ac.uk

Version and date: v.2 11/05/2024

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

Purpose of the study

The aim of this research was to find out more about what is important to people who identify as autistic and gender diverse. We wanted to find out more about how you discovered you were autistic and if this is the same or different to how you discovered that you were gender diverse. We wanted to find out more about this so that we can explore what helps people to feel happy and confident to be themselves.

Confidentiality

Results of this study will not include your name or any other identifying information. Some quotes from questions with a text box answer may be used in the final write up of this research project. If quotes are used, then a pseudonym will be used in the report and not your real name.

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- The LGBT Foundation (<https://lgbt.foundation/>) a national charity supporting LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing
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- Mind (www.mind.org.uk) a charity supporting people with their mental health across the UK
- Shout (<https://giveusashout.org/>) a free confidential mental health text messaging service for anyone in the UK who feels sad, worried, lonely, suicidal, or needs urgent in the moment support from trained volunteers. Text Shout to **85258** to start a text-based conversation with a trained volunteer.
- The Samaritans (www.samaritans.org) Call 116 123 from any UK phone to talk to someone for free 24 hours a day every day of the year.

Further reading

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Cooper, K., Mandy, W., Butler, C., & Russell, A. (2022). The lived experience of gender dysphoria in autistic adults: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Autism*, 26(4), 963–974.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613211039113>

Appendix M

McAuliffe, C., Walsh, R. J., & Cage, E. (2023). "My whole life has been a process of finding labels that fit": A Thematic Analysis of Autistic LGBTQIA+ Identity and Inclusion in the LGBTQIA+ Community. *Autism in Adulthood*, 5(2), 127–138. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2021.0074>

Further information

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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 (0)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.

Please now click on 'next' below to be redirected back to Prolific and register your submission.

Please be aware that if you do not click on the above link you will not receive payment for your participation.

It is important that only genuine answers from people who are eligible are included in research so that the voice of the autistic gender diverse community can be authentically represented and heard. Therefore, you may be asked to return a submission or rejected for payment, in line with Prolific participant rules, if a large section of the questionnaire is not completed; or answers given show a low level of engagement for example through the use of single word answers or 'gibberish'.

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