THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Exploring the Role of Parenting and Social Media in the Experiences of Transgender Individuals

being a Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology

in the University of Hull

by

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BSc Psychology

May 2023

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank all the parents who participated in my research for your time, honesty, and willingness to support my work. This research wouldn't have been possible without you. It has been such a privilege to listen to your experiences and I hope you feel like your voices have been heard. With your stories, I hope we can promote change, together.

I would also like to thank my research supervisor, Dr Annette Schlösser, for your enthusiasm for this research. Your constant encouragement helped me to stay motivated in times of stress. I am so grateful for your wisdom, compassion, and integrity, but most of all for the laughs we've shared. Your belief in me has allowed me to be where I am today.

To my incredible friends, we did it! Miley Cyrus was right when she said, "it's the climb". Through all the assignments, placements, laughter, tears, stress, road trips, questionable singing, even more questionable dancing, and thesis dramas, we made it to the top. Thank you for always picking me back up. I love you all endlessly.

Thank you to my wonderful family for your continued love and support. Special thanks to my mum for helping with recruitment and to my dad for all your proof reading and unwavering faith in me. To my partner Amy, you have gone above and beyond to help me through this thesis, with your formatting skills and colour coded timetables. I remain grateful for you every day.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my twin brother, Liam. You mean the world to me and will always be my greatest inspiration. Stay legendary.

Overview

This portfolio thesis consists of three parts: a systematic literature review, an empirical paper, and the appendices. Together, they provide a greater understanding of the role of parenting and social media in the experiences of transgender individuals.

Part One: Systematic Literature Review

The systematic literature review explored the role that social media plays in the experiences of transgender individuals navigating their gender identity. Ten studies met the inclusion criteria, eight of which used a qualitative methodology, whilst two adopted a mixed methods approach. The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) was used to assess the quality of the studies. Narrative synthesis revealed five roles that social media plays in the experiences of transgender individuals: explorational, relational, informative, supportive, and exposing. The findings demonstrate that social media can be used to foster support systems, improve wellbeing, and create opportunity for gender expression. Clinical implications and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Part Two: Empirical Paper

The empirical paper explored how parents enable their transgender child to flourish. Nine participants took part in semi-structured interviews. A qualitative Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) methodology was used to generate a theory, with implications of optimising the wellbeing of transgender youth. The theory of creating a safe space emerged from the data, as parents managed their emotions, protected their child from harm, supported their gender identity exploration, and accessed support for their child to enable them to flourish. The practical applications of the flourishing framework are discussed. Clinical implications and recommendations for future research to strengthen the framework are explored.

Part Three: Appendices

The appendices provide additional documentation which support the systematic literature review and empirical paper. This includes a reflective statement and an epistemological statement outlining the role and positioning of the researcher.

Total word count: 25,144 (including tables, figures, references, and appendices)

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Part One: Systematic Literature Review

The Role of Social Media in the Experiences of Transgender Individuals Navigating Their Gender Identity: A Systematic Literature Review

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This paper is written in the format ready for submission to the journal: Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity. Please see Appendix C for the Guidelines for Authors.

Word Count: 7,372 words

Abstract

Social media has rapidly become popular for communication, information, and identity management. This systematic review aims to explore the role that social media plays in the experiences of transgender individuals navigating their gender identity. Ten studies investigating the experiences of transgender individuals on social media were identified, eight of which used a qualitative methodology, whilst two adopted a mixed methods approach. Narrative synthesis revealed five overarching themes. Social media was found to play an explorational, relational, informative, supportive, and exposing role in the experiences of transgender individuals. The review demonstrates how social media can be used to foster support systems, improve health and wellbeing, and create opportunity for gender expression. Several recommendations are provided to mitigate the potential dangers that social media poses to those navigating their gender identity, including the need for appropriate guidance regarding online safety.

Keywords: social media, transgender, gender identity, experiences, wellbeing

Introduction

Social media can be described as a group of internet applications, over a wide range of platforms, which allow users to generate and share their own content. (Ahmed et al., 2019). Platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and Snapchat are frequently used, especially amongst young adults (Hruska & Maresova, 2020). The popularity of social media can be explained by its functionality, including information gathering and sharing, social interaction, entertainment, relaxation, and convenience of communication, resulting from the removal of geographical location barriers (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Therefore, users can communicate privately with family, friends, and acquaintances, or they can share information on a larger scale with an unknown audience, regardless of time and distance. Other motivations to use social media involve identity development and management, as users have the tools to curate online self-presentations to express their identities (van Dijck, 2013). Hence, transgender individuals may use social media to navigate their gender identity. The word ‘transgender’ is used as an umbrella term to describe those whose experienced gender does not align comfortably with the sex they were assigned at birth (Stonewall, 2019). This review will utilise this term accordingly.

Social media platforms have been deemed revolutionary for transgender individuals, due to enabling visibility (McInroy & Craig, 2015), connecting with others with shared identities, and experimenting with different gender presentations (Kitzie, 2018). Marcia’s (1966) Identity Development Theory proposes that individuals experience a series of identity crises and develop their sense of self through a process of trial and error. This theory suggests an ‘identity moratorium’ phase, whereby an individual will experiment or research ideas, but has not yet decided how to identify (Marcia, 1966). Applying this theory to social media, transgender individuals may carry out research or look for shared experiences to navigate a sense of ‘gender identity moratorium’, with the safety of privacy settings available in online interactions. Online safety is critical for transgender individuals,

as the latest Trans Legal Mapping Report found that 14 countries still criminalize transgender identities (Chiam et al., 2020). Transgender individuals are subject to stigma and discrimination within society (Hughto et al., 2015), which can have a detrimental impact on their overall wellbeing and lead to minority stress (Meyer, 2003).

The Minority Stress Model proposes that individuals from marginalised groups experience a unique form of stress, due to the persistent devaluation of their identity and the conflict between their inner self and societal norms (Meyer, 2003). This framework may explain why research consistently shows that transgender individuals are at increased risk of experiencing anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts compared to cisgender individuals (Dhejne et al., 2016; Price-Feeney et al., 2020). Against this background, it is unsurprising that social media has become a safe space for LGBTQ+ individuals, with research showing that participants used social media to explore, connect and express themselves comfortably (Lucero, 2017). Whilst this research is useful for offering insight into how minority groups experience social media, it focuses on LGBTQ+ participants more broadly. This is not able to capture the individual, rich experiences of those identifying as transgender, with sexuality and gender being distinct constructs (Roselli, 2018). Therefore, research focused on how transgender individuals experience social media is needed. To date, no comprehensive review has explored how transgender individuals experience social media.

There is, however, a systematic review which looks at social media use and the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ youth (Berger et al., 2022). A total of 26 studies were included in the review, with 15 qualitative papers, eight quantitative and three mixed methods articles. The qualitative data revealed that youths used social media to explore their identity, aligning with the aforementioned research on how transgender individuals experiment with gender presentations online (Kitzie, 2018). The quantitative data showed that social media use was associated with fewer mental health concerns and increased

wellbeing among LGBTQ youths (Berger et al., 2022). A negative outcome of social media use identified was the higher risk of victimisation of LGBTQ youths online (Abreu & Kenny, 2018), with some LGBTQ networks being a source of discrimination (Berger et al., 2021). The identification of both positive and negative aspects of social media was a strength of the review, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges LGBTQ individuals navigate online. Conversely, the review was limited by not having a uniform measure to determine the effect that social media had on mental health. Thus, this restricts what can be inferred about how LGBTQ youths utilise and experience social media. Furthermore, the review looked only at LGBTQ youths, so does not capture the experiences of adult populations. By investigating the experiences of a broad range of LGBTQ identities, this review fails to demonstrate how transgender individuals specifically navigate their gender identity online. Altogether, these limitations present a gap in the current literature base, which the current review seeks to fill.

Aims of the Review

This review aims to answer the question: “What role does social media play in the experiences of transgender individuals navigating their gender identity?” No reviews of the exclusive experiences of transgender individuals using social media could be found, thus this review is novel. Answering this review question will improve our understanding of social media usage specifically amongst the transgender community, moving away from research on the overarching LGBTQ community. This aim has the potential to identify experiences specific to those navigating their gender identity, thereby providing recommendations for how social media could be used to promote wellbeing.

Clinical Rationale

A systematic review on the uses of social media found that it has the possibility to improve health outcomes, as it can offer a platform in which the public, clients and health professionals communicate about health difficulties, widening accessibility to service

provisions and lessening health disparities (Moorhead et al., 2013). Therefore, this current review has clinical implications for informing online service provisions tailored for transgender individuals, which could bolster the effectiveness of support available. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that social media rapidly became a crucial tool for the dissemination and consumption of information (Tsao et al., 2021). Thus, by gaining an understanding of how transgender individuals experience social media, recommendations can inform social media usage as a tool to enhance health outcomes.

Method

Search Strategy

A systematic review of the literature was carried out between December 2022 and January 2023. Six electronic databases were searched using EBSCOhost: Academic Search Premier, CINAHL Complete, MEDLINE, APA PsycArticles, APA PsycInfo, and LGBTQ+ Source. These databases were selected to increase the likelihood of finding all relevant literature. A manual search of the reference lists of the included articles was also conducted to look for potentially eligible articles. Prior to the comprehensive literature search, a scoping search was conducted to prevent the replication of an existing review and to identify key search terms. No existing reviews were found on this topic.

Search Terms

The search terms were generated by first scanning the titles and abstracts of existing literature to see which keywords were used in the databases. Variations in terminology were identified from the literature, which helped to select relevant synonyms. This process was supported by a librarian, experienced in systematic literature reviews, and checked by the secondary researcher, a clinical psychologist. A search protocol was developed including a research question, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the search terms to ensure a replicable and transparent methodology. The search terms were also run through another database (SCOPUS), with no further results. Therefore, the search terms were considered appropriate. The final search terms were:

transgender* OR transsexual* OR transexual* OR “gender variant” OR “gender non-conforming” OR “gender diver*” OR trans OR “non binary” OR “non-binary”

AND

“social media” OR facebook OR twitter OR reddit OR instagram OR snapchat OR tumblr OR “social network*” OR “tik tok” OR tiktok OR youtube*

Limiters were applied to only include academic journals and peer reviewed papers to narrow the search whilst maintaining quality. An English language limiter was utilised to accommodate the researcher's understanding. Due to an abundance of articles that were not relevant, only journal articles that featured the search terms in their titles and met the inclusion criteria were reviewed.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of research, with a rationale, is provided in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Inclusion Criteria and Rationale

Inclusion Criteria	Rationale
Language: English	To avoid articles being misunderstood, as English is the only language that the researcher can understand and read.
Population: People identifying as transgender or gender diverse (non-binary)	The review aimed to investigate the experiences of transgender individuals using social media. Therefore, only articles with those identifying as transgender or gender diverse were of interest. Due to limited literature available, no limit was implemented on the age of participants or location of where the studies were conducted.
Context: Articles looking at experiences of social media	The review aimed to investigate the experiences of transgender individuals using social media. Therefore, only articles exploring types of social media were of interest. Due to the limited literature available, no limit was applied to the type of social media.
Date Range: No limit	This review was novel and only a small number of relevant articles were found without applying a date limiter.
Study Type: Full text, primary research articles published in an academic peer reviewed journal	To avoid secondary or unreviewed data and, therefore, ensure scientific rigour.
Design: Empirical, qualitative, or mixed methods design	The review aimed to investigate empirical studies composed of a research question, data collection, results, and a discussion on the findings. Qualitative findings were included, as the review aimed to explore the experiences of transgender individuals, which cannot be captured solely with quantitative data.

Table 2

Exclusion Criteria and Rationale

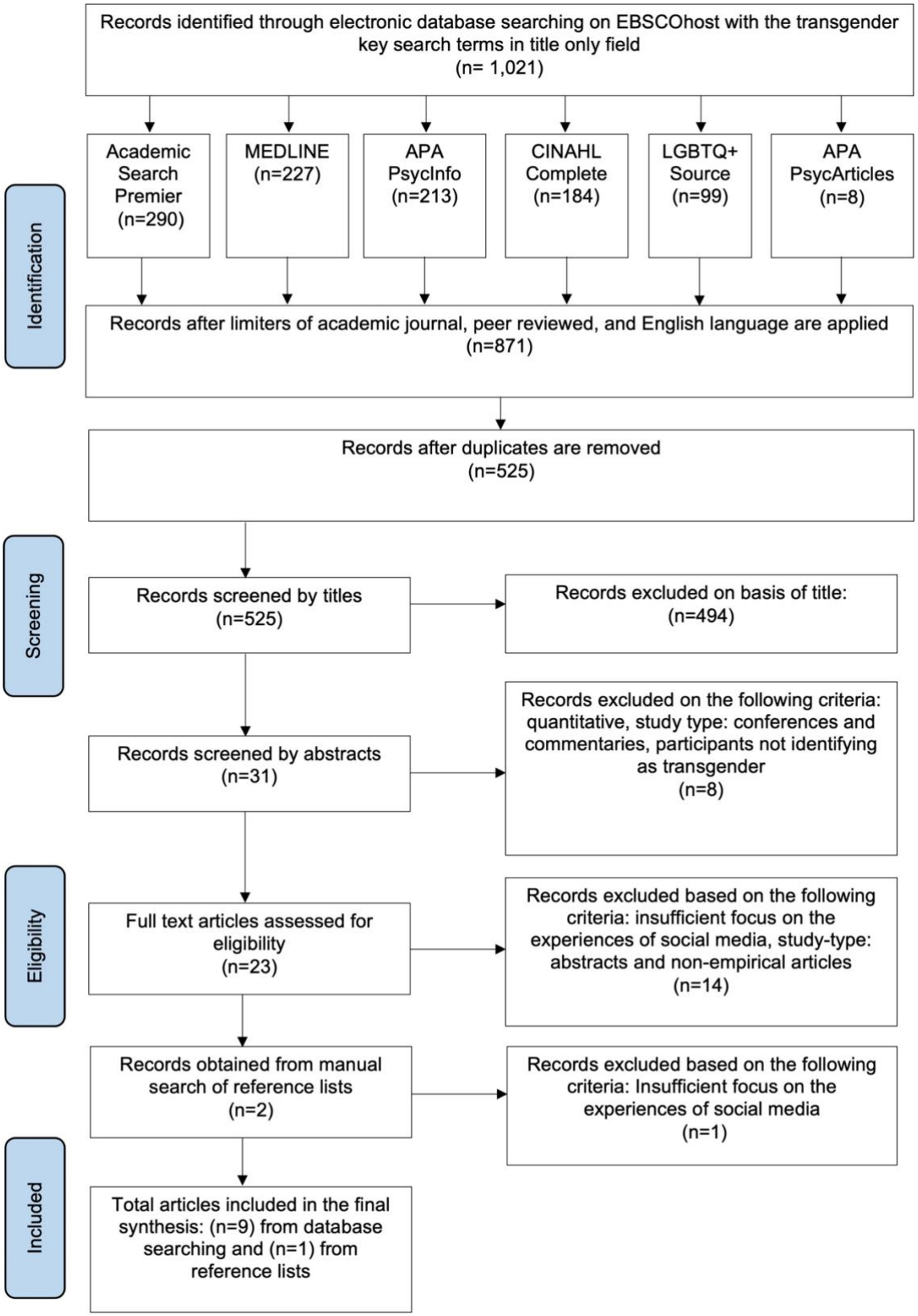
Exclusion Criteria	Rationale
Language: Non-English	Translating papers was not possible.
Population: People who did not identify as transgender	This review aims to investigate the experiences of transgender individuals using social media. Therefore, studies involving cisgendered individuals or other members of the LGBTQ+ community that did not identify as transgender were excluded.
Context: Insufficient focus on the experiences of social media	The review question is focused specifically on experiences of social media.
Study Type: Commentaries, letters, unpublished dissertations, literature reviews, conferences, grey literature, opinion articles, abstracts, book chapters, or studies not published in peer reviewed journals	This review aims to synthesise primary, original research to ensure rigour and research quality.
Design: Quantitative	The review aims to explore the experiences of transgender individuals, which cannot be captured solely with quantitative data.

Article Selection

In total, 1,021 articles were found from the electronic database search (see Figure 1 for PRISMA flow diagram). Once limiters were applied and duplicates removed, 525 articles remained. After screening the titles, abstracts, and full text articles for eligibility, nine articles met the inclusion criteria. An additional article was identified by hand searching reference lists, resulting in a final 10 articles for review.

Figure 1

Article Selection Process



Note. The selection process is represented using a Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) Diagram (Page et al., 2021).

Quality Assessment

Quality assessment of the included studies was accomplished used the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (Hong et al., 2018). The MMAT was selected (see Appendix D), as this tool allows the appraisal of reviews with qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method studies in a critical and reliable way, unlike other tools (Hong et al., 2018). Scoring is discouraged using this tool, so no overall score of quality was calculated (Hong et al., 2018). Instead, ratings of each study were inputted into a table to provide a visual depiction of the quality of each study and qualitative quality assessments were drawn.

The MMAT user guidelines recommend an additional quality assessor to ensure rater reliability and robustness of the final synthesis (Hong et al., 2018). Therefore, four articles were rated by a peer reviewer who was blind to the original ratings. Any quality assessment discrepancies were discussed before mutually agreeing on ratings. No articles were excluded after quality assessment, as all studies contributed useful insight into the experiences of transgender individuals using social media.

Data Extraction

A bespoke data extraction tool was developed to extract relevant information from each study (see Appendix E). The tool was curated to pull key information from each of the included articles to provide an understanding that would answer the review question. The information retrieved included the author(s), year of publication, title, location of study, research aims, population, design, method of analysis, and key findings related to the present review question.

Data Synthesis

To analyse the data, narrative synthesis was used, as this allows the analysis of studies with varying methodologies and designs to capture all the available experiences of transgender individuals using social media (Popay et al., 2006). Narrative synthesis is known as a form of storytelling (Popay et al., 2006). This approach aligns with the aim of

the review, as transgender individuals may use stories of different kinds to share their experiences of social media whilst navigating their gender identity. The preliminary stage of the synthesis involved extracting key findings from each article that provided an understanding to the research question (see Table 3). Then, the relationships in the data were explored to allow for the generation of themes. Finally, the robustness of the synthesis was examined by discussing the methodological quality of the studies and potential themes within the data with the secondary researcher. The discussion aided decisions on the final themes in the analysis, improving the quality of the review.

Results

Study Characteristics

A summary of all the studies in the review can be found in Table 3. All studies were published between 2017 and 2022, indicating that the literature base is still in its infancy. A range of countries were represented, with six from the United States, one each from Italy, Australia, and Canada, and one from the United States and Canada combined. Whilst the majority of studies aimed to explore the experiences of transgender individuals on social media more broadly, two studies specifically investigated how transgender individuals used YouTube (Rothbaum et al., 2021; Miller, 2019), one study examined a transgender Facebook group (Dowers et al., 2021) and one study analysed Tumblr posts (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Eight studies used a qualitative design, whilst two studies utlised a mixed methods approach.

Nine studies used either semi structured interviews, online surveys, or questionnaires, with two studies supplementing their data collection with observations of YouTube videos (Rothbaum et al., 2021) or scanning comments from online forums and Facebook groups (Cipolletta et al., 2017). Only one study analysed Tumblr posts as a standalone methodology (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Three studies used grounded theory to analyse qualitative data, three studies used thematic analysis, one study used critical discourse analysis, and one used narrative analysis. Two studies used qualitative methods to analyse their data, using coding techniques, but were not specific about the type of analysis employed (Buss et al., 2021; Cannon et al., 2017). Both mixed methods studies used descriptive statistics to analyse quantitative data (Ma et al., 2022; Rothbaum et al., 2021). Regarding the populations, seven studies explored the experiences of transgender adults, whilst three studies specifically focused on the experiences of transgender adolescents or youths.

Table 3

Overview of Studies Included in the Review

Author(s), Year of Publication, Title, and Location of Study	Research Aims	Population	Design	Method of Analysis	Key Findings
Austin, Craig, Navega and McInroy (2020) It's My Safe Space: The Life-saving Role of the Internet in the Lives of Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth (United States and Canada)	To engage in an in-depth exploration of the online experiences and processes which help protect against psychological distress and promote wellbeing among TGD youth	(N=260) (aged 14-22 years old)	Online survey invited open-ended written responses	Qualitative Grounded Theory	• Online platforms offer affirming spaces that do not necessarily exist in the offline lives of transgender youth • Participants were able to engage with others meaningfully online as their authentic selves • Wellbeing, healing, and growth were fostered through five processes: finding an escape from stigma and violence, experiencing belonging, building confidence, feeling hope, and giving back
Buss, Le and Haimson (2021) Transgender Identity Management Across Social Media Platforms (United States)	To examine how transgender individuals make decisions regarding their social media presentations across different	Participants interviewed (N=20) who identified as transgender social media users	Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative Open and axial coding-qualitative analysis	• Transgender individuals use social media to curate their own identity presentations and strategically select who has access to their content • Individuals manage the content that appears in their feed to ensure exposure to enjoyable, trans-affirming social media experiences

Author(s), Year of Publication, Title, and Location of Study	Research Aims	Population	Design	Method of Analysis	Key Findings
	profiles and platforms				
Cannon, Speedlin, Avera, Robertson, Ingram and Prado (2017) Transition, Connection, Disconnection, and Social Media: Examining the Digital Lived Experiences of Transgender Individuals (United States)	To explore the lived experiences of transgender individuals using social media, and to understand the possible benefits and hindrances of social media for individuals who are either in the process of transitioning or have transitioned	Participants interviewed (N=5) who identified as transgender social media users (aged 31-53 years old)	Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative Phenomen-ological approach	• Participants used social media to access information on hormone therapy, beauty tips and shared experiences • Social media provided an accepting community where one could feel empowered • Participants struggled to maintain boundaries on social media • Participants struggled with the choice of authenticity at the expense of avoiding interactions with family members on social media
Cipolletta, Votadoro and Faccio (2017) Online Support for Transgender People: An Analysis of Forums and Social Networks	To explore how transgender people talk about themselves, ask questions, and build relationships of	Online forum/group users (N=39) Participants interviewed (N=16):	Comments from discussions on Italian forums and Facebook groups involving	Qualitative Grounded Theory	• Online communities were used to test different identities as physical appearance could be concealed • Participation in online communities often derived from users' seeking help • Help could be offered by peers or professionals through discussions online

Author(s), Year of Publication, Title, and Location of Study	Research Aims	Population	Design	Method of Analysis	Key Findings
(Italy)	trust within online communities	9 trans females, 4 trans males, 1 non-identified gender, 1 male and 1 female (aged 25-64 years old)	transgender individuals Online semi-structured interviews		• Sharing personal stories or medical history enabled support, solidarity, and ways of feeling less alone
Dowers, Kingsley and White (2021) Virtually Trans: An Australian Facebook Group Supporting Gender Diverse Adults' Health and Wellbeing (Australia)	To explore how transgender individuals use social networking sites to navigate social and structural barriers to care in a specific place. Also, to explore the meaning of participation in the Virtually Trans group for gender diverse adults	Participants interviewed (N= 12) who identified as transgender group members of a Facebook support group called Virtually Trans (aged 24-55 years old)	Semi-structured interviews Qualitative ethnographic methodology	Qualitative Thematic Analysis	• The Virtually Trans Facebook group enabled affirmation of gender identities considered impossible or unimaginable offline • Participants described a profound felt sense of care and mutual support • Members of the group empowered others to express their gender identity • The online group provided social support and filled information gaps for participants

Author(s), Year of Publication, Title, and Location of Study	Research Aims	Population	Design	Method of Analysis	Key Findings
Jacobsen, Devor and Hodge (2022) Who Counts as Trans? A Critical Discourse Analysis of Trans Tumblr Posts (Canada)	To explore how transgender Tumblr users define "who counts as trans", including how users define gender dysphoria and its relationship to online identities	Social media posts analysed (N=38) posted by individuals identifying as transgender or non-binary	Analysis of Tumblr posts	Qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis	• Tumblr can enable both individual and collective identity formation for transgender individuals • The social media site can be home to intense debate, hostility, and toxicity • Two distinct groups of Tumblr users emerged: transmeds, who believe you need to experience dysphoria to be trans, and anti-transmeds who believe you do not need to experience dysphoria
Ma, Korpak, Choukas-Bradley and Macapagal (2022) Patterns of Online Relationship Seeking Among Transgender and Gender Diverse Adolescents: Advice for Others and Common Inquiries (United States)	To examine patterns and experiences of online relationship seeking among TGD (transgender and gender diverse) adolescents	Survey participants (N= 130) identified as transgender, genderqueer or gender non-conforming (aged 15-19 years old)	17 item investigator-created questionnaire with open and closed questions	Mixed methods Thematic Analysis for open-ended questions	• Adolescents advised others to maintain personal safety and set realistic expectations when seeking online relationships • Gender identity disclosure was valued online as individuals were able to present authentically with reduced risk of threats to personal safety • Transgender adolescents use social media as a way of seeking romantic relationships

Author(s), Year of Publication, Title, and Location of Study	Research Aims	Population	Design	Method of Analysis	Key Findings
Miller (2019) YouTube as a Site of Counternarratives to Transnormativity (United States)	To explore the ways in which transgender vloggers make meaning out of their experiences, using YouTube to discuss trans perspectives that are rarely represented in mainstream media	Participants interviewed (N=6) who identified as transgender YouTube creators (aged 18-34 years old)	Observation of 60 hours of YouTube videos Semi-structured, qualitative interviews	Qualitative Multipersp-ectival cultural studies analysis Grounded Theory	• YouTube serves as a platform to hear voices that challenge transnormativity • Trans vloggers can reinforce transnormativity by exaggerating medical transition • The increasing diversity of trans people using YouTube to share their experiences can create more representations of trans identities • Transgender individuals can create content which challenges ideas around language and identification
Rothbaum, Etengoff and Uribe (2021) Transgender Community Resilience on YouTube: Constructing an Informational, Emotional, and Sociorelational Support Exchange	To understand how transvlog viewers use YouTube to build trans community resilience	Survey participants (N=86) who identified as transvlog viewers. 27% identified as a transwoman, 24% as a transman, 18% as non-binary, 14% as female, 11% as trans and	Online survey with open and closed questions	Mixed methods Narrative Analysis for open ended responses	• Transvlog viewers actively used transvlogs to both gain and give information • Transvlogs were used to learn about transition processes and to gain advice and emotional support • Social media can provide a platform for co-constructing, navigating, and sustaining trans community to foster resilience

Author(s), Year of Publication, Title, and Location of Study	Research Aims	Population	Design	Method of Analysis	Key Findings
(United States)		2% as male (aged 18-86)			
Selkie, Adkins, Masters, Bajpai and Shumer (2020) Transgender Adolescents' Uses of Social Media for Social Support (United States)	To understand how transgender adolescents use social media to find social support	Participants interviewed (N=25): 11 identified as transfeminine, 13 as transmasculine and 1 as non-binary (aged 15-18 years old)	Semi-structured interviews	Qualitative Thematic Analysis	• Social media communities can provide emotional, appraisal, and informational support that transgender youth may not otherwise be able to access • Negative aspects of social media involved transphobia and harassment • Narratives of other transgender individuals provided affirmational support and increased hope • Information on medical care empowered individuals to take next steps in limiting dysphoria

Overview of Quality Assessment

The methodological quality of each article was assessed using the MMAT (Hong et al., 2018) and summarised in Table 4. In the initial screening phase, three articles were identified as not having clear research questions (Miller, 2019; Dowers et al., 2021, Jacobsen et al., 2022). Whilst the researcher could ascertain the study aims, the lack of explicit research questions affects the validity of the studies, as it was unclear if the qualitative analyses had provided an adequate understanding of what the studies had hoped to address. However, of the eight qualitative papers, all had an appropriate qualitative approach, as they looked at the experiences of transgender individuals using social media. Several studies lacked clarity in the coherence between data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Miller, 2019; Buss et al., 2021; Cannon et al., 2017). Therefore, this weakens the conclusions drawn from these papers. One study stood out to have the weakest methodological quality, with no clear explanation of how data analysis was carried out or how the results were integrated into the conclusions drawn (Miller, 2019). Thus, this may impact the usefulness of the contribution this paper makes to the field. Of the two mixed methods papers, one paper was deemed to be of high quality, with rigorous methodology and integration of the findings (Rothbaum et al., 2021). However, concerns around the convenience sample size and method meant that the second mixed methods paper was rated lower in quality (Ma et al., 2022). Conclusions from this paper need to be interpreted cautiously, as they lack representativeness, weakening the relatability of the experiences found to a wider population of transgender individuals using social media. Altogether, the papers included in the review are of high quality, with each paper contributing an element of insight into a developing field of knowledge.

Table 4

Summary of Quality Assessment

Study	Screening Questions		Qualitative					Mixed Methods				
	S1	S2	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5
Austin, Craig, Navega and McInroy (2020)	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-
Buss, Le and Haimson (2021)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-
Cannon, Speedlin, Avera, Robertson, Ingram and Prado (2017)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-
Cipolletta, Votadoro and Faccio (2017)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-
Dowers, Kingsley and White (2021)	CT	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-
Jacobsen, Devor and Hodge (2022)	CT	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-
Ma, Korpak, Choukas-Bradley and Macapagal (2022)	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	CT	N
Miller (2019)	CT	Y	Y	CT	Y	Y	N	-	-	-	-	-
Rothbaum, Etengoff and Uribe (2021)	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Selkie, Adkins, Masters, Bajpai and Shumer (2020)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	CT	Y	-	-	-	-	-

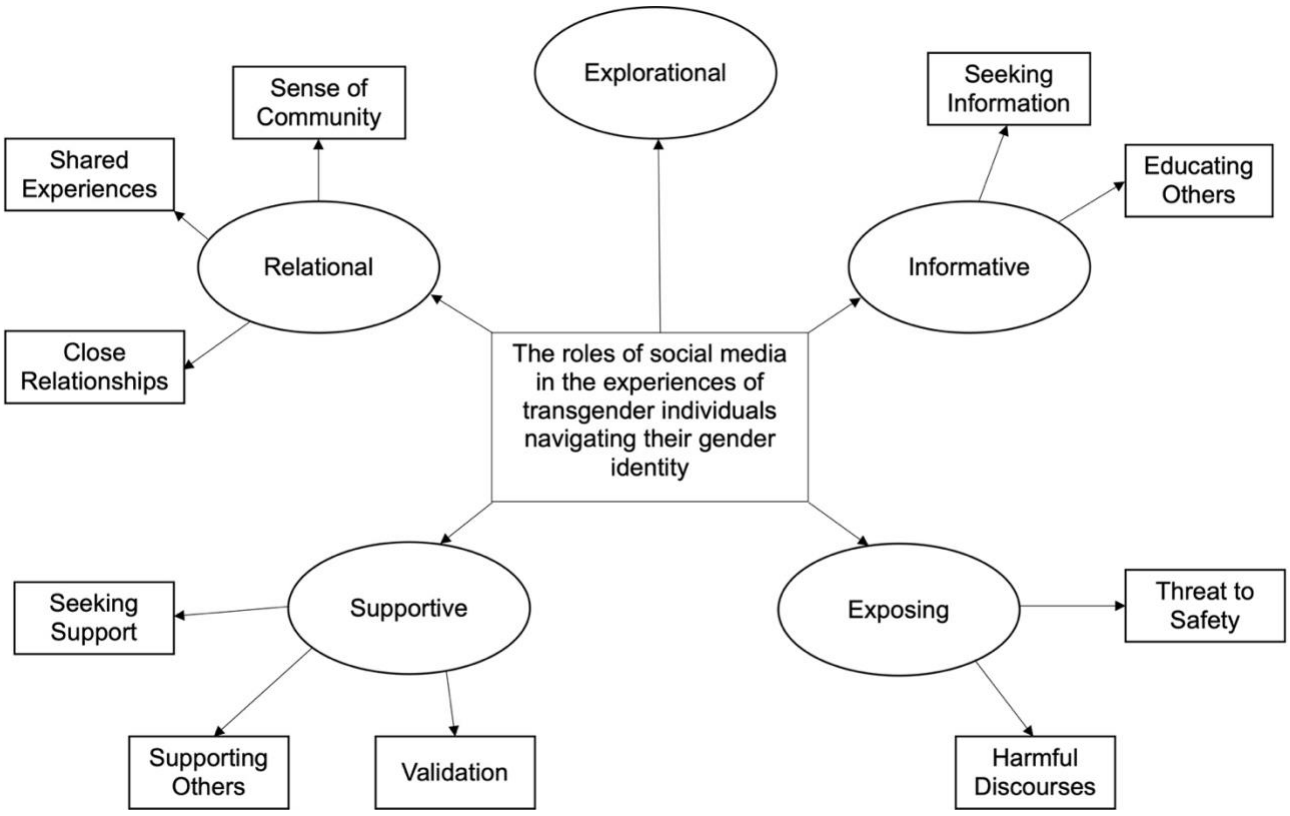
Note. Y, N and CT represent yes, no, and cannot tell respectively.

Narrative Synthesis

Five main themes and ten subordinate themes emerged from the synthesis of the key findings from each study. Relationships within the data were explored to reveal five main roles of social media. The main and subordinate themes are displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Ideas Web Representing the Synthesis Themes



1. Explorational Role

One of the main themes identified was the explorational role that social media plays in the experiences of transgender individuals navigating their gender identity. Transgender individuals used social media to explore their gender identity by being their authentic selves online (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Buss et al., 2021; Dowers et al., 2021; Austin et al., 2020). It was easier for some to test out their gender identity online, as they did not have

to reveal their physical appearance (Cipolletta et al., 2017). By engaging with others online as their authentic selves, participants were able to explore aspects of their gender identity in affirming spaces, which mostly did not exist in their offline lives (Austin et al., 2020). The research of Austin et al. (2020) was carried out on transgender youths, which limits the applicability of the findings, as transgender youths may navigate social media differently to adults. Nevertheless, other papers in the review found similar themes of exploration, having sampled a broader range of ages.

Some individuals used various social media platforms to test out different gender identity expressions (Buss et al., 2021):

> "I don't really do much of any gender or identity things on Twitter or Snapchat too often. But usually, Facebook is where I express my identity the most." (Buss et al., 2021; page 10).

Similarly, Dowers et al. (2021) also found that Facebook provided opportunities for transgender individuals to explore their gender expression, as a culture of care enabled members to feel validated in their gender identity. This suggests that some individuals used social media to test their known gender identity, whilst others explored different identity options. However, Dowers et al. (2021) based their conclusions on data gathered from an Australian Facebook group, the access to which they had gained as a group member. Group involvement could have created blindness or bias, due to the researcher being an active participant and gaining their own experiences. Therefore, this limits the usefulness of the findings.

2. Informative Role

Using social media in an informative way was a key theme that emerged from the review (Cipoletta et al., 2017; Selkie et al., 2020; Rothbaum et al., 2021; Cannon et al.,

2017; Dowers et al., 2021). The way that transgender individuals used social media for information could be distinguished as two separate subthemes, which were seeking information and educating others via social media.

2.1. Seeking Information

Social media was often used as a tool to seek medical advice or information regarding possible treatment options for and outcomes of gender transition (Cipoletta et al., 2017; Selkie et al., 2020; Cannon et al., 2017). By using social media as an informational resource, this allowed insight into various hormonal therapies, so individuals could make informed decisions about their care (Cannon et al., 2017).

> "Being able to hear what the outlook was possibly going to be like. There were a lot of unknowns. Am I going to grow facial hair, am I not? Do I want to have it, do I not? Being able to see what changes are going to come." (Cannon et al., 2017; page 76).

In addition to learning about treatment, transgender individuals also sought out information regarding the safety of gender affirming therapy (Selkie et al., 2020). However, these conclusions were drawn from small populations. Cannon et al. (2017) had a small sample size of five participants lacking in culturally diverse experiences, whilst Selkie et al. (2020) utilised a clinical population of adolescents who had to attend the clinic with at least one parent. Therefore, this does not capture the experiences of transgender individuals from different cultural backgrounds, or those who do not have supportive parents, limiting the helpfulness of the findings.

Another approach to information seeking was treating specific social media sites as informational resources (Rothbaum et al., 2021; Dowers et al., 2021). YouTube served as a platform for individuals to watch informational 'trans vlogs' (Rothbaum et al., 2021),

whilst a Facebook support group offered transgender participants the opportunity to seek information from others in the locality (Dowers et al., 2021). Both papers use ‘transgender’ as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of gender identities, which fits with the interpretation in the review. Thus, this shared meaning improves the quality of the conclusions drawn from the papers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

2.2. Educating Others

Social media provided the opportunity for transgender individuals to give information to others (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Selkie et al., 2020; Dowers et al., 2021). This came from a desire to educate families, nurture support (Selkie et al., 2020), and reduce prejudice against transgender individuals by promoting understanding (Cipolletta et al., 2017). Participants were motivated to counteract misinformation about transgender identities by sharing useful information (Cipolletta et al., 2017). The findings from this paper were drawn from Grounded Theory analysis after achieving data saturation (Charmaz, 2014), a process which may be vulnerable to researcher bias (Allan, 2003). Therefore, this may have impacted the robustness of the results.

3. Relational Role

It was apparent that social media provided transgender individuals with different relationships or ways of relating to others whilst navigating their gender identity, as this theme emerged in most of the papers. The way that social media was used relationally separated into three subthemes.

3.1. Sense of Community

Social media provided a sense of community for transgender individuals, as it allowed them to connect with others who had similar experiences (Rothbaum et al., 2021; Buss et al; 2021; Cannon et al., 2017; Dowers et al., 2021; Austin et al., 2020). One paper found that Facebook offered members a ‘safe space’ online to develop a sense of community with other transgender group members (Dowers et al., 2021). Comparably,

Austin et al. (2020) found that online communities provided a ‘safe space’ and a sense of ‘belonging’ for transgender individuals, positively impacting on their wellbeing.

> “There’s a supportive community out there online and they mean the world to me. They’ve saved my life.” (Austin et al., 2020; page 37).

The quality of these findings can be questioned, as the voices of transgender women were unrepresented within the Facebook group (Dowers et al., 2021). Furthermore, Austin et al. (2020) collected data through an anonymous online survey, so researchers were unable to ask follow-up questions, limiting the understanding that could be gained from individuals’ experiences.

3.2. Shared Experiences

Sharing experiences via social media was a predominant theme across the papers (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Selkie et al., 2020; Rothbaum et al., 2021; Cannon et al., 2017).

> “I share pieces of my life and I feel less alone.” (Cipolletta et al., 2017; page 1545).

Motivations to share experiences online were related to participants not being able to openly discuss their gender identity in their offline relationships (Cipolletta et al., 2017). Social media provided a platform for transgender individuals to both watch and curate videos or ‘trans vlogs’, whereby they could listen to or share experiences about gender transition on YouTube (Rothbaum et al., 2021; Miller, 2019). Transition videos were found to be focused on sharing details of physical transition, something that a lot of transgender individuals could not do in their offline lives (Miller, 2019). However, the conclusions drawn from this paper need to be interpreted cautiously, as there are no clear research questions

and no description of the measures and data analysis procedure used, which reduces the quality of the findings.

3.3. Close Relationships

Social media provided the opportunity for transgender individuals to develop close relationships (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2022; Dowers et al., 2021). By being their authentic selves online, transgender individuals were able to foster friendships with others on social media, built through shared experiences and support (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Dowers et al., 2021). One paper, focused on romantic relationship seeking, found that transgender adolescents used social media to meet partners, as the safety benefits of online interaction allowed honest identity disclosure (Ma et al., 2022). However, the findings of Ma et al. (2022) were drawn from a convenience sample, consisting mostly of white participants with limited representation of transgender women and non-binary adolescents.

4. Supportive Role

An overall theme of support emerged from the papers included in the review. This theme encapsulates three subthemes of seeking support, supporting others and validation.

4.1. Seeking Support

It was found that social media could be used by transgender individuals to seek support (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Selkie et al., 2020; Rothbaum et al., 2021). Two papers referenced social media as an emotional resource (Selkie et al., 2020; Rothbaum et al., 2021). Rothbaum et al. (2021) found that individuals asked for advice on how to regulate emotions to improve their self-esteem, whilst Selkie et al. (2020) found that seeking support online reduced feelings of isolation. Similarly, Cipolletta et al., (2017) reported that social media was a space for transgender individuals to ask others for help. The conclusions drawn from Rothbaum et al. (2021) are drawn from an online survey, which

may be prone to responder bias and a lack of detail in responses. Therefore, this reduces the usefulness of the findings.

4.2. Supporting Others

Transgender individuals used social media as a tool to support others (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Rothbaum et al., 2021; Dowers et al., 2021; Austin et al., 2020). Offering support allowed users to give back to those who had previously helped them (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Austin et al., 2020). Dowers et al. (2021) demonstrated transgender individuals creating a “culture of care”, whilst Rothbaum et al. (2021) referenced support through “empathy for others”. Furthermore, Austin et al. (2020) identified that when transgender individuals gave support to others, this also had a positive impact on their own wellbeing. However, the conclusions from this study were drawn from an online survey that collected anonymous data at a single timepoint, limiting what can be inferred from the findings.

> “I’ve never felt better in my life! I want to inspire more people to be themselves and to forget all the haters. Being able to make a difference is an amazing feeling! Even on a small scale, that’s all I need.” (Austin et al., 2020; page 40).

4.3. Validation

Social media provided an affirming space for transgender individuals to receive validation (Selkie et al., 2020; Buss et al., 2021; Cannon et al., 2017; Austin et al., 2020). Users could connect with other transgender individuals who normalised the feelings of those navigating their gender identity (Selkie et al., 2020; Buss et al., 2020; Austin et al., 2020). Supportive online groups allowed people to feel accepted within their gender identity, encouraging them to embrace their authentic selves (Cannon et al., 2017).

> “Mostly just by accepting me as a woman… it means a lot… just accepted as a woman. I guess another type of woman. I can’t stress enough how much it means.” (Cannon et al., 2017; page 76).

Furthermore, validation occurred through receiving ‘likes’ or positive comments on social media posts, that gave compliments on personal appearance in relation to their gender identity (Selkie et al., 2020). This suggests that transgender individuals may use social media to normalise their experiences and gain confidence in their gender presentation. Each paper within this subtheme adopted a qualitative methodology deemed to be of high quality which raises the credibility of the findings.

> “I feel like the reason that I’ve come to the point in my life where I feel like I am very comfortable, is probably due to social media. Because like I said, the amount of love that I get, people constantly telling me, ‘Oh my god you look so pretty! You’re prettier than me! I would have never thought you were a boy!’” (Selkie et al., 2020; page 277).

5. Exposing Role

Social media was found to play an exposing role, as transgender individuals faced harmful discourses and threats to their safety online, represented as two subthemes.

5.1. Threat to Safety

Consistent concerns regarding online safety were exhibited throughout the papers (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2022; Buss et al., 2021; Cannon et al., 2017). Social media was cited as a platform pregnable to online trolls, who created uncomfortable interactions (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2022; Cannon et al., 2017). Strategies to manage online safety consisted of disengaging with harmful interactions online (Ma et al.,

2022; Cannon et al., 2017) and actively curating online networks to consume positive social media content (Buss et al., 2021; Cannon et al., 2017). Whilst threat to safety was cited in all papers within this subtheme, only Ma et al., (2022) references personal safety as a clear finding. However, all studies within this subtheme were deemed good quality so can further our understanding of the experiences of transgender individuals on social media.

5.2. Harmful Discourses

Transgender individuals were exposed to harmful discourses via online platforms (Selkie et al., 2020; Miller, 2019; Jacobsen et al., 2022). Transnormativity, which is characterised by ideals surrounding the "right way to be transgender" or experience gender dysphoria, saturated discourses on social media (Selkie et al., 2020; Miller, 2019; Jacobsen et al., 2022). Miller (2019) found that YouTube provided a platform for transition videos in which people exaggerated the importance of physically transitioning, contributing to transnormativity. However, this was followed up with findings which demonstrated YouTube as a site to challenge transnormative discourses, as it enables users of all gender identities to share content of diverse experiences (Miller, 2019). Two of the papers within this subtheme did not have findings on any of the other themes within the review, limiting the usefulness of the studies (Miller, 2019; Jacobsen et al., 2022).

> "If you do not have at least some measure of dysphoria YOU ARE NOT TRANS" (Jacobsen et al., 2022; page 68).

Discussion

Overview of the Findings

This review aimed to explore the role that social media plays in the experiences of transgender individuals navigating their gender identity. The research within this review has been conducted across an array of countries, with client populations of different gender identities, aged from adolescents to adults. Several papers explored specific social media sites, whilst others investigated social media more broadly. This review demonstrates that, overall, social media plays a positive role in the lives of transgender individuals. The different beneficial purposes for which it is used often intersect with each other. For example, social media was found to play a supportive role, as it allowed people to both seek and gain support. This was closely related to the relational role identified, empowering transgender people to share experiences with one another and develop a sense of community. On the other hand, the negative aspects of social media use that transgender people are exposed to were also highlighted. The current literature base primarily consists of the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals on social media (Berger et al., 2022). This review adds a novel perspective by considering transgender individuals specifically and, therefore, contributes to a field of literature still in its infancy.

Positive Roles of Social Media

Overall, social media was found to play a positive role in the experiences of transgender individuals. Of the five main themes identified from the synthesis of the included papers, four were helpful and hopeful. One such role was transgender individuals using social media to explore their gender identity. This finding is supported by previous research, which found that social media offered individuals a space to experiment with different gender presentations (Kitzie, 2018). This might be because social media offers tools to curate online self-presentations (van Dijck, 2013). Therefore, users have flexibility in how they choose to be perceived online. Furthermore, similar findings of social media

offering an explorative role were found in a literature review of LGBTQ+ adolescents using social media (Berger et al., 2022). Thus, social media may offer transgender individuals a platform to explore their gender identity in a way that they lack the opportunity to do in their offline lives.

Exploring gender identity via social media aligns with Marcia's (1966) Identity Development Theory. This review found that some transgender individuals used social media to explore different gender identity presentations, suggesting they navigated an 'identity moratorium' phase by experimenting with their online presence. Through trial and error on social media, transgender individuals are afforded a deeper understanding of their gender identity and opportunities for affirmation.

Another way in which transgender individuals gained further understanding of their gender identity was by using social media as an informative tool. Online platforms allowed users to both seek information and educate others. Seeking information allowed transgender individuals increase their knowledge of treatment options and services available. Social media gave transgender individuals a voice and platform to educate others by responding to misinformation. This fostered a sense of wellbeing from being able to 'give back'. Research by Whiting and Williams (2013) demonstrates the popularity of social media due to its information gathering and sharing functionality, further supporting this theme. Therefore, social media can be regarded as a practical, informative tool for transgender individuals, which can be used to bolster health and increase awareness around gender identity.

Similarly, social media was found to play a supportive role, as transgender individuals both sought support and gave support to others online. This was deemed to be a distinct theme from the informative role, as transgender individuals also used social media to elicit and provide emotional comfort, giving and receiving sympathy, reassurance, and encouragement. This finding is not surprising, given the societal context that

transgender individuals have an increased risk of experiencing anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts when compared to cisgender people (Dhejne et al., 2016; Price-Feeney et al., 2020). This increased risk of poor mental health may be related to a lack of compassion for transgender individuals from family, professionals, or wider society. Hence, transgender individuals may feel safer using social media to receive and provide support. Additionally, social media provided a platform for transgender individuals to receive validation within their gender identity. Validation was given in the form of 'likes' or positive comments on posts that complimented their personal appearance (Selkie et al., 2020). This allowed individuals to embrace their authentic selves, as they felt accepted within their gender identity (Cannon et al., 2017). The findings reinforce previous research conveying social media as a platform to enable visibility (McInroy & Craig, 2015). Therefore, transgender individuals may use social media as a platform to be visible within their gender identity, enabling them to feel nurtured in receiving emotional support and validation. As this support was bidirectional, it contributed to a sense of community.

Developing a sense of community contributed to the relational role of social media. Other relational experiences were sought through developing strong interpersonal bonds and sharing experiences with others. This theme has been found in other research, which showed that social media provided a safe space for LGBTQ+ individuals to connect with others and express themselves comfortably (Kitzie, 2018; Lucero, 2017). It can be inferred that transgender individuals may find it easier and safer to develop close relationships and become part of a community online if they struggle to do so in their offline lives. This could be due to a lack of access to support groups or not feeling able to be their authentic selves. Therefore, social media enables transgender individuals to develop relationships as part of a community that is accepting and supportive.

Negative Role of Social Media

Despite social media offering transgender individuals many positive experiences, there were also challenges in navigating online platforms. The review revealed an overarching theme of exposure, whereby transgender individuals were vulnerable to harmful discourses and threats to their safety online. Harmful discourses were often centered around transnormativity, feeding into the concept of there being a “right way to be transgender” (Selkie et al., 2020; Miller, 2019; Jacobsen et al., 2022). This is a worrying finding, as the review also found that many transgender individuals use social media for informative and supportive purposes. Therefore, if people are met with damaging rhetoric, disguised as information, it may have a detrimental impact on their health. One paper discusses how ‘psych’ disciplines have developed and perpetuated transnormativity through expectations of transgender individuals conforming to a ‘wrong body’ narrative that requires medical treatment (Riggs et al., 2019). Thus, this creates a narrow set of tropes that transgender individuals are expected to adhere to, which may be intensified by social media.

Further threats to health were found through concerns regarding online safety. Social media platforms held risks of online trolls, who disseminated transphobic messages and abuse (Cipolletta et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2022; Cannon et al., 2017). Worryingly, this finding is reflective of previous research, which shows that transgender individuals face stigma and discrimination in society (Hughto et al., 2015). A higher risk of victimisation was also identified in the literature review of LGBTQ+ adolescents on social media (Berger et al., 2022). This implies that social media provides a platform on which it is easier to share harmful and threatening messages, causing distress in transgender individuals. This might be because social media allows users to curate online identities (van Dijck, 2013), which can make it easier for trolls to hide behind false profiles. This protects them from being held personally accountable for online abuse.

These findings align with the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003). Transgender individuals, who are exposed to messages devaluing their gender identity, may experience a unique form of stress that is a result of conflict between their gender identity and societal norms. Consequently, social media may contribute to minority stress by exposing transgender individuals to harmful discourses not necessarily faced in their offline lives. Hence, social media can serve as an echo chamber which circulates existing views, limits diverse perspectives and reinforces a shared narrative through confirmation bias (Cinelli et al., 2021). Thus, social media can create further challenges that transgender individuals face when navigating their gender identity.

Strengths and Limitations

The included papers were deemed generally of high quality, as they satisfied the criteria for good quality research. They included an appropriate methodology for the research aims and coherence between data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Another strength is that the papers were published within the last six years, which suggests the findings are current and relevant to our understanding of the topic. However, one paper was highlighted to have the weakest methodological quality, as it lacked clarity in the analysis procedure and the conclusions drawn (Miller, 2019). Nevertheless, interpretations were made from each paper to answer the review questions with confidence in the overall methodological quality of the studies.

The MMAT provided a useful tool to ascertain the methodological quality of the included papers. This tool allowed the appraisal of both the qualitative and mixed-methods papers within the review in a reliable, systematic way (Hong et al., 2018). However, a bespoke data extraction tool may have improved the quality of the current review by addressing the limitations of the MMAT, pertaining to researcher position. Still, the researcher ascertained that most papers reflected on researcher positionality. Several authors identified as transgender whilst the majority worked professionally with gender

diversity. This was useful as the researcher lens is paramount to quality control in qualitative research (Berger, 2015). Whilst the perspectives obtained in the review may hold biases, limiting the usefulness of the overall findings, the researcher used the MMAT consistently and achieved inter-rater reliability with a peer reviewer, increasing the robustness of the final synthesis (Hong et al., 2018).

This is the first systematic review on the experiences of transgender individuals using social media. Therefore, the recommendations made can contribute to a novel field of research, which is a significant strength. Whilst there is a review which looks at the experiences of LGBTQ adolescents using social media (Berger et al., 2022), the current review solely focuses on the experiences of transgender individuals, to avoid othering those navigating their gender identity. However, only ten studies met the inclusion criteria, which indicates that the research base is quite limited. Therefore, drawing conclusions from a limited number of studies may weaken the overall conclusions drawn from this review.

Finally, the review consists of studies conducted in the United States, Australia, Canada, and Italy. This is a strength, as the review is likely to capture the experiences of transgender individuals on social media within different cultural contexts. Conversely, there were no papers included in the review that represented non-Western cultures. The implications of why there is a scarcity to research conducted in non-Western cultures needs to be further explored.

Clinical Implications and Future Research

The research within this area is lacking, leaving scope for future research on the systemic factors impacting on the experiences of transgender individuals using social media. Further research should not only explore the experiences of those in non-Western cultures, but also aim to understand how race, age, ability, and social class impact on the experiences of those navigating their gender identity on social media. The role of

intersectionality needs further exploration, as transgender individuals who occupy different marginalised positions will have disparate experiences (Wesp et al., 2019).

Social media has become a crucial tool for the dissemination and consumption of information, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Tsao et al., 2021). The findings of the current review demonstrate that social media is used as an informative tool, and for relational, explorational and supportive purposes. This indicates that social media use for these functions should be encouraged, to enable people to explore their gender identity or to foster support and relationships less accessible offline. In this way, social media can be deemed a protective factor for transgender individuals, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting wellbeing.

Furthermore, social media can be used to increase accessibility of information on gender healthcare, reducing pressures on service providers and lessening health disparities that create barriers to transgender individuals accessing care (Safer et al., 2016). The review found that transgender individuals use social media for information, sharing experiences, and seeking support, providing an alternative to service provision or additional help whilst waiting for healthcare. Therefore, a recommendation from this review is for gender specialists to consider disseminating information and conversing about health difficulties via social media platforms to increase accessibility of support and knowledge.

However, the limitations of social media also need to be accounted for, as the review found that transgender individuals face harmful discourses and threats to their safety. There are clinical implications of this finding, as social media and online platforms are constantly evolving. Therefore, guidance for transgender individuals on how to remain safe online and maintain healthy and protective boundaries needs to be regularly reviewed to keep up with the changing threats. Similarly, training for healthcare professionals on the dangers that transgender individuals are exposed to on social media needs to remain current, so that they can guide service users on how to remain safe. Specific education

tailored to transgender individuals on harmful discourses around transnormativity would be particularly useful, as individuals can be exposed to these narratives in seemingly safe online spaces. Implementing such guidance and training could enhance health outcomes for those who do not have access to supportive spaces in their offline lives.

Conclusion

Overall, this review evidenced the importance of understanding how transgender individuals experience social media whilst navigating their gender identity. The findings drawn from the included studies demonstrated the positive roles of social media, which provide protective factors for transgender individuals, fostering support and improving wellbeing. However, the review also highlighted the potential dangers that social media poses to transgender individuals. Therefore, guidance for transgender individuals on how to navigate online spaces safely would reduce exposure to harm. It would also be helpful for healthcare professionals working with transgender individuals to be aware of strategies for remaining safe online, so they can responsibly promote the beneficial aspects of social media. Additionally, the review highlighted a lack of research within this field. Further research conducted within non-Western cultures would be beneficial, to provide a more representative understanding of the experiences of transgender individuals worldwide. This would positively impact our understanding of how social media can be used to reduce health disparities, as well as increase the accessibility of information and support for those navigating their gender identity.

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Part Two: Empirical Paper

Creating a Safe Space: A Grounded Theory Analysis of How Parents Enable Their Transgender Child to Flourish

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This paper is written in the format ready for submission to the British Journal of Psychology. Please see Appendix G for the Guidelines for Authors.

Word Count: 8,176 words

Abstract

Transgender individuals consistently experience poorer mental health outcomes compared to the cisgender population. The role of the parent is fundamental in the prevention of distress through care, nurture, and protection from adverse life events. Little research exists on the experiences of parents of transgender youths, which is mostly saturated with negative discourses of loss, rejection, and stigma. Consequently, this study aimed to adopt a positive psychology approach to explore how parents enable their transgender child to flourish. Nine parents from across the UK participated in semi-structured interviews. A qualitative Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology was used to guide sampling, data collection and the generation of theory. The theory of creating a safe space emerged from the data, as parents managed their emotions, protected their child from harm, supported their gender identity exploration, and accessed support for their child to enable them to flourish. The flourishing framework provides guidance to parents and healthcare professionals on how to optimise the wellbeing of transgender youth whilst they navigate their gender identity.

Keywords: transgender; parents; safe space; flourishing; gender identity

Introduction

"Transgender" is used as an umbrella term to describe individuals whose experienced gender does not comfortably align with the sex they were assigned at birth (Stonewall, 2019). In contrast, "cisgender" is used to describe individuals whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth (Cava, 2016). Transgender people consistently display higher rates of anxiety (Bouman et al., 2017), depression (Hoffman, 2014), self-harm and suicidality compared to the cisgender population (Liu & Mustanski, 2012). One study, involving 180 participants, found that transgender youth were three times more likely to experience poor mental health outcomes compared to cisgender controls (Reisner et al., 2015). Furthermore, The Trans Mental Health Study, which included 889 respondents, found that 84% had thought about ending their lives, and 35% had attempted suicide at least once, making transgender people seven times more likely to attempt suicide compared to the global average (Bailey et al., 2014). These alarming statistics emphasise the importance of developing an understanding of how to improve the wellbeing of transgender individuals.

To reach this understanding, we must first consider the factors which contribute to adverse health outcomes faced by transgender individuals. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory posits that it is fundamental to consider a child's development within the context of their environment, involving the interplay between different systems. The macrosystem is the outer layer of a child's environment and consists of cultural elements that affect their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Hughto et al. (2015) found that transgender individuals face prejudice and discrimination from societal stigma surrounding gender diversity, accounting for adverse effects on their health. This demonstrates the influence of the macrosystem. The microsystem is a child's immediate environment such as parents, siblings, teachers, and friends (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Research has shown that transgender individuals face transphobia (Rood et al., 2017),

bullying, victimisation (Gower et al., 2018), and family rejection (Fuller & Riggs, 2018), all examples of interactions within the microsystem. Therefore, interactions between transgender youths and the systems around them provide an understanding of what contributes to their wellbeing. Parents play a critical role in their child's welfare, ordinarily being the primary source of support and acting as a protective shield (Noffsinger et al., 2012). According to Attachment Theory, parents provide a "secure base" from which to explore the world and offer protection and comfort in times of distress (Ainsworth et al., 2015). Thus, it is crucial to understand the parental role in the wellbeing of transgender youth.

The parental role can be fundamental in reducing distress, as parents often manage their child's gender expression through clothing and hairstyle options or the selection of games and toys they provide (Ehrensaft, 2012). Research with 66 transgender youth found that support from parents led to greater life satisfaction and reduced depressive symptoms (Simons et al., 2013), whilst parental rejection was associated with a higher risk of suicide attempts and substance misuse among transgender individuals (Klein & Golub, 2016). This indicates the necessity of parental acceptance. To date, little research exists on the experiences of parents of transgender youths (Coolhart et al., 2018). A literature review, conducted to summarise all published studies adopting a family understanding of gender diversity, revealed only 16 studies that focused solely on the experiences of parents of gender diverse young people (Westwater et al., 2019). The review included themes of loss, grief, parental difficulties, rejection, and stigma, predominantly demonstrating that a lack of family support led to poorer mental health and adverse life outcomes for transgender youth (Westwater et al., 2019). Whilst the review was the first to summarise all studies on a family understanding of youth gender diversity, it further adds to the negative discourses around transgender identities. Not only does this negate positive narratives of raising a transgender child, it also ignores how their wellbeing can be

improved. This highlights a gap in the literature, which can be filled by taking a positive psychology approach to parenting transgender youth.

Positive psychology is the study of what makes life worth living (Peterson, 2006). Flourishing is a key aspect of positive psychology and can be defined as finding fulfilment, accomplishing meaningful and worthwhile tasks, and connecting with others at a deeper level (Seligman, 2011). Seligman's (2002) positive psychology parenting approach states that there are two core elements needed for a child to flourish: building positive emotions and character strengths. Positive emotions expressed by parents facilitate a secure attachment, enabling the child to explore the world around them after establishing a sense of safety (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Additionally, research shows that the wellbeing of the child is greater when their parents identified and encouraged their character strengths (Waters, 2015). However, a later conceptualisation of flourishing, known as the PERMA model, outlines five different components that contribute to a sense of flourishing (Seligman, 2011). These components are increasing positive emotions, engaging with the world purposefully, developing significant relationships, finding meaning and accomplishing our goals through cultivating our strengths (Seligman, 2011). Whilst these models offer a framework of how to conceptualise flourishing, no research has yet been conducted on ways in which parents enable their transgender child to flourish.

Therefore, the research aimed to add to the limited literature base on the parental experiences of raising gender diverse youth (Westwater et al., 2019). As the parental role is fundamental in the development of the child, expanding our understanding of parental experiences will allow us to gain insight into how to improve the wellbeing of transgender youth. A further aim was to introduce a positive psychology narrative of flourishing to the literature base, focusing on the strengths of parents raising a transgender child, to produce recommendations for support. Using Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2014), the research aimed to generate a theory to explain how parents enable their

transgender child to flourish. This has practical implications for parents, providing a framework for optimising their transgender child's development. Additionally, there is clinical relevance for healthcare professionals providing support to families navigating gender diversity. To address these aims, the following research question was established: How do parents enable their transgender child to flourish?

Method

Design

A qualitative design was implemented to allow for a thorough exploration of the experiences of parents of transgender youth. Individual, semi-structured interviews were utilised to investigate how parents enable their children to flourish. Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2014) was used because of its utility in generating theory to explore under-theorised concepts, whilst remaining grounded in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Furthermore, CGT uses each interview to guide the next through a constant comparative method, which is useful to identify the relationships between parental experiences (Charmaz, 2014).

Recruitment and Sample

Participants were recruited via purposive and theoretical sampling between June 2022 and December 2022. The principal researcher created a research poster (Appendix H) and emailed it to numerous UK based LGBTQ+ charities for advertisement. Additionally, the poster was advertised on social media, predominantly through Facebook support groups for parents of transgender youth based in the UK. Nine parents, who satisfied the inclusion and exclusion criteria in Table 1, participated.

Table 1

Inclusion Criteria, Exclusion Criteria, and Rationale

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Rationale
Able to speak English	Lack of fluency in English	English is the only language the researcher uses.
Parents or primary caregivers who have experience parenting a transgender child	Trans children or secondary caregivers	Participants are required to talk about their parental experiences. Those who have spent the most time with the child will have more in-depth experiences of parenting.
Over the age of 18	Under the age of 18	The research is interested in adults who are parents of transgender children.
Able to give informed consent	Not able to give informed consent	Informed consent is necessary to participate.
Living in the UK	Living outside of the UK	This is a UK based study.

Demographic information was obtained through structured questions prior to the interview. All participants (n=9) identified as White British, cisgender females and their ages ranged from 27-64. Most participants (n=8) had one transgender child with one participant (n=1) having three transgender children. The children of the participants represented different gender identities: transgender male (n=5), transgender female (n=3), intersex and non-binary (n=1), non-binary (n=1) and gender fluid (n=1). The ages that the children initially displayed gender diversity ranged from 18 months to 17 years. All participants responded to the contact details on the research poster and were recruited via email to participate. Pseudonyms were given to each participant to protect their anonymity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was granted from the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of Hull (Appendix I). Participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form (Appendix J and Appendix K) prior to taking part and were given the opportunity to ask questions. Written or verbal consent was necessary to

participate. All participants were briefed on confidentiality and informed that their interviews would be anonymised throughout transcription. Participant data was stored safely in accordance with ethical guidelines. Participants were given a debrief sheet (Appendix L) post interview, which signposted sources of support. No incentives were provided to participate.

Procedure

Participants were contacted via email, after showing interest in the research, and were sent the information sheet and consent form. The researcher provided an opportunity to ask questions and a mutually convenient time and date was arranged for the interview. For those who could not send back the consent form digitally, verbal consent was acquired via audio recording before the interview commenced. All interviews took place via Microsoft Teams or telephone call.

The semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix M) was used to guide the interview and was developed in collaboration with the research supervisor and two parents of a transgender child to ensure the questions were appropriate, unbiased, and understandable. The researcher adopted an open interview style, to guide the line of questioning and allow participants to share their experiences freely. Interviews were audio recorded using an NHS encrypted laptop and later transcribed. The duration of the interviews ranged from 25 minutes, 57 seconds to 69 minutes, 37 seconds. After the interview, participants were sent the debrief form in an email thanking them for participating.

Researcher Role and Position

The principal researcher is a cisgender female, White British, Trainee Clinical Psychologist in her 20s with an interest in gender diversity, shaped by familial experience. The researcher observed the positive role of the parent in supporting a transgender child, particularly around accessing healthcare. Hence, the researcher acknowledged the lens

through which they approached the research and the potential impact this may have had on the findings. A relativist constructivist epistemological position was taken, as a relativist stance posits that there are no absolute truths (Willig, 2013) and a constructivist stance assumes that reality is constructed by the individual through their personal lens (Ramalho et al., 2015). Therefore, this epistemological stance may have influenced the protocol design and analysis process. However, the constructivist stance employed by CGT recognises that the researcher co-constructs the research through their own experiences and the resultant theory cannot stand outside of it (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, to ensure reflexivity, the researcher kept a reflective diary, used memo-writing, and supervision to identify any biases. Furthermore, an academic research supervisor supported the development of the protocol and provided guidance on data analysis and the emergent theory.

Data Analysis

The first step of the analysis involved line-by-line coding of the transcripts, which involved reading each sentence, highlighting key concepts, and then ascribing meaning through initial codes (Willig, 2013). This process was repeated after further interviews and the codes evolved, through comparing similarities and differences with initial codes, to become preliminary categories. Then, focussed coding was used to distinguish more conceptual categories within the data (Charmaz, 2014). The principal researcher kept reflective memos after each interview on emerging ideas and the process of interviewing. Memos enhanced researcher reflexivity through examining the self in relation to the findings and strengthened the trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The constant comparative data analysis method was used so that data from recent interviews was compared to earlier interviews (Willig, 2013). Codes that appeared most frequently helped to identify significant themes within the data. The researcher engaged in theoretical sampling, so that each new interview provided data to selectively develop the

emerging theory, satisfying any gaps in the emergent categories (Charmaz, 2014). As data analysis progressed, the researcher added several questions to the interview schedule to saturate the emerging codes and categories with more depth and detail. This approach allowed ideas and concepts to be explored that had initially emerged from previous earlier interviews. The added questions remained driven by the initial research question to ensure the emergent theory was grounded within the data (Willig, 2013).

The latter stages of the analysis involved theoretical coding, which integrated the emergent categories from the initial codes into a theory (Willig, 2013). The categories were organised under different superordinate themes and sub-themes. The researcher ceased data collection once data saturation was achieved (Charmaz, 2014). It was deemed that no new data from further interviews could add to or inform the relationship between categories, having no influence on the overall theory (Charmaz, 2014).

Results

The purpose of this research was to develop a framework to explain how parents enable their transgender child to flourish. The overarching grounded theory of creating a safe space is defined and explained through four superordinate categories and six subordinate categories (Table 2) that are described below.

Table 2

Superordinate and Subordinate Categories Illustrating the Safe Space Theory

Superordinate Categories	Subordinate Categories
Managing emotions	Concealing concerns
	Seeking support
Protecting child from harm	Mitigating societal threats
	Enabling open communication
	Acknowledging risk of non-acceptance
Supporting gender identity exploration	Demonstrating unconditional love
Accessing support for child	

1. Managing Emotions

Managing emotions emerged as a superordinate category, as parents identified that handling their own feelings assisted in enabling their child to flourish. This often involved adapting to changes in their child's gender identity, but also applied to more generic feelings related to parenting and life stressors. Parents managed their own emotions by concealing concerns from their child and seeking support for themselves. In doing so, parents created a safe space by preventing added strain on their child.

1.1 Concealing Concerns

Parents were determined to conceal their concerns from their child. Some parents spoke about hiding their feelings towards their child transitioning.

Zoe: Being supportive and trying not to show when we're finding things very difficult.

Rachel: You do not ever say to your child 'this is so hard for me, I can't understand this, this is really stressful'.

Joanna: Probably the parent can do their own journey to catch up. But if they can't feel it authentically, then better just fake it to start with, I think. Because the kid just needs that acceptance.

When parents found it difficult to come to terms with their child's gender identity, they tried not to expose the child to these concerns to prevent them from feeling rejected or misunderstood. Meanwhile, some parents expressed the importance of concealing their concerns not specific to their child's gender identity, instead highlighting the importance of parental responsibilities in protecting the child.

Lisa: Don't tell them that you've got money worries.

Jennifer: It's not her job as a child at any age to deal with my emotions. She doesn't need to know that. That's not her responsibility.

Thus, parents created a safe space by managing their emotions, as this allowed the child to interact with them without concerns of upsetting, angering, or burdening them, avoiding ruptures in the relationship. Concealing their own feelings allowed parents to foster a strong, supportive relationship with their child. This provided a platform from which their child could flourish.

1.2 Seeking Support

To manage their emotions, parents spoke about seeking support for themselves. Some parents sought support from other parents of transgender youth and found it valuable to share their experiences.

> Rachel: I guess I spend a lot of time reading what people say about their own experiences and leaning into the places where people have shared their advice and their opinions.
>
> Michelle: Generally, you need other parents… You need somebody to just sort of validate your experiences and say 'Yeah… you're not going mad or being awful'.
>
> Jennifer: Currently I'm part of Facebook groups… and they're very active and it's very much about the mutual support between parents and that's invaluable.

Mutual support allowed advice and reassurance to be shared. Seeking support allowed parents to manage their emotions, as they were able to seek validation in their experiences and share their concerns with other parents, rather than placing these on the child. Thus, this created a safe space for the child to communicate their own emotions and receive comfort. One parent recognised the importance of seeking support for themselves to enable their transgender children to flourish.

> Rachel: I think if my mental health is okay, then I've got the capacity to look after the children. So, the people who look after me are the ones who make me let the children flourish.

By looking after their own wellbeing, the parent felt more capable of meeting the needs of their children. Similarly, another parent commented on how seeking support allowed them to support their child.

Michelle: She was able to put me in touch with somebody who's had a similar experience and then they were able to put me in touch with a charity. So I, as a parent, got some resources to help me understand how to support them.

Therefore, seeking support allowed parents to manage their uncertainty around how to help a child navigating their gender identity, as they gained advice and information from those with relevant knowledge and expertise. Thus, parents seeking support to manage their emotions was a prerequisite for their transgender child to flourish.

2. Protecting Child from Harm

To enable flourishing, parents protected their transgender child from harm. Three subordinate categories emerged from the data, which included: mitigating societal threats, enabling open communication, and acknowledging the risk of non-acceptance. Consequently, the protective parental role created a safe space for the child to explore their gender identity.

2.1 Mitigating Societal Threats

Parents recognised potential societal threats to their transgender children and spoke about ways of mitigating harm. Some parents actively altered the environment that their child was in by censoring hateful messages or preventing contact with people who were not supportive.

Lisa: I am spending a lot of time protecting him from sh*t that goes on in town and stuff. Recently, we had a spate of Team TERF stickers in town, so you know. I found ways to keep him at home until I'd done a thorough investigation of every lamp post to make sure he doesn't see that.

Stephanie: People have to address her as she wishes to be addressed or they don't see her or don't speak to her. So, if I feel like someone's not allowing her to flourish,

by misgendering her or calling her by the wrong name, then that person is removed from the situation.

Other parents warned their child of potential negative attitudes towards transgender individuals held societally. In doing so, parents tried to cultivate safety for their child by raising their awareness of possible threats.

Zoe: Advise them to take a bit of a pragmatic view on things. So, things will not be perfect, people will not react as they absolutely should in a perfect world, but there's a certain amount that you just have to walk away.

Therefore, parents protected their children by actively lessening the harmful societal rhetoric that their child was exposed to, or by equipping them to handle potential threats to their safety and wellbeing. In doing so, parents enabled their child to flourish by cultivating a safe space where the influence of transphobic attitudes was diminished.

2.2 Enabling Open Communication

All parents identified that enabling open communication was crucial to allow their transgender child to flourish. Parents created a safe space for their child by enabling them to talk openly about their feelings without judgement, as they did not want their child to suffer in silence. Therefore, developing strong communication allowed parents to understand their child's experiences, thus protecting them from struggling with any inner emotional turmoil.

Joanna: My husband and I have tried to create an atmosphere at home that it is okay to talk about feelings and be open about failures or mistakes.

Sarah: I suppose it's just trying to keep those lines of communication open between us, you know to make him feel like he can come and talk to us about anything.

Rachel: "There's something on your mind, you want to talk to me? I can't see what it is so do you want to write it down?"

Lisa: All a parent has to do is ensure their child knows they're there for them, and they can tell them anything.

Furthermore, open communication enabled parents to foster a sense of safety for their child. One parent spoke openly with their child to give them reassurance that it would be okay to think and feel differently about their gender identity.

Jennifer: If you change your mind tomorrow, if you tell me you're really a boy, it's all good. All the doors are open. I've been able to make sure she doesn't feel pressured into going down a particular path.

Providing reassurance reduced any pressure on the child to identify in a certain way and allowed them to feel safe whilst exploring their gender identity. This also protected the child from worrying about how their parent might react if their identity changed. Thus, encouraging their child to communicate their feelings allowed parents to provide appropriate support to facilitate flourishing.

2.3 Acknowledging Risk of Non-Acceptance

Antithetically, to enable their child to flourish, most parents acknowledged the risk of not accepting their transgender child. Some parents reflected on the possibility of losing their child. Having an awareness of this risk instilled the importance of supporting their transgender child, which in turn protected the child from harm. Not only was the child

protected from the ramifications of unsupportive parents, but they also received additional safeguarding from a parent that prioritised their wellbeing.

> Laura: I think the statistics are quite high of people trying to commit suicide because they just can't cope with not being able to… progress how they want to… I'd rather my child do anything rather than commit suicide.
> Michelle: Just understanding that I could lose my child, whatever gender they might be. I wasn't willing to lose them… Because we know a lot of trans young people take their own lives… I wasn't willing for that to happen.

Parents also recognised the risk of their child struggling with their mental health or not living authentically without support. In response, parents enabled their transgender child to flourish by showing support and acceptance. Consequently, parents protected their child from harm by acknowledging and alleviating the risk of losing their child or them suffering from poor mental health. This created a safe space for their child to explore their gender identity without fearing rejection.

> Sarah: They're your child and if you don't support them, it's going to negatively impact their mental health and they're not going to be happy…
> Jennifer: You just don't want your child to suffer in any way, but I know that this is what they really want, and I know it will happen sooner or later, so all I can do is make her happier about it.

3. Supporting Gender Identity Exploration

All parents described different ways in which they enabled their child to explore their gender identity, so that they could flourish. Demonstrating unconditional love emerged as

a subordinate category, as this made the child feel supported and accepted. The superordinate category represents the various actions that parents took to support their child in exploring their gender identity. One of these actions was assisting their child in changing their name.

> Laura: I was finding bits and pieces for him to take to university, and I bought a bottle opener which had names on, and I bought his male name. That was the first thing I did to show him that we were beginning to accept it.
> Lisa: Let them know you accept them for who they are, so you change that name instantly. If they want you to, take those photos down immediately.

Respecting the wishes of their child, such as taking down photos and referring to their child with their new name and pronouns, were ways that parents expressed support. Additionally, parents assisted their child in experimenting with their gender expression by providing access to makeup, clothing, and different hairstyles.

> Jennifer: If they want to wear a dress, let them wear a dress. If they want to cut their hair short, it's only hair.
> Stephanie: I kind of just follow her lead with things if she wants to try something like wearing makeup.

One parent watched their child flourish due to their support, demonstrating the importance of the parental role.

> Jennifer: We went on holiday and treated her as a girl consistently. The whole time we were away. And she was like another child. She was so happy and confident

and sure of herself, and it was astonishing. So that was the point where we knew we'd done the right thing because I mean she, yeah, flourished is the word.

Another parent reflected on the concept of authenticity in relation to their child exploring their gender identity and placed great importance on allowing their child to be unapologetically themselves.

Rachel: It's something about authenticity I think that is key for me. You have to be able to show up as yourself for anything else to feel like flourishing.

Altogether, parents created a safe space for their child to flourish by supporting their gender identity exploration, enabling them to live as their authentic selves.

3.1 Demonstrating Unconditional Love

Parents were also able to support their child in exploring their gender identity by demonstrating unconditional love. This created a safe space for the child to explore their gender identity without feeling invalidated or rejected. Thus, parents enabled their child to flourish by making them feel loved and cherished regardless of their gender identity.

Laura: You just need to let your child know that you're there for them and no matter what, how their life turns out. You've just got to be there for them and support them any way you can and let them know how much you love them.

Rachel: My children need to know that I love them. It's not conditional on them coming across a certain way.

Jennifer: There's nothing you can say or do here that will make me love you less… So yeah, support your child unconditionally and they will find their path.

4. Accessing Support for Child

Parents took an active role in accessing support for their children, to assist them in navigating their gender identity. Some parents spoke about accessing healthcare for their child, such as getting a referral to a specialist gender service or accessing psychological support. In facilitating the provision of healthcare, parents created a safe space for their child to explore their gender identity, supported by professionals.

> Lisa: I will always be there to take him to appointments.
>
> Jennifer: Take them to services. Get a referral. Get on the waiting list.

Other parents talked about providing access to support within school. By communicating with staff members in school, parents aimed to foster a safer, more comfortable educational environment for their child to flourish. One parent spoke about their experiences of contacting school with the purpose of making staff aware of appointments that their child would be attending at a gender service.

> Michelle: I was quite proactive and open and sort of like reached out and said, you know, we're in this process.

Furthermore, another parent communicated with school to consider what toilets or changing facilities their child would use to feel more comfortable.

> Sarah: We had a meeting in school, talked about what toilets was he going to use, what he was going to do about PE.

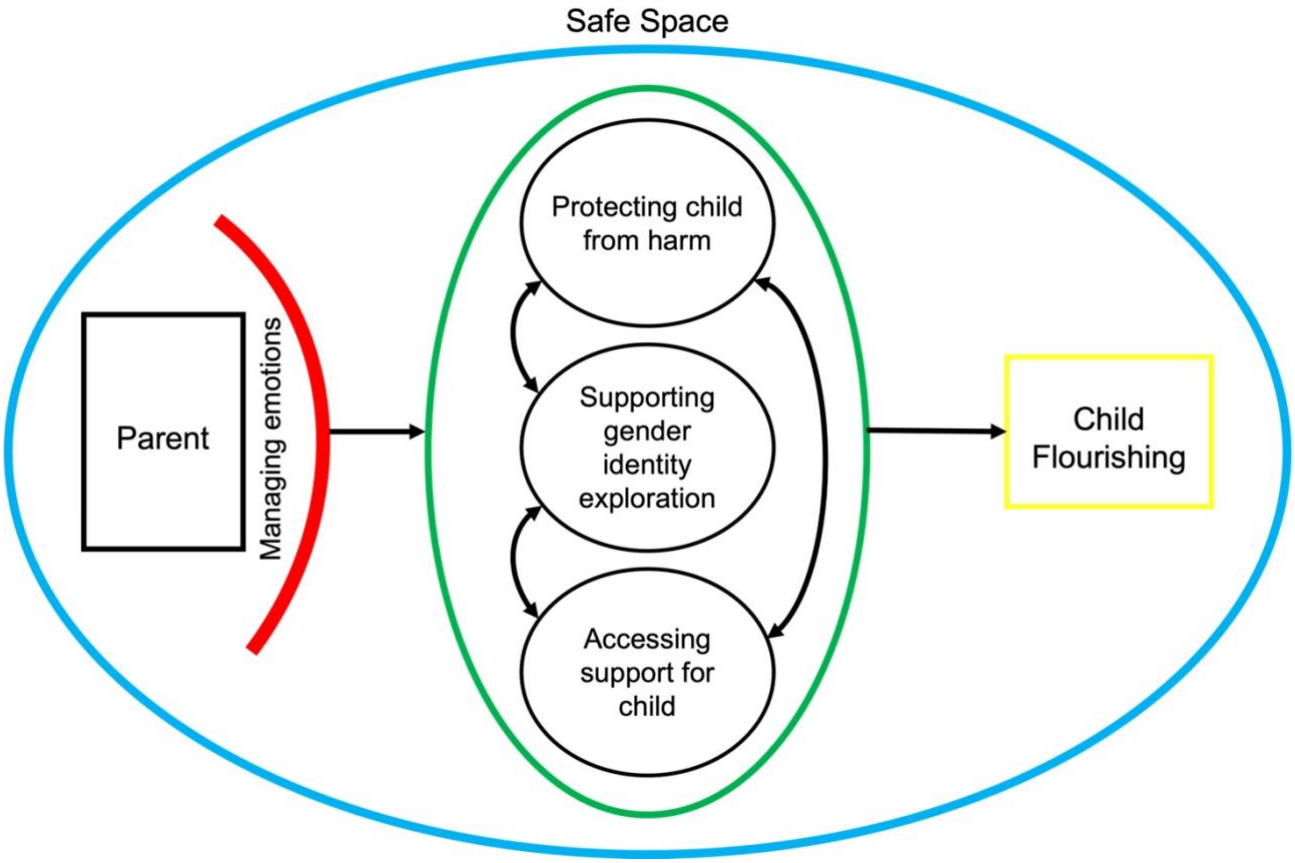
Therefore, by accessing support for their child, parents generated a safe space for the child to navigate both the physical and social aspects of their gender identity. Drawing on external support reduced systemic barriers to the child navigating their gender identity. Thus, this was recognised as another way in which parents enabled their transgender child to flourish.

5. Creating a Safe Space: the Grounded Theory

Creating a safe space was the unifying process identified from the analysis of the qualitative data. The diagrammatic model presented (Figure 1) demonstrates different components within the theory that explain how parents enable their transgender child to flourish. The outer circle symbolises the safe space that encompasses the interactions between parent and child. The relationships among the categories emerged as reciprocal and interdependent rather than discrete, with the arrows showing how they are interrelated. For example, supporting gender identity exploration was a way that parents protected their child from harm. This is a reciprocal relationship, as to protect their child from harm, parents supported their gender identity exploration. Similarly, accessing support for their child was another way that parents protected them from harm and vice versa. The parent is depicted as a rectangle behind a red line symbolising the managing emotions category. The interior circle surrounding the three middle circles demonstrates the group of interactions that parents carried out after they managed their emotions. The unidirectional arrow next to the red line shows that parents managed their emotions before carrying out all the interactions encompassed within the green circle. By first managing their own emotions, parents felt more capable of protecting their child from harm, supporting their gender identity exploration, and accessing support for them, ultimately creating a safe space and resulting in their child flourishing.

Figure 1

Safe Space Diagrammatic Model



Note. A diagram to show how parents create a safe space, enabling their transgender child to flourish.

Discussion

Overview of Findings

This study aimed to develop an understanding of how parents enable their transgender child to flourish. The current literature base, comprising the experiences of parents raising gender diverse youth, is not only lacking, but predominantly consists of negative discourses. These include loss, grief, parental difficulties, rejection, and stigma (Westwater et al., 2019). Therefore, a positive psychology approach was adopted within this research, with the aim of producing a framework to optimise the wellbeing of transgender youth through parental support. The framework produced from this study demonstrates that parents enable their transgender child to flourish through creating a safe space. The overarching safe space theory contains four main parental processes that contributed to their child flourishing. The processes consisted of parents managing their emotions, protecting their child from harm, supporting their gender identity exploration, and accessing support for their child to optimise their wellbeing. By engaging in these processes, parents created a safe space for their child to navigate their gender identity, essentially enabling them to flourish.

Managing Emotions

Managing emotions was achieved by parents concealing their concerns from their child and by seeking support for themselves. Parents chose to hide their feelings around their child's gender identity if they had worries or were still in the process of understanding, to avoid causing distress. Similarly, parents also concealed their feelings around general life stressors to prevent added strain on their child. By concealing their concerns, parents provided a safe space for their child to express their emotions and receive support, without the child feeling like a burden. This relates to attachment theory, as positive emotions expressed by parents facilitate a secure attachment, where the child seeks safety and security from their parent, particularly in times of distress (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Through

positive engagement, the parent provides a ‘secure base’ from which the child can explore the world from, after a sense of safety has been established (Ainsworth et al., 2015). Therefore, by concealing their concerns, parents provided a ‘secure base’ and a sense of safety for their child navigating their gender identity, enabling them to flourish.

Another way that parents managed their emotions was through seeking support for themselves. Support was gained by seeking mutual support from other parents with shared experiences to receive validation and reassurance. It was expressed that parents felt more capable of equipping their child to flourish when they felt supported themselves. The buffering hypothesis of social support posits that the effects of stress are lessened with the presence of support from others (Cohen & McKay, 1984). Therefore, seeking guidance from other parents with relevant expertise may provide a ‘buffer’ to parents experiencing stress or uncertainty around raising a transgender child. The implications of this are improved wellbeing for both parent and child. Given the wide age range that the participants’ children first discussed their gender, there was no uniform age at which the child began to flourish. Instead, flourishing appeared to be dependent on the period it took for the parent to show support, highlighting the necessity of managing emotions as a first step. Overall, by managing their own emotions, parents also protected their child from harm, which is another category within the flourishing framework. Shielding their child from negative emotions was a way that parents protected their child from distress, thus creating a safe space for their child to flourish.

Protecting Child From Harm

By mitigating societal threats, enabling open communication, and acknowledging the risk of not accepting their child’s gender identity, parents aimed to protect their child from harm. Given the context of the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), where research has shown that transgender individuals face prejudice, discrimination, and stigma (Hughto et al., 2015), it is not surprising that parents tried to mitigate societal threats against their

child to enable them to flourish. Efforts to mitigate these threats consisted of censoring hateful messages and preventing contact with those who were not supportive of their child. Furthermore, the impact of interactions within the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) were also considered by parents by acknowledging the risk of harming or losing their transgender child if they did not support them. This relates to research which shows that transgender individuals had a higher risk of suicide attempts and substance misuse when facing parental rejection (Klein & Golub, 2016). Therefore, parents demonstrated their awareness of the reality of causing serious harm to their child through non-acceptance. This underlined the importance of parental support in protecting their transgender child from harm.

Similarly, parents tried to enable open communication with their child to protect them from struggling with difficult feelings around their gender identity alone. Through talking openly and honestly, parents aimed to create a safe space for their child to communicate their needs without feeling judged or rejected, instead offering reassurance. This aligns with research which asserts the crucial role of the parent as protective shield and thus a primary source of support to a child's welfare (Noffsinger et al., 2012). Encouraging their child to communicate openly, allowed parents to develop a greater understanding of their child's needs and provide appropriate support, thus protecting them from harm. Ultimately, by enabling open communication, mitigating societal threats, and acknowledging the risk of non-acceptance, parents provided a safe space for their child to flourish by acting as a 'protective shield' from harm.

Supporting Gender Identity Exploration

Another component within the safe space theory is parents supporting their child's gender identity exploration. Parents enabled their child to experiment with their gender expression, through helping with name changes and providing access to clothing, makeup, and different hairstyles. This aligns with research showing that parents play a fundamental

role in managing their child's gender expression aesthetically through clothes, hairstyles and by providing access to certain toys and activities (Ehrensaft, 2012). In doing so, parents allowed their child to express themselves authentically, improving their sense of self and wellbeing. Drawing on Seligman's (2002) positive psychology parenting approach, this posits that building on a child's character strengths is needed for a child to flourish. Therefore, supporting gender identity exploration can be conceptualised as a way that parents built on their child's character strengths. Character strengths such as integrity and bravery are pertinent to gender identity exploration, as it takes honesty for a child to express and present themselves authentically. Doing so also takes bravery, as it can be scary for a child to explore their gender identity in a world that appears unsafe. Thus, parents created a safe space for their child by supporting their gender identity exploration and encouraging their character strengths needed to flourish.

Demonstrating unconditional love was another way in which parents created a safe space for their child to explore their gender identity. Parents articulated the importance of making their child feel loved and cherished, regardless of how they identified, to show their support and enable them to flourish. This aligns with research which illustrates that parental support led to greater life satisfaction and reduced depressive symptoms amongst transgender youths (Simons et al., 2013). The significance of unconditional positive regard within a parent and child relationship has been noted within Roger's (1951) theory of personality development. This theory posits that children who consistently receive affection and acceptance from their parents, regardless of their behaviour, grow up to be healthier adults (Rogers, 1951). Therefore, parents demonstrated unconditional love, creating a safe space for their child to explore their gender identity with implications of healthy development and flourishing.

Accessing Support for Child

The final parental process within the safe space theory was accessing support for the child. To support their child in navigating their gender identity, parents provided access to psychological therapy and specialist healthcare by making a referral to a gender service. The research consistently shows that transgender youth are more likely to experience poor mental health compared to cisgender youth (Reisner et al., 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that parents spoke about accessing professional support to improve their child's wellbeing. The parental role also involved communicating with school to make adjustments that would make their child feel more comfortable, such as using different toilet and changing facilities. In doing so, parents provided a space for their child to feel safe whilst navigating their gender identity in school. Accessing support for their child was another way in which parents aimed to optimise their child's health to enable them to flourish. This also links with other categories within the flourishing framework, as accessing support for their child helped parents to protect their child from harm. Furthermore, making a referral to a gender service can be viewed as a strategy in which parents supported their child's gender identity exploration, through providing access to specialists with expertise in gender identity.

Safe Space Theory and Flourishing Framework

The flourishing framework (Figure 1) sits inside the unifying theory of parents creating a safe space. Hence, parents enabled their transgender child to flourish by creating a safe space for them to navigate their gender identity. The overarching safe space theory, drawn from this research, can be grounded in attachment theory, which views the parent as providing a 'secure base' for the child to explore the world from (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The flourishing framework, which emerged from the data, can be compared against the PERMA (Seligman, 2011) model of flourishing. The managing emotions aspect of the framework has similarities with the positive emotions component of

the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011). When parents managed their emotions by seeking support for themselves, this promoted positive emotions for both parent and child.

Additionally, the supporting gender identity exploration component of the present framework can be viewed as parents supporting their child to pursue an authentic life which holds meaning, another component of the PERMA model. Protecting their child from harm relates to the relationships aspect of the PERMA model, as parents enabled their transgender child to flourish by acting as a protective shield. Accomplishment is the final component of the PERMA model, which also holds similarities with components of the present framework. By supporting their child's gender identity exploration and accessing support for them, parents enabled their child to accomplish their goals of living an authentic life. Therefore, the present framework holds face validity in its conceptualisation of flourishing when compared to the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011).

Furthermore, it is useful to consider why the parent sits inside the safe space circle in the flourishing framework. Parents often reflected on their own positive emotions from supporting their child's gender exploration and watching them grow happier. This ameliorated feelings of uncertainty or anxiety about doing the 'right' thing, particularly when facing non-acceptance from close family or wider society. Thus, it can be surmised that the parent created a safe space for themselves and the child. By enabling their child to flourish, this allowed the parent to feel accomplished, which positively influenced their own wellbeing. Ultimately, whilst the focus of this research was child flourishing, the safe space theory also has implications for parental wellbeing.

Recommendations and Clinical Implications

The flourishing framework developed within this study provides a practical guide to optimising the wellbeing of transgender youth. Recommendations derived from the framework include parents seeking support for themselves to help with managing their emotions. It may be the case that parents overlook their own needs when trying to support

their child, or underestimate the impact of their emotions on their child. Thus, it is recommended that, to enable their child to flourish, parents should also seek their own support. Accessing support for the child is another recommendation derived from the framework. This would involve being led by the child's needs as some may want adjustments to be made in school, whilst others may want gender healthcare. A briefing paper by the House of Commons details current provisions to support transgender children in schools (Long & Loft, 2020). Whilst the Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against transgender children in all schools within England, Wales and Scotland, there is no official guidance on how schools should manage decicions on uniform, toilets, changing facilities, or sport arrangements (Long & Loft, 2020). Thus, it is advised that parents advocate for their child's needs in school to ensure fair treatment.

Additionally, the framework proposes ways in which parents can protect their transgender child from harm. These include engaging in open communication, having an awareness of societal threats and the risks of rejection. A further recommendation is that parents should support their child's gender identity exploration to enable them to flourish. The word 'exploration' has been used as this captures the experiences of parents supporting their child in navigating different aspects of their gender identity. The framework recognises that some children may not identify within the gender binary and instead may explore a non-binary identity. Therefore, it is recommended that parents support their child's gender identity exploration without enforcing binary views of gender to enable them to flourish. This might look like parents listening with an open, non-judgemental stance, assisting them with style choices, and using the name and pronouns chosen by their child. It is suggested that parents be amenable to change, as it may take a process of trial and error for their child to experience what feels right.

The practical implications of the flourishing framework are evident in its approach to optimise the wellbeing of transgender youth. The framework and overarching theory can

be considered as a tool for parents to enable their transgender child to flourish, thus minimising the risk of their child suffering from poor mental health. Likewise, the framework provides recommendations for parents to seek support and has implications of improving parental wellbeing through the cultivation of a safe space where they can acknowledge their successful parenting. Furthermore, the framework has clinical utility as it can provide healthcare professionals with guidance on how to support parents of transgender youth. The present guidelines for psychologists working with gender, sexuality, and relationship diversity do not provide tailored advice for clinicians working with children or their families (British Psychological Society, 2019). These guidelines, which are currently under review, have also been criticised for taking an unquestioning 'gender-affirmative' stance without a strong evidence base (British Psychological Society, 2020). Therefore, the current study can contribute to a research led update of the guidelines.

Clinicians may use the framework to inform their work with parents, which may involve looking at strategies for managing emotions and examining ways in which the parent and child communicate, to see how this aligns with the safe space theory. Alternatively, a clinician may use the framework to generate dialogue around their child's wellbeing with parents who are not supportive of their child's gender identity. By raising awareness of the fundamental role that parents play in their child flourishing, this can promote support and acceptance.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

The study met its aims of adding a positive psychology narrative to the literature, as a framework has been produced to explain how parents can enable their transgender child to flourish. This is a strength of the research, as practical recommendations have been made to optimise the wellbeing of transgender youth, hence offering clinical utility. A further strength includes the recruitment of nine participants who shared their rich experiences, adding a voice to parental experiences amongst a scarce field of literature.

However, a limitation of the study is the lack of diversity within the sample. Despite efforts to also recruit fathers and parents from the global majority, all nine participants were White British, cisgender mothers. Therefore, future research is needed to consider the experiences of fathers and those from different ethnic backgrounds, who may have disparate experiences of parenting transgender youth that are not reflected in the present framework.

Additionally, the children of the parents included in the sample were all White British, which does not consider the role of intersectionality in transgender youth flourishing. Transgender individuals experience heightened marginalisation at the intersections of race, sexuality, age, disability, and class (Wesp et al., 2019). Thus, it cannot be ascertained that the framework captures the experiences of those facing different intersections of marginalisation, due to the lack of diversity within the participants and their children. Further research, with a more diverse sample of participants, would address this limitation.

The use of online interviews meant that the sample included parents from all over the UK, which is a strength of the study, as the framework is likely to be more reflective of parental experiences across the UK. Despite this, the flourishing framework may not be reflective of parental experiences in other countries. Factors such as societal views and government legislation towards gender differ across nations, which is likely to impact on the experiences of transgender individuals and their parents. Future research should look at how parents enable their transgender child to flourish in other cultures to understand the usefulness of the flourishing framework cross-culturally.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the present study was planned with social distancing measures and travel restrictions in mind. Participants were recruited and interviewed online, which allowed data to be collected safely without the need for travel. A limitation of online research is that it may discount the voices of those without access to

the internet. Therefore, the framework produced may only be reflective of those with access to the internet and a private space to participate in an interview. It would have been useful to advertise the study via posters or leaflets and provide the opportunity to engage in a face-to-face interview.

Finally, the flourishing framework and unifying grounded theory, recognises the fundamental role of the parent in the wellbeing of the child. This is a strength as it is crucial to recognise systemic factors that can impact mental health.To develop the theory further, more research should explore what transgender youth say about their experiences of flourishing and the role of their parents. By also investigating the experiences of transgender youth, this can contribute to a bidirectional model of interaction between parent and child. Furthermore, future research could explore how parental wellbeing is influenced by child flourishing to understand the mechanism behind this relationship and further inform the safe space theory of flourishing.

Conclusion

In summary, this study evidenced the importance of understanding how to optimise the wellbeing of transgender youth. The flourishing framework shows that parents managed their emotions, protected their child from harm, supported their gender identity exploration and accessed support for their child to enable them to flourish. The overarching theory explains how parents enabled their transgender child to flourish by creating a safe space. This study provides a positive narrative amongst the dismal backdrop of hate and misunderstanding towards the transgender community. The flourishing framework can be used to guide parents and healthcare professionals supporting youth who are navigating their gender identity. Whilst the study addresses a current gap in the literature, future research is recommended to develop the flourishing framework so that it reflects more parental experiences and can be utilised cross-

culturally. Strengthening the framework with the experiences of transgender youth would further deepen our conceptualisation of how to achieve flourishing.

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Part Three: Appendices

Appendix A. Epistemological Statement

The research process is composed of four basic elements: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods (Crotty, 1998). These elements provide a structure to understanding the stages of research and provide a foundation from which to identify the assumptions made about the world and social processes that occur (Feast & Melles, 2010). Therefore, this statement aims to explore the positions of the researcher across these elements and how this influenced the overall research findings.

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge that defines how we acquire knowledge and what we can know about reality (Willig, 2013). Positivism is the view that there is an objective reality which can be studied and understood through empirical scientific evidence (Park et al., 2020). Conversely, interpretivism is the view that reality is subjective and socially constructed, so we can only know an individual's reality through their own experience (Chowdhury, 2014). Constructivism aligns with an interpretivist theoretical perspective, as it asserts that people actively construct their own knowledge, so reality is determined through the lens of the individual and their experiences (Lowenthal & Muth, 2009). The researcher held a constructivist epistemological position, therefore rejecting a positivist stance of there being an objective reality to study.

The theoretical perspective of the researcher is the philosophical stance which informs and provides context to the methodology of the research (Feast & Melles, 2010). Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and meaning in the world (Willig, 2013). Realism is an ontological philosophical stance which considers there to be an external reality that exists independent of our understanding (Ritchie et al., 2013). On the other hand, relativism asserts that there is no shared social reality, but multiple ways of understanding an event from individual constructions of it (Ritchie et al., 2013). A relativist ontology aligns with a constructivist epistemology. These theoretical perspectives consider there to be no absolute truths, as reality is constructed by the individual (Ramalho et al.,

2015). Thus, these ontological and epistemological perspectives laid the foundations for the research design and methodology.

Methodology is the strategy underlying the choice and implementation of particular methods to achieve data (Crotty, 1998). Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) was adopted, as it uses a qualitative approach to generate a theory of how an experience can be understood (Charmaz, 2014). A qualitative approach fits with a relativist, constructivist stance, as it allows for the exploration of an individual's experience of reality (Willig, 2013). The research aimed to explore how parents enable their transgender child to flourish. Thus, a qualitative methodology was important to explore the detailed experiences of parents to gain insight into how the wellbeing of transgender youth can be improved. Furthermore, CGT recognises that the researcher cannot be disentangled from the research, as they co-construct it with their own personal lens (Charmaz, 2014). Hence, CGT aligns with the constructivist position employed by the researcher, which posits that individuals actively construct their own knowledge (Lowenthal & Muth, 2009).

Several other qualitative methodologies were considered, but CGT was deemed the most appropriate to meet the exploratory aims of the research in line with the epistemological position of the researcher. The research aimed to fill a gap in the literature regarding parental experiences raising transgender children, using a positive psychology approach. Thus, CGT was selected to allow for the generation of theory within an under-theorised area of research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It was recognised that the emergent theory is just one interpretation of reality, co-constructed between the researcher and participants, based off how each individual assigned meaning to their experiences (Levers, 2013).

Methods are the techniques used to gather data that provide an understanding to the research question (Crotty, 1998). Semi-structured interviews were utilised to gather information from parents about their experiences of enabling their transgender child to

flourish. This method aligned with the CGT protocol, as the interviews were transcribed and coded, contributing to the emergence of the theory (Charmaz, 2014). Semi-structured interviews are explorative in nature, and they allowed the researcher to explore different avenues in the participant's responses, to understand the meaning they ascribed to their experiences and their constructions of knowledge (Lowenthal & Muth, 2009). Therefore, the overarching theory rests on the assumptions of relativist, constructivist epistemology, which are embodied by the findings of semi-structured interviews within a CGT methodology.

Within the systematic literature review, narrative synthesis was the methodology used to understand all the available experiences of transgender individuals using social media (Popay et al., 2006). Narrative synthesis is a qualitative approach, which tells a story of how individuals ascribe meaning to their experiences (Popay et al., 2006). Therefore, this approach is also compatible with the researcher's relativist, constructivist epistemological position, as it recognises that there is no absolute truth. We can only know about an individual's socially constructed reality through the stories they tell (Ramalho et al., 2015).

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Appendix B. Reflective Statement

Background of the Portfolio Thesis

My curiosity towards the facets of human identity preceded my acceptance onto the Clinical Psychology Doctorate. I have often pondered how my experiences of being a working class, bisexual woman have shaped my outlook on life and the values I hold. My interest in gender diversity has been shaped by familial experience and my strong values of inclusivity and equity. Appreciating diversity has possibly been influenced by my own identity as part of the LGBTQ+ community and admiration of my transgender sibling. With my family, I observed the role of psychology in supporting transgender youth to live a more fulfilled and authentic life. This experience demonstrated the interconnection of identity and mental health, highlighting the fundamental role that identity plays on an individual's wellbeing. After being successfully accepted onto the Clinical Psychology Doctorate, I was eager to pursue my interests in gender identity through designing my own research study.

Development of the Empirical Research

Initial scoping searches of the literature left me feeling deeply concerned and saddened at the poor mental health outcomes facing transgender youth (Bouman et al., 2017; Hoffman, 2014; Liu & Mustanski, 2012). This influenced conversations with my research supervisor about my relationship to the topic and the potential emotional impact of my research. In supervision, we reflected on striking a balance between my motivation to pursue a research topic I was ardent to explore and addressing my 'closeness' to the topic to limit potential bias. I felt truly grateful that I had a strong relationship with my supervisor, where we could discuss my research openly, to identify my own position and assumptions. Initially, I wanted to address the experiences of transgender youth, as I felt that this would be the most useful research to undertake. However, my ideas were sculpted further by discussions with my research supervisor, who helped me to think systemically around wider factors contributing to the wellbeing of transgender youth. My

assumptions about what constituted ‘useful’ research were challenged when I identified a lack of research on the experiences of parents of transgender youth (Westwater et al., 2019). Thus, this identified a clear rationale to explore parental experiences. In future, I would try to ensure that I remain open minded about the utility of potential topics based off the literature landscape to avoid clouding research ideas with personal assumptions.

On reflection, I am so happy that I chose this topic, as my unwavering enthusiasm for exploring gender diversity felt like a helping hand in times of stress and countless hours staring at my laptop. Henceforth, if I were to conduct research driven by my personal experiences again, I would ensure having a strong support system around me, as this not only supported the momentum of my work, but also made the process less challenging. I would also encourage others to keep a reflexive diary, as this was an incredibly valuable practice to review my decision making that I will continue in future research endeavours.

Conducting the Empirical Research

Ethics Application

The ethics application required a lot of deliberation when designing my research. I was mindful that I may be able to recruit more parents of transgender youths if I advertised through NHS services. However, after taking into consideration the political climate towards transgender youths and the closure of the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS), I realised that this recruitment strategy may not be feasible. On reflection, I am glad that I did not pursue NHS ethics, as this process is lengthy and I may have only captured the experiences of those with access to a gender service. Gaining ethical approval from the university was aided by support from people with experience of ethics submissions. I would recommend that others do the same, as this made the process more straightforward and allowed me more time for recruitment.

Recruitment

Initially, I aimed to recruit parents through social media, organisations, and charities aimed at supporting transgender youth and their families. I felt quite disheartened when I received emails back from most of the organisations that I contacted to say that they could not advertise my research poster, due to the high demand for research support. However, I understood why research was not a priority for these organisations when they were still trying to resume service delivery post pandemic. When I began recruiting through social media, I was overwhelmed with the number of responses I received from parents within support groups. Given the rise of social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tsao et al., 2021), I felt that this recruitment strategy was advantageous to my research and something that I would consider again in future projects.

During the latter stages of recruitment, I reflected on the diversity of my sample within supervision due to only having White, British mothers. I reflected on what systemic factors may be influencing why only this participant group was reaching out to participate in my research. In supervision, we discussed the impact of religious and cultural ideas around being transgender and the barriers this might create to someone living authentically. Furthermore, we reflected on the role of the father and why they might feel less inclined to be outspoken about their experiences of parenting. If I were to conduct similar research again, I would try to increase the diversity of my sample through recruiting across a greater breadth of social media platforms and support groups.

Data Collection

I was initially worried about conducting interviews on Microsoft Teams, as I did not know if I would be able to build a rapport with my participants and enable them to feel comfortable to share their experiences. Whilst the dreaded poor internet connection impacted the interviews in some instances, overall Microsoft Teams provided a useful tool to reach participants all over the country. I felt so grateful that my participants shared their

time with me, and I thoroughly enjoyed listening to their stories. I realised that rapport was strengthened at the end of the interviews when speaking about my passion for the topic. On reflection, this may have been useful to do with participants at the start of the interview, so I would do this differently in future research.

Data Analysis

Once I had completed the first transcription, I felt quite daunted at the prospect of coding the data in line with Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2014). There were many hesitant pauses where I asked myself if I was doing it 'right'. It was reassuring to reflect on this in supervision, as CGT recognises that the researcher cannot be disentangled from the research (Charmaz, 2014). The constant comparative method allowed me to become immersed in my data. I engaged in memo writing during coding, as this enabled me to strengthen the emergent categories and themes. Mapping my categories out visually was an asset to my approach and my confidence in the resultant theory. In future, I would have less hesitancy in coding, as throughout the analysis, I frequently revisited initial codes to compare them with new data. I think there is value in becoming more comfortable with uncertainty.

Systematic Literature Review

The most difficult aspect of the review project was choosing a topic. My early ideas revolved around reviewing the experience of transgender youth regarding different therapeutic interventions. However, I was mindful that this review topic inferred an implicit assumption of transgender youth needing therapy, which is not a belief that I hold. It was a conversation with my partner that diverted my attention onto the topic of social media. After carrying out a scoping search of the literature, I identified a gap, as there was a very limited number of studies on the experiences of transgender individuals using social media. I was concerned at the scarcity of the literature and questioned if there was enough

research to review. Fortunately, my supervisor reassured me of the importance of reflecting on this as a recommendation for future research.

Choice of Journals

I have chosen the British Journal of Psychology to submit my empirical, as it publishes research on all aspects of psychology. My research includes a British sample, which is appropriate for the journal. Furthermore, the journal scope and requirements align closely with the university thesis assessment criteria. For the systematic literature review, I have chosen Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity to submit to. The scope of the journal is research in the field of sexual orientation and gender diversity, which aligns with my review of the experiences of transgender individuals using social media. Similarly, the journal submission requirements align closely with the university thesis specification.

Final Reflections

In summary, I feel grateful for the opportunity to produce a piece of work that I feel so deeply proud of. Carrying out research in an area I am so passionate about has felt really meaningful and I hope that my participants feel heard and valued in their contributions to the grounded theory. I am keen to disseminate and publish my research to amplify their voices. Looking back on this research process, I have found it challenging and stressful, but incredibly rewarding. I have learnt about my position and assumptions as a researcher and the importance of reflexivity, which will strengthen my research in future. Whilst I celebrate reaching the end of this research journey, my pursuit of a better world for the gender diverse community is just getting started.

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Appendix C. Submission Instructions for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity Journal

Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity

Editor: M. Paz Galupo, PhD
ISSN: 2329-0382
eISSN: 2329-0390
Published: quarterly, beginning in March
Impact Factor: 4.617
Psychology - Multidisciplinary: 27 of 147
This journal is a publication of APA Division 44 (Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity)

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Journal scope statement

Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity®, the official publication of APA Division 44 (Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity), is a scholarly journal dedicated to the dissemination of information in the field of sexual orientation and gender diversity. It is a primary outlet for research particularly as it impacts practice, education, public policy, and social action.

The journal is intended to be a forum for scholarly dialogue that explores the multifaceted aspects of sexual orientation and gender diversity. Its focus is on empirical research (both quantitative and qualitative), theoretical and conceptual articles, in-depth reviews of the research and literature, clinical case studies, book reviews, and letters to the editor.

Many issues include a major article or set of articles on a specific theme of importance to theory, research, and/or practice in the psychology of sexual orientation and gender diversity. In addition, articles address professional issues, methodological and theoretical issues, and comments on previous publications in the journal as well as such topics that advance the psychological knowledge of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals and their families, couples and marriage, health and health care, aging, work, and careers.

The journal includes all areas of psychological research, especially developmental, social, clinical, community, counseling, family, gender roles and gender nonconformity, lifespan and aging, cultural diversity including race and ethnicity, and international issues.

Subscribe to the RSS feed for *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* (http://content.apa.org/journals/sgd.rss)

Equity, diversity, and inclusion

Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity supports equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in its practices. More information on these initiatives is available under EDI Efforts (https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/sgd?tab=5#tabs) .

Journal highlights

Editor's Choice

Each issue of *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*® will honor one accepted manuscript per issue by selecting it as an "Editor's Choice" paper. Selection is based on the discretion of the editor if the paper offers an unusually large potential impact to the field and/or elevates an important future direction for science.

Clinician's Digest

Read clinically-oriented article summaries (/pubs/journals/sgd/clinicians-digest)

From APA Journals Article Spotlight®

Do beliefs about sexual orientation predict voting? Findings from the 2016 U.S. presidential election (/pubs/highlights/spotlight/issue-191)

Who identifies as queer? A study looks at the partnering patterns of sexual minority populations (/pubs/highlights/spotlight/issue-175)

What's the relational toll of living in a sexist and heterosexist context? (/pubs/highlights/spotlight/issue-59)

Editor Spotlight

Read an interview with Editor M. Paz Galupo, PhD (/pubs/highlights/editor-spotlight/sgd-galupo)

Submission Guidelines (javascript:void(0);) Editorial Board (javascript:void(0);) Abstracting & Indexing (javascript:void(0);) Special Issues (javascript:void(0);)
EDI Efforts (javascript:void(0);)

Submission Guidelines

Prior to submission, please carefully read and follow the submission guidelines detailed below. Manuscripts that do not conform to the submission guidelines may be returned without review.

Submission

To submit to the editorial office of M. Paz Galupo, please submit manuscripts electronically through the Manuscript Submission Portal in Word Document format (.doc).

Prepare manuscripts according to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* using the 7th edition. Manuscripts may be copyedited for bias-free language (see Chapter 5 of the *Publication Manual*). APA Style and Grammar Guidelines (https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines?_ga=2.108621957.62505448.1611587229-1146984327.1584032077&_gac=1.60264799.1610575983.Cj0KCQiA0fr_BRDaARIsAABw4EvuRpQd5ff159C0LIBvKTktJUIeEjl7uMbrD1RjULX63J2Qc1bJoEIaAsdnEALw_wcB) for the 7th edition are available.

SUBMIT MANUSCRIPT (HTTPS://WWW.EDITORIALMANAGER.COM/SGD/)

M. Paz Galupo
Towson University
Maryland

Manuscript types

Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity® (*PSOGD*) accepts a variety of article types consistent with the journal's mission, including:

Standard articles containing a maximum of 7,500 words of text. These will be the most typical articles.

Longer, monograph-style articles containing a maximum of 12,000 words of text. These longer contributions will not be typical and to be considered, must provide a particularly enhanced coverage of the topic addressed.

This can take the form of:

- especially extensive literature review with a methodological critique and/or public policy implications explicated
- description of an interlocked series of research projects
- synthesis of material on sexual orientation and gender diversity with material from other aspects of psychology and/or other disciplines
- similarly extensive contributions

AUTHORS MUST OBTAIN PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE EDITOR (MAILTO:PSOGD@TOWSON.EDU) PRIOR TO SUBMITTING THIS ARTICLE TYPE.

Brief reports are research-oriented and contain a maximum of 4,000 words of text.

Case studies are clinically/practice-oriented (including industrial/organization practice) and contain a maximum of 3,000 words of text. All ethical and risk management considerations regarding informed consent, confidentiality, and other relevant concerns must be addressed. Case studies must also situate the case in question in relevant theoretical, empirical, and methodological matrices.

Letters to the editor should be limited to 500 words. In unusual circumstances, the founding editor may allow a longer limit with the author.

Commentaries may address developments in the behavioral sciences and related fields, the legal system, national or world events, as these pertain to the content areas of *PSOGD*. These should be a maximum of 1000 words, unless a longer length is allowed by the founding editor.

This list is not meant to be exclusive. Other article varieties may be accepted under unusual circumstances. However, authors must contact the editor (mailto:psogd@towson.edu) prior to submission of any other article to discuss and get approval.

As a rule of thumb one double-spaced page of standard font and size text contains about 300 words. If submissions contain an unusually larger number of references for the article type and/or unusually large tables/charts/graphs, authors may be required to reduce these. "Words" refers to words and other symbols or characters.

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PSOGD welcomes a variety of methodologies in its submissions, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed quantitative/qualitative methodologies.

All submissions are expected to maintain word limits specific to the type of manuscript (see manuscript types); offer replicable methodology; involve an *N* commensurate with the purpose of the research and which allows reasonable inference; and be written in a concise and focused manner.

In particular, extensive quotations from research participants are ill-advised, and should be limited to a few which are especially evocative of key themes. The theme descriptions should be the predominant vehicle for conveying participants' responses in qualitative research.

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Review APA's Journal Manuscript Preparation Guidelines (/pubs/journals/resources/manuscript-submission-guidelines) before submitting your article.

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This material attempts to respond to these proactively, in the hope that potential authors have a clearer sense of *PSOGD's* expectations and procedures.

Please feel free to contact the editor (mailto:psogd@towson.edu) with any inquiries about these topics below or others.

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Nothing in your manuscript should indicate authors' identities, institutional affiliation, or other identifying features. Common examples include: naming the institution that granted institutional review board approval; citing by name previous publications on which the current submission explicitly builds; naming specific organizations that cooperated in data collection, etc.

The words "MASKED FOR REVIEW" should be substituted.

When masking earlier work on which the current submission is based, remember to remove the identifying citation both from the text and the references. Insufficiently masked submissions will be returned to authors for masking before being sent for review, which slows the review process.

If the article is accepted for publication, the identifying information can be added subsequently.

Please ensure that the final version for production includes a byline and full author note for typesetting.

Language guidelines

Authors should be cognizant that language and terminologies used to describe sexual orientation and gender diversity have been used in pejorative ways, have undergone transitions, may likely undergo more transitions, and should be used in ways that convey respect yet maintain precision.

When APA offers language guidelines or policy statements that address terminology, authors are generally expected to use these guidelines and statements. There are exceptions to this, such as accurately quoting or describing older literature which might use outdated or problematic terminology.

If atypical or non-standard language choices are made deliberately (e.g., using "they" as singular in order to be trans-inclusive), this should be explained and documented in a footnote to the manuscript.

Revisions

Revisions must be accompanied by a description of changes made, including previously rejected and rewritten papers incorporating feedback.

As the decision letters state, when submitting a revision, authors must include a letter or memo describing the changes made in response to reviewer and editor feedback. This letter should address all the points raised by the editor and reviewers. It is acceptable to disagree with feedback and reject or modify a requested change; this should be clearly stated, and a rationale provided for the disagreement.

Resubmission of a previously rejected manuscript is generally not recommended without consultation with the editor. If resubmission of a previously rejected manuscript is made, authors should note the manuscript number of the earlier rejected submission, and include the same full description of changes made as described in the above paragraph.

Revisions/resubmissions without a description of changes made will not be read and will be returned to authors with instructions to provide this description.

Abstract and keywords

All manuscripts must include an abstract containing a maximum of 250 words typed on a separate page.

After the abstract, please supply up to five keywords or brief phrases.

PSOGD encourages submissions from all countries and aspires to disseminate knowledge about sexual orientation and gender diversity internationally.

To this end, authors should submit abstracts and keywords in English and, if they wish, in addition provide abstracts in any other language(s) relevant to the submission in question.

Specifically, authors may submit abstracts and keywords in languages in addition to English in the following circumstances:

- When the research subjects or content matter involve non-English speaking populations
- When the authors are based in a non-English speaking country or comprise a multi-national team with some members from non-English speaking countries.
- There may be other circumstances where authors wish abstracts in other languages to be included. These should be reviewed and approved by the founding editor.

Note that all submissions must include an abstract and keywords in English.

Non-English language abstracts

PSOGD is committed to encouraging and disseminating scholarship on sexual orientation and gender diversity world-wide as much as is feasible. To facilitate this goal, authors working in a non-English speaking country, or whose sample is from a non-English speaking country, should submit another abstract in their other language, or that of the sample. This will appear below the English abstract if the article is published.

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PSOGD does not have the resources to provide a final copyediting of non-English abstracts, so authors should carefully check the non-English abstracts.

PSOGD can publish the main article text only in English.

Public significance statement

Authors submitting manuscripts to PSOGD are required to provide a short statement of one to two sentences to summarize the article's findings and significance to the educated public (e.g., understanding human thought, feeling, and behavior and/or assisting with solutions to psychological or societal problems). This description should be included within the manuscript on the abstract/keywords page.

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Clinicians' Digest

Beginning in 2018, *PSOGD* will include a Clinicians' Digest section providing practitioners with clinically useful, yet scientifically robust ideas from articles published in the journal.

The Digest, consisting of one- or two-paragraph synopses of clinically relevant concepts from articles in that issue, presented together as one piece, is written by a rotating team coordinated by Christopher Martell, PhD, ABPP.

Authors of the source articles from which the Digest synopses are drawn have the prerogative to decline their articles' participation in the Digest. They are, however, strongly encouraged to allow their articles to be included in order to facilitate their findings being maximally useful to practitioners.

Digest authors will work with source articles' authors to maintain fidelity with the source article.

The synopses in the Clinicians' Digest are intended to be used with the source article and its abstract, but offer original clinically relevant ideas based on the source article.

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Below are additional instructions regarding the preparation of display equations, computer code, and tables.

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We strongly encourage you to use MathType (third-party software) or Equation Editor 3.0 (built into pre-2007 versions of Word) to construct your equations, rather than the equation support that is built into Word 2007 and Word 2010. Equations composed with the built-in Word 2007/Word 2010 equation support are converted to low-resolution graphics when they enter the production process and must be rekeyed by the typesetter, which may introduce errors.

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Authored book

Brown, L. S. (2018). *Feminist therapy* (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000092-000 (https://doi.org/10.1037/0000092-000)

Chapter in an edited book

Balsam, K. F., Martell, C. R., Jones, K. P., & Safren, S. A. (2019). Affirmative cognitive behavior therapy with sexual and gender minority people. In G. Y. Iwamasa & P. A. Hays (Eds.), *Culturally responsive cognitive behavior therapy: Practice and supervision* (2nd ed., pp. 287–314). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000119-012 (https://doi.org/10.1037/0000119-012)

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Resolution

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>
> On occasion, it may be appropriate to publish several reports referring to the same database. The author should inform the editor at the time of submission about all previously published or submitted reports so the editor can judge if the article represents a new contribution. Readers also should be informed; the text of an article should cite other reports that used the same sample (or a subsample) or the same data and methods.

Since *PSOGD* allows for longer submissions, up to 12,000 words, there should be few circumstances where publishing several pieces from the same data set is warranted. Data sets that have both quantitative and qualitative components should generally be published as a whole.

PSOGD recognizes, however, that some large data sets, for example as are common in epidemiological research, appropriately lend themselves to multiple publications. Authors are expected to contact the Editor before submitting a piece which may have fragmented data, provide a rationale for this, and obtain the Editor's consultation on the appropriateness.

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Ethical Principles

Previously published data

It is a violation of APA Ethical Principles to publish "as original data, data that have been previously published" (Standard 8.13).

Availability of raw data

APA Ethical Principles specify that "after research results are published, psychologists do not withhold the data on which their conclusions are based from other competent professionals who seek to verify the substantive claims through reanalysis and who intend to use such data only for that purpose, provided that the confidentiality of the participants can be protected and unless legal rights concerning proprietary data preclude their release" (Standard 8.14).

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On a case by case basis, *PSOGD*'s editor may request that authors provide all or some of the raw data on which research reported in a submission is based. This might typically occur at the request of a reviewer, or when the editor believes there is something unusual, atypical or unclear about the reported results.

Authors are expected to provide the raw data requested in a timely manner. Authors' unwillingness to do so will result in the submission's rejection. Data may not be considered proprietary.

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General expectations of submissions

Given the wide variety of manuscript types that *PSOGD* accepts, all of these recommendations may not be suitable for all submissions, but are most true for standard and longer research articles.

Clear description/intro. Make certain readers are quickly oriented to the purpose and focus of your manuscript. Make sure that the words used to describe your purpose and focus are the same throughout the manuscript.

Literature review to set context. The literature review should situate your work both in the literature on sexual orientation and gender diversity, and in the behavioral sciences more generally. It should include enough to make a compelling argument for why your study was needed, and should lead directly to your purpose and

hypotheses/research questions. Too little, too much, or tangential literature review are common errors. Ensure that your sources present credible scientific findings.

Clear methodology. Could others replicate it? Are the chosen methodologies adequately justified? Provide citations to support your rationale for selecting your given methodology and analytical strategy. Are your data appropriate for the study questions and analyses (e.g., adequate sample size)?

Information about measures. Basic reliability/validity of measures should be summarized and, when possible, these data should be obtained from samples consistent with your study sample. Provide reasons for choosing the specific measures. In addition, report the number of items, scoring procedures, the directionality of scores (e.g., higher scores on this measure indicate higher...), and how scores are computed. If measures were modified in your study, describe the rationale for the modification, the specific modification, and whether this modification was guided by any theory or previous study's methods, and how the measure "behaved" in your study (e.g., reliabilities, factor scores).

Sample. Describe clearly sampling and recruitment procedures. Describe demographics and other characteristics. Have you used up-to-date terminology?

Statistics. Are your statistical results presented in a clear and accessible manner? Does your statistical plan map to your hypotheses? When programs other than SPSS or SAS are utilized to conduct the analyses, report the program (e.g., MPlus). Only identify quantitative results as significant when they meet the generally accepted minimum criterion of $p < .05$ (i.e., do not suggest that scores "trended toward significance" unless you did a trend analysis). Discuss missing data (i.e., amount and whether data were missing at random) and how missing data were addressed. Were the tables/charts/graphs etc. checked for accuracy?

APA Style. Headings, references, citations, and tables/charts are frequently done incorrectly. Please check these carefully.

Copyediting. Your submission should be free of spacing, formatting, grammatical, spelling, and other copyediting errors. Manuscripts judged to contain an unreasonable number of errors will be rejected without review.

Conclusions. Are the conclusions that are drawn clearly supported by the data and congruent with the limitations of your methodology? It is a common mistake to reach beyond your data, especially when discussing implications for practice, advocacy, education, etc. However, not discussing the full implications of one's findings can be problematic as well. Strive for balance, but err on the side of caution. Attempt to relate the findings to conclusions reached in previous research but watch speculating beyond the data.

Limitations. Do not minimize or avoid. Describe limitations directly, and when possible use your limitations as a springboard for recommendations for future research.

Note compliance with institutional review board and ethical requirements, without sacrificing masking of the manuscript.

Concise writing

Be concise and avoid expansive writing.

Journal space is at a premium. Please review your submissions to keep the writing as concise and focused as possible. The goal is to write just enough to fully communicate the integrity of your work.

Manuscripts with an unnecessarily verbose writing style will be returned to authors, unreviewed, for a more focused and shorter revision. This is also true of references, which should be sufficient to fully justify and contextualize the submission–but no more.

Tables, charts, figures etc. should similarly summarize and clarify, and contribute to the understanding of the research being presented beyond the information reported in the text. If they do not do so, they serve no useful function and authors will be asked to condense or delete them.

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Be aware of the stylistic differences between student and institutional papers versus journal publications. Papers that are initially prepared as student assignments, reports of research grant activities, internal institution documents, etc., are typically in formats and styles inconsistent with journal publication.

For example, faculty often expect student papers to demonstrate wide-ranging literature reviews and elaborate justifications of methodology and instrumentation; grant and institution-focused papers often address goals and issues uniquely relevant to those entities.

Such papers usually require considerable revision before they are appropriate journal submissions. This is almost always in the direction of sharper focus, more concise writing style, and significant shortening.

Faculty and funding sources usually expect such student and institutional paper authors to demonstrate skill sets and goals that go beyond concise presentation of the material. Journal publications seek only concise presentation of the material.

Please edit your work accordingly before submitting it.

Other information

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Appendix D. MMAT User Guidelines

Part I: Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), version 2018

Category of study designs	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?				
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?				
	Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.				
1. Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?				
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?				
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?				
	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?				
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?				
2. Quantitative randomized controlled trials	2.1. Is randomization appropriately performed?				
	2.2. Are the groups comparable at baseline?				
	2.3. Are there complete outcome data?				
	2.4. Are outcome assessors blinded to the intervention provided?				
	2.5 Did the participants adhere to the assigned intervention?				
3. Quantitative non-randomized	3.1. Are the participants representative of the target population?				
	3.2. Are measurements appropriate regarding both the outcome and intervention (or exposure)?				
	3.3. Are there complete outcome data?				
	3.4. Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis?				
	3.5. During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended?				
4. Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?				
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?				
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?				
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?				
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?				
5. Mixed methods	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?				
	5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?				
	5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?				
	5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?				
	5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?				

Part II: Explanations

1. Qualitative studies	Methodological quality criteria
"Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2013b, p. 3). Common qualitative research approaches include (this list if not exhaustive): **Ethnography** The aim of the study is to describe and interpret the shared cultural behaviour of a group of individuals. **Phenomenology** The study focuses on the subjective experiences and interpretations of a phenomenon encountered by individuals. **Narrative research** The study analyzes life experiences of an individual or a group. **Grounded theory** Generation of theory from data in the process of conducting research (data collection occurs first). **Case study** In-depth exploration and/or explanation of issues intrinsic to a particular case. A case can be anything from a decision-making process, to a person, an organization, or a country. **Qualitative description** There is no specific methodology, but a qualitative data collection and analysis, e.g., in-depth interviews or focus groups, and hybrid thematic analysis (inductive and deductive). Key references: Creswell (2013a); Sandelowski (2010); Schwandt (2015)	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question? Explanations The qualitative approach used in a study (see non-exhaustive list on the left side of this table) should be appropriate for the research question and problem. For example, the use of a grounded theory approach should address the development of a theory and ethnography should study human cultures and societies. This criterion was considered important to add in the MMAT since there is only one category of criteria for qualitative studies (compared to three for quantitative studies). 1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question? Explanations This criterion is related to data collection method, including data sources (e.g., archives, documents), used to address the research question. To judge this criterion, consider whether the method of data collection (e.g., in depth interviews and/or group interviews, and/or observations) and the form of the data (e.g., tape recording, video material, diary, photo, and/or field notes) are adequate. Also, clear justifications are needed when data collection methods are modified during the study. 1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data? Explanations This criterion is related to the data analysis used. Several data analysis methods have been developed and their use depends on the research question and qualitative approach. For example, open, axial and selective coding is often associated with grounded theory, and within- and cross-case analysis is often seen in case study. 1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data? Explanations The interpretation of results should be supported by the data collected. For example, the quotes provided to justify the themes should be adequate. 1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation? Explanations There should be clear links between data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation.

5. Mixed methods studies	Methodological quality criteria
Mixed methods (MM) research involves combining qualitative (QUAL) and quantitative (QUAN) methods. In this tool, to be considered MM, studies have to meet the following criteria (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017): (a) at least one QUAL method and one QUAN method are combined; (b) each method is used rigorously in accordance to the generally accepted criteria in the area (or tradition) of research invoked; and (c) the combination of the methods is carried out at the minimum through a MM design (defined *a priori*, or emerging) and the integration of the QUAL and QUAN phases, results, and data. Common designs include (this list if not exhaustive): **Convergent design** The QUAL and QUAN components are usually (but not necessarily) concomitant. The purpose is to examine the same phenomenon by interpreting QUAL and QUAN results (bringing data analysis together at the interpretation stage), or by integrating QUAL and QUAN datasets (e.g., data on same cases), or by transforming data (e.g., quantization of qualitative data). **Sequential explanatory design** Results of the phase 1 - QUAN component inform the phase 2 - QUAL component. The purpose is to explain QUAN results using QUAL findings. E.g., the QUAN results guide the selection of QUAL data sources and data collection, and the QUAL findings contribute to the interpretation of QUAN results. **Sequential exploratory design** Results of the phase 1 - QUAL component inform the phase 2 - QUAN component. The purpose is to explore, develop and test an instrument (or taxonomy), or a conceptual framework (or theoretical model). E.g., the QUAL findings inform the QUAN data collection, and the QUAN results allow a statistical generalization of the QUAL findings. Key references: Creswell et al. (2011); Creswell and Plano Clark, (2017); O'Cathain (2010)	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question? Explanations The reasons for conducting a mixed methods study should be clearly explained. Several reasons can be invoked such as to enhance or build upon qualitative findings with quantitative results and vice versa; to provide a comprehensive and complete understanding of a phenomenon or to develop and test instruments (Bryman, 2006). 5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question? Explanations Integration is a core component of mixed methods research and is defined as the "explicit interrelating of the quantitative and qualitative component in a mixed methods study" (Plano Clark and Ivankova, 2015, p. 40). Look for information on how qualitative and quantitative phases, results, and data were integrated (Pluye et al., 2018). For instance, how data gathered by both research methods was brought together to form a complete picture (e.g., joint displays) and when integration occurred (e.g., during the data collection-analysis or/and during the interpretation of qualitative and quantitative results). 5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted? Explanations This criterion is related to meta-inference, which is defined as the overall interpretations derived from integrating qualitative and quantitative findings (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). Meta-inference occurs during the interpretation of the findings from the integration of the qualitative and quantitative components, and shows the added value of conducting a mixed methods study rather than having two separate studies. 5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed? Explanations When integrating the findings from the qualitative and quantitative components, divergences and inconsistencies (also called conflicts, contradictions, discordances, discrepancies, and dissonances) can be found. It is not sufficient to only report the divergences; they need to be explained. Different strategies to address the divergences have been suggested such as reconciliation, initiation, bracketing and exclusion (Pluye et al., 2009b). Rate this criterion 'Yes' if there is no divergence. 5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved? Explanations The quality of the qualitative and quantitative components should be individually appraised to ensure that no important threats to trustworthiness are present. To appraise 5.5, use criteria for the qualitative component (1.1 to 1.5), and the appropriate criteria for the quantitative component (2.1 to 2.5, or 3.1 to 3.5, or 4.1 to 4.5). The quality of both components should be high for the mixed methods study to be considered of good quality. The premise is that the overall quality of a mixed methods study cannot exceed the quality of its weakest component. For example, if the quantitative component is rated high quality and the qualitative component is rated low quality, the overall rating for this criterion will be of low quality.

Appendix E. Data Extraction Form

Author(s), Year of Publication, Title, and Location of Study	Research Aims	Population	Design	Method of Analysis	Key Findings

Appendix F. Summary of Synthesis Themes Drawn from Each Study Within the Review

Study	Outline of Synthesis Themes
Cipolletta, Votadoro and Faccio (2017) Online Support for Transgender People: An Analysis of Forums and Social Networks.	Motivations for social media use: Sharing experiences. (3.2. Sharing Experiences) Developing close relationships. (3.3. Close Relationships) Testing oneself to assess credibility as another gender. (1. Explorational) Asking for (4.1. Seeking Support) and offering help. (4.2. Supporting Others) Reducing prejudice by educating others. (2.2. Educating Others) People sought online help in the form of medical advice. (2.1. Seeking Information) It is not necessary to reveal a physical appearance whilst testing an identity online. Forums are outdated and unattractive. Increased security against trolls (5.1. Threat to Safety) and transphobia. (5.2. Harmful Discourses)
Ma, Korpak, Choukas-Bradley and Macapagal (2022) Patterns of Online Relationship Seeking Among Transgender and Gender Diverse Adolescents: Advice for Others and Common Inquiries.	Most participants used social media to meet partners. (3.3. Close Relationships) Individuals valued personal safety online. (5.1. Threat to Safety) Participants recommend honest and genuine gender identity disclosure. Various strategies were adopted to navigate online relationships. The ability to disengage from uncomfortable interactions online increased safety. (5.1. Threat to Safety)
Selkie, Adkins, Masters, Bajpai and Shumer (2020) Transgender Adolescents' Uses of Social Media for Social Support.	Emotional support (4.1. Seeking Support) was obtained through shared understanding (3.2. Shared Experiences) and hope for the future. Appraisal support was provided in the form of validation and normalising of feelings. The affirmational support included compliments on individuals' appearances 'passing'. (4.3. Validation) Informational topics: (2.1. Seeking Information) Gender affirming therapy

Study	Outline of Synthesis Themes
	Treatments and hormones Educating families (2.2. Educating Others) Individuals also exposed to negative, harmful, and transphobic comments. (5.2. Harmful Discourses) Subject to victimisation based on the “right way to be trans”.
Rothbaum, Etengoff and Uribe (2021) Transgender Community Resilience on YouTube: Constructing an Informational, Emotional, and Sociorelational Support Exchange.	Individuals watched trans vlogs to gain informational (2.1. Seeking Information), emotional, and socio-relational resources. Able to learn about transition process and experience. (3.2. Shared Experiences) Emotional resources included advice on how to regulate emotions and improve self-esteem. (4.1. Seeking Support) Empathy for others was created (4.2. Supporting Others) by connecting with other transgender people and hence the transgender community. (3.1. Sense of Community)
Miller (2019) YouTube as a Site of Counternarratives to Transnormativity.	Popular transition videos outline the physical aspects of gender transition. (3.2. Shared Experiences) Videos contained ideas of “passing standards”. YouTube videos generate an idea of what it means to be transgender, including the language and dialogue around the identity. (5.2. Harmful Discourses) YouTube serves as a site to hear voices that challenged transnormativity.
Buss, Le and Haimson (2021) Transgender Identity Management Across Social Media Platforms.	Different gender identities presented across different platforms. (1. Explorational) Separate accounts for trans content. Ability to curate social media content to make experiences more enjoyable by unfollowing and blocking accounts. (5.1. Threat to Safety) Users were more likely to be open about their gender identity online if their network was made up of close friends. (3.3. Close Relationships) Platforms provided resources and a community (3.1. Sense of Community) that affirmed users’ gender identities. (4.3. Validation)

Study	Outline of Synthesis Themes
Cannon, Speedlin, Avera, Robertson, Ingram and Prado (2017) Transition, Connection, Disconnection, and Social Media: Examining the Digital Lived Experiences of Transgender Individuals.	Social media was used as a resource to gain information about hormones, treatment, and beauty tips. (2.1. Seeking Information) Users could share own experiences and learn about the experiences of others. (3.2. Shared Experiences) Online safety was controlled by selectively choosing the sites used. (5.1. Threat to Safety) A key finding was the importance of belonging to a community. (3.1. Sense of Community) Social media provided validation and acceptance. (4.3. Valildation) By maintaining boundaries, individuals protected themselves from trolls (5.1. Threat to Safety) who made discriminatory comments. (5.2. Harmful Discourses) Social media played a dual role in users' authenticity: either enabling authentic presentation or hindering self-expression to avoid exposure to family.
Dowers, Kingsley and White (2021) Virtually Trans: An Australian Facebook Group Supporting Gender Diverse Adults' Health and Wellbeing.	Social media provides a safe space, solidarity (3.1. Sense of Community), and identity affirmation. (4.3. Validation) Creating a culture of care. (4.2. Supporting Others) "Virtually Trans" group enables localised peer information exchange. (2.1. Seeking Information) Group acted as a space to contribute to resources for other trans individuals in the local area. (2.2. Educating Others) Provided an opportunity to explore gender expression. (1. Explorational) Membership of group led to the development of friendships with other members. (3.3. Close Relationships)
Jacobsen, Devor and Hodge (2022) Who Counts as Trans? A Critical Discourse Analysis of Trans Tumblr Posts.	Identified two groups of trans Tumblr users: transmed and anti-transmed. Users aligned themselves with one of these groups. Discourse on the platform around gender identity and dysphoria. (5.2. Harmful Discourses)

Study	Outline of Synthesis Themes
	Site of individual and collective identity formation.
Austin, Craig, Navega and McInroy (2020) It's My Safe Space: The Life-saving Role of the Internet in the Lives of Transgender and Gender Diverse Youth.	Provided an affirming space. (4.3. Validation) Users able to engage with others as their authentic selves. (1. Explorational) Individuals found an escape from stigma and violence. Built feelings of belonging (3.1. Sense of Community), confidence, and hope. Giving back had a profound positive impact on individuals' sense of wellbeing. (4.2. Supporting Others)

Appendix G. Submission Instructions for the British Journal of Psychology

British Journal of Psychology

the british psychological society

BJP AUTHOR GUIDELINES

Sections

1. Submission
2. Aims and Scope
3. Manuscript Categories and Requirements
4. Preparing the Submission
5. Editorial Policies and Ethical Considerations
6. Author Licensing
7. Publication Process After Acceptance
8. Post Publication
9. Editorial Office Contact Details

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New submissions should be made via the Research Exchange submission portal. You may check the status of your submission at any time by logging on to submission.wiley.com and clicking the "My Submissions" button. For technical help with the submission system, please review our FAQs or contact submissionhelp@wiley.com.

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We attract a large number of international submissions each year which make major contributions across the range of psychology, particularly where the work has the following characteristics:

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- articles or groups of articles dealing with novel areas, theories or methodologies;
- integrative reviews, particularly where the review offers new analysis (e.g. meta-analysis), new theory or new implications for practice;
- articles or groups of articles dealing with the history of psychology;
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It enjoys a wide international readership and features reports of empirical studies, critical reviews of the literature and theoretical contributions which aim to further our understanding of psychology.

The journal additionally publishes a small number of invited articles by people who lead their field on a topic that provokes discussion. These articles include a short peer commentary.

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- All papers should be no more than 8000 words (excluding the abstract, reference list, tables and figures). In exceptional cases the Editor retains discretion to publish papers beyond this length where the clear and concise expression of the scientific content requires greater length (e.g., explanation of a new theory or a substantially new method). Authors must contact the Editor prior to submission in such a case.
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If you are invited to revise your manuscript after peer review, the journal will also request the revised manuscript to be formatted according to journal requirements as described below.

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Contributions must be typed in double spacing. All sheets must be numbered.

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The manuscript should be submitted in separate files: title page; main text file; figures/tables; supporting information.

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You may like to use this template for your title page. The title page should contain:

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- A short running title of less than 40 characters;
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- Data availability statement (see Data Sharing and Data Accessibility Policy);
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For all articles, the journal mandates the CRediT (Contribution Roles Taxonomy)—more information is available on our Author Services site.

Abstract

Please provide an abstract of between 100 and 200 words, giving a concise statement of the intention, results or conclusions of the article. The abstract should not include any sub-headings.

Keywords

Please provide appropriate keywords.

Acknowledgments

Contributions from anyone who does not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed, with permission from the contributor, in an Acknowledgments section. Financial and material support should also be mentioned. Thanks to anonymous reviewers are not appropriate.

Main Text File

As papers are double-anonymous peer reviewed, the main text file should not include any information that might identify the authors.

Manuscripts can be uploaded either as a single document (containing the main text, tables and figures), or with figures and tables provided as separate files. Should your manuscript reach revision stage, figures and tables must be provided as separate files. The main manuscript file can be submitted in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or LaTex (.tex) format.

If submitting your manuscript file in LaTex format via Research Exchange, select the file designation "Main Document – LaTeX .tex File" on upload. When submitting a LaTex Main Document, you must also provide a PDF version of the manuscript for Peer Review. Please upload this file as "Main Document - LaTeX PDF." All supporting files that are referred to in the LaTex Main Document should be uploaded as a "LaTeX Supplementary File."

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Please check that you have supplied the following files for typesetting post-acceptance:

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- The LaTeX source code files (text, figure captions, and tables, preferably in a single file), BibTex files (if used), any associated packages/files along with all other files needed for compiling without any errors. This is particularly important if authors have used any LaTeX style or class files, bibliography files (.bbl, .bst. .blg) or packages apart from those used in the NJD LaTex Template class file.
- Electronic graphics files for the illustrations in Encapsulated PostScript (EPS), PDF or TIFF format. Authors are requested not to create figures using LaTeX codes.

Your main document file should include:

- A short informative title containing the major key words. The title should not contain abbreviations;
- Acknowledgments;
- Abstract without any subheadings;
- Up to seven keywords;
- Main body: formatted as introduction, materials & methods, results, discussion, conclusion;
- References;
- Tables (each table complete with title and footnotes);
- Figure legends: Legends should be supplied as a complete list in the text. Figures should be uploaded as separate files (see below)
- Statement of Contribution.

Supporting information should be supplied as separate files. Tables and figures can be included at the end of the main document or attached as separate files but they must be mentioned in the text.

- As papers are double-anonymous peer reviewed, the main text file should not include any information that might identify the authors. Please do not mention the authors' names or affiliations and always refer to any previous work in the third person.
- The journal uses British/US spelling; however, authors may submit using either option, as spelling of accepted papers is converted during the production process.

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Appendix H. Recruitment Poster

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Are you a parent of a transgender child?

I am interested in how parents enable their child to flourish.

I am conducting research as part of my Doctorate in Clinical Psychology and would love to hear about your experiences.

What would I have to do?

If you are happy to talk about your experiences, please get in touch and we can arrange a convenient date and time to speak via phone or video call.

How do I get involved?

If you would like to participate in this important research or would like more information, please email Olivia Carrick at: **o.carrick-2017@hull.ac.uk**

Appendix I. Documentation of Ethical Approval

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University of Hull
Hull, HU6 7RX
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T: +44 (0)1482 463336 | E: e.walker@hull.ac.uk
w: www.hull.ac.uk

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL
Miss Olivia Carrick
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Hull
Via email

Wednesday 29th June 2022

Dear Olivia

REF FHS441 - How do parents enable their transgender child to flourish?

Thank you for your responses to the points raised by the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Given the information you have provided I confirm approval by Chair's action.

Please refer to the Research Ethics Committee web page for reporting requirements in the event of any amendments to your study.

Should an Adverse Event need to be reported, please complete the Adverse Event Form and send it to the Research Ethics Committee FHS-ethicssubmissions@hull.ac.uk within 15 days of the Chief Investigator becoming aware of the event.

I wish you every success with your study.

Yours sincerely

Professor Liz Walker
Chair, FHS Research Ethics Committee

UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Liz Walker | Professor of Health and Social Work Research | Faculty of Health Sciences
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@UniOfHull /UniversityOfHull universityofhull

Appendix J. Participant Information Sheet

V1.2. 22.04.2022

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INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Title of study: How do parents enable their transgender child to flourish?

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project which forms part of my doctorate research. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

Research predominantly focuses on the negative experiences that parents face parenting transgender youth which disregards the positivity, resilience, growth, and hope that can be involved within gender transition. This study is looking to understand more about how parents enable their transgender child to flourish.

Flourishing can be defined as: having good mental and physical health, being free from illness or distress and being able to function well in one's personal and social life (Keyes & Haidt, 2003).

We hope that this study will create a positive and empowering narrative about the role of the parent in their child's gender transition and help us to understand what parents can do to enable their child to flourish which may influence how we improve support in this area.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a parent of a transgender child who has experience supporting their child throughout their gender transition. The information sheet is being shared with people who may fulfil the criteria to take part in the study as they may be interested in participating.

What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part, please send me your contact details to the email address below. Then, I will contact you to arrange a meeting via video call at a convenient time. I will ask you to answer some short questions about you, for example your gender, age and your child's gender and age. Then, I will ask some questions and you will have a conversation with me which will last no longer than 60 minutes. I will ask about your experiences of parenting a transgender child and what you have done to enable your child to flourish. **Within the interview, please remember to not disclose any names or identifiable information of your child or the systems that they may be involved with.** I will audio record the discussion with your consent. There are no right or wrong answers, and I am only interested in your experiences and stories.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is completely voluntary. You should only take part if you want to and choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Once you have read the information sheet, please contact me if you have any questions that will help you make a decision about taking part. If you decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form and you will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

Participating in the study will require 60 minutes of your time and although the researcher will endeavour to meet at a mutually convenient time, this may not be convenient for you. Some parents may experience emotional distress when talking about their experiences of parenting a transgender child because it may bring to mind difficult memories or experiences. If this happens to you, the researcher will signpost you to sources of support such as your GP, mental health organisations and LGBTQ+ charities, if needed.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We cannot promise that you will have any direct benefits from taking part in the study. However, it is hoped that the study will offer parents the opportunity to have their voices heard and tell their stories of parenting a transgender child. The findings may also help to promote positive stories of raising transgender youth which can empower transgender youth and their families. An understanding of how parents enable their transgender child to flourish may have practical implications for practitioners working with young trans individuals.

Data handling and confidentiality

Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

The data controller for this project is the University of Hull. The University will process your personal data for the above research. The legal basis for processing your personal data for research purposes under GDPR is a 'task in the public interest'.

We will need to use information from you for this research project. This information will include your name and contact details. This information will be used to conduct the research or to check your records to make sure that the research is being done properly.
People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your name or contact details. Your data will have a code number instead. We will keep all information about you safe and secure. Once the study is complete, we will keep some of the data so we can check the results. We will write our reports in a way that you would not be identifiable in the study. Direct quotes from the discussion may be used in research publications and presentations but you will not be identified in these.

To protect the security of the audio recordings an encrypted recording device will be used. After the research is completed, all the audio recordings will be destroyed. Anonymised transcripts of the recordings will be stored securely in an on-line storage repository at the

University of Hull for a period of ten years. The only time that information cannot be kept confidential is if you disclose something that suggests that you or someone else is at risk of serious harm. In this instance, the researcher will need to contact appropriate authorities to ensure that you and others are safe. It is unlikely that this will happen, and the researcher will try to discuss this with you where possible.

You can find out more about how we use your information at https://www.hull.ac.uk/choose-hull/university-and-region/key-documents/data-protection.aspx or by emailing University of Hull Information Compliance Manager (dataprotection@hull.ac.uk). If you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit www.ico.org.uk.

What if I change my mind about taking part?

You can withdraw at any point of the study, without having to give a reason. Withdrawing from the study will not affect you in any way. You can withdraw your data from the study up until the point of data analysis, after which withdrawal of your data will no longer be possible as the data will have been anonymised and/or committed to the final report. If you choose to withdraw from the study before this point, the data collected will be destroyed. Information collected from this study will be used for this study, the information collected from you may be used to support other research in the future and may be shared anonymously with other researchers.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of the study will be summarised in a written thesis as part of a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. The thesis will be available on the University of Hull's on-line repository https://hydra.hull.ac.uk. It is possible the research may be published in an academic journal.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:

Olivia Carrick
Clinical Psychology
Aire Building
University of Hull
Cottingham Road
Hull
HU6 7RX
Email: o.carrick-2017@hull.ac.uk

What if I have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

If you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study, you can contact the University of Hull using the details below for further advice and information:

Dr Annette Schlosser
Clinical Psychology
Aire Building
University of Hull
Cottingham Road
Hull
HU6 7RX
Email: a.schlosser@hull.ac.uk

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

Appendix K. Participant Consent Form

V1.2. 22.04.2022

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CONSENT FORM

Title of study: How do parents enable their transgender child to flourish?

Name of Researcher: Olivia Carrick

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated 22.04.2022 (Version 1.2) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected. I understand that the data I have provided up to the point of withdrawal will be retained. ☐

3. I understand that the research interview will be audio recorded and that my anonymised verbatim quotes may be used in research reports and conference presentations. ☐

4. I understand that the information collected about me will be used to support other research in the future and may be shared anonymously with other researchers. ☐

5. I give permission for the collection and use of my data to answer the research question in this study. ☐

6. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix L. Participant Debrief Form

V1.2. 22.04.2022

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Debrief Form

Title of study: How do parents enable their transgender child to flourish?

Name of Researcher: Olivia Carrick

Debrief information

Thank you for taking part in the present study. Your contributions will help to develop positive narratives around parenting a transgender child and promote support, acceptance, and an understanding of how parents can enable their transgender child to flourish. We are still learning new ways of supporting transgender youth so the time you have taken to participate in this research can help to develop a more comprehensive understanding of a parental perspective which is greatly appreciated.

As a reminder, all the information in this study will remain anonymised. Your data will be given a code/pseudonym in the write up of the research and any quotes that may be used will not be linked back to you.

Note that you are still able to withdraw your data from the research without reason if you wish to do so. However, you can only withdraw your data from the research up to the point of data analysis. After this point, your data will have been anonymised and committed to the report.

Sources of support

For some people, they may have found the content of discussions within the interviews distressing. If you have found taking part in the research difficult or distressing, you may find it helpful to access some of the following support:

Samaritans – Samaritans is a confidential support line for people experiencing distress (24-hour support). Tel: **116 123**. Website: **www.samaritans.org.uk.**

Mind – Mind is a mental health charity that offer a range of support for people with distress. They offer online information and support. Website: **https://www.mind.org.uk/** or contact your local Mind branch.

Your Local GP – Your GP may be able to provide support via signposting to local organisations and talking therapies.

MindOut – MindOut is a mental health service which offers advice and is run by and for lesbians, gay, bisexual, trans and queer people. Tel: **01273 234839**. Website: **www.mindout.org.uk.**

Mermaids - Mermaids is a charity which supports transgender, nonbinary and gender diverse children, young people and their families which offers helpline services and web resources. Website: **www.mermaidsuk.org.uk.**

LGBT Foundation - LGBT Foundation is a national charity which delivers advice, support, and information services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities. Tel: **03453 303030.** Website: **https://lgbt.foundation**.

Further information

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:

Olivia Carrick
Clinical Psychology
Aire Building
The University of Hull
Cottingham Road
Hull
HU6 7RX
E-mail: o.carrick-2017@hull.ac.uk

If you wish to make a complaint about the study, you can contact the University of Hull using the research supervisor's details below for further advice and information:

Dr Annette Schlosser
Clinical Psychology
Aire Building
The University of Hull
Cottingham Road
Hull
HU6 7RX
Email address: a.schlosser@hull.ac.uk

Appendix M. Interview Schedule

V2.2 01.12.2022

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Interview Schedule

Introduction

- Introduce myself, my role and thank participant for taking part.
- Check that audio and visuals are working.
- Check that the participant has read the Information Sheet and understands why they are being interviewed.
- Check that the participant still wants to proceed with the interview.
- Check if the participant has signed, scanned and emailed the consent form to myself.
- If not, start the audio recording, obtain verbal consent relating to each item on the Consent Form and then stop the audio recording.
- Ask if there are any questions before proceeding.

Checks

- Check that the participant is in a quiet place where they will not be interrupted and can talk openly.
- Discuss what would happen if internet connection were lost- keep the audio recording going and ask each other to repeat what has just been said. If the connection is lost completely, re-load the link or move to phone call.
- Check how long the participant has available for the interview and reassure them that it should last no longer than an hour and we can take a break at any time.
- Discuss the interview process. The aim is to have a conversation about the participant's experiences. "As the researcher, I will try to talk as little as possible".
- Check if the participant is happy for brief notes to be taken during the interview.
- Remind participant that anything discussed is confidential and any names or specific situations that may make someone identifiable will be anonymised.
- Remind participant that disclosure of risk or harm will not be able to be kept confidential if the research believes that harm could be caused to the participant or others.

Questions

- To begin, I'm going to ask you some demographic questions. This information is important as it helps to guide the selection of participants and allows for an exploration of different factors which may influence the experiences you have as a parent.
- Age of parent
- Gender identity of parent
- Ethnicity
- Relationship to child
- Age of child
- Gender identity of child
- Ethnicity of child
- Thank you for answering those questions. The next part of the interview involves me asking about your experiences. Some parents may love talking about their experiences parenting a transgender child, some may find it difficult, and others can experience something in the middle. Research has often focused on the challenges associated with parenting a transgender child but today I want to focus on positive experiences and talk about how parents can enable their child to flourish. How does that sound to you?
- Do you have any questions before we get started?
- Begin audio recording.
- What does the word 'flourishing' mean to you?
  (If participant doesn't understand the idea of flourishing, provide the definition from the Information Sheet. "Flourishing can be defined as having good mental and physical health, being free from illness or distress and being able to function well in one's personal and social life").
- How important do you think it is to enable your child to flourish with regards to their gender identity?
- Could you describe your experiences of what your role is as a parent?
- What sort of things do you do as a parent to enable your child to flourish?

- How have you attempted to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your child?
- What has supported you as a parent to enable your child to flourish?
- What strengths are you able to draw on that contribute to how you parent your child?
- How do you enable your child to feel like they can talk to you about anything? (Added to interview schedule 28/07/2022).
- How do you handle the day to day demands of a parent raising a transgender child?
- What challenges have you had to overcome? How were you able to overcome these challenges?
- How do you make your child feel more comfortable in their gender identity? (Added to interview schedule 11/08/2022).
- What advice would you give to other parents who are going through similar experiences to you?
- What do you think is needed for a transgender child to experience flourishing?
- How are you able to create a safe space for your child? (Added to interview schedule 01/12/2022).
- What do you think are the most important factors that a parent can do to enable their transgender child to flourish?

Conclusion

- We have reached the end of my questions, is there anything else you would like to discuss or share about your experiences of parenting a transgender child?
- Is there anything you would like to ask me?
- End the audio recording.
- Discuss how the participant found the interview. Signpost to sources of support if there has been any distress caused.
- Discuss next steps. I will send a summary email with my contact details and further information accessing support if needed.
- Thank participant again for taking part in the research and state how valuable their contribution has been.

Appendix N. Worked Example of Initial Coding on Transcript

R = Researcher and P = Participant

R: How were you able to create that sense of safety for your child to have been able to feel like they could talk to you about their gender identity?

P: I think what I wish I'd done more of, I did do to some extent but now wish I'd done more was from when they were young, talk openly and respectfully about all the different ways people are in the world. And I guess erm... I made sure, I sort of edited and selected and curated the media they were exposed to and things like that, but I wish I'd done more of that and explicitly brought… I guess there's a lot of disabled people in our family and people who live quite differently but they weren't exposed to many. I'm queer and I'm now in a relationship with a woman, but until fairly recently they knew me as if I were straight and I hadn't talked to them about that a great deal. I think I have always tried to make an atmosphere of kind of acceptance and understanding as a kind of baseline and how we talk and think about each other and other people. I wish that I had deliberately done more of that explicitly around gender and sexuality, and I'm now aware of tonnes of wonderful resources that I wish we'd had that round the time my eldest came out. You assume that you have to be the person in all the stories, and you have to want that. So, I would want to be the girl who marries the prince, because apparently that's the happy ending and maybe one day you'll stop wanting that. We've always questioned things. We've always noticed the stories that adverts tell, the stories they tell that assume that's what everyone wants. Thinking about them actually coming out, it was a process of knowing something was up and making space for them to feel safe and kind of adding that reassurance and giving them suggestions of, maybe write me a letter. "There's something on your mind, you want to talk to me. I can't see what it is so do you want to write it down? Is there someone else you could tell it to? If you told me this, what are you worried would happen?"

Wishing they had communicated more openly about diversity

Curated media content to monitor what children were exposed to

Reflecting on difference and diversity and child's exposure to this

Navigating personal identity adjustment with children

Tried to create an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding

Being mindful of how the self and others are thought about

Wishing there had been more communication around gender and sexuality

Awareness of helpful resources

Separating the self from societal norms and expectations

Questioning societal norms with children

Offering child options of how they can communicate their thoughts and feelings

Making child feel safe by giving reassurance

Encouraging open communication

Appendix O. Example of Coding Process

Quote from Transcript	Initial Line by Line Coding	Focused Coding	Theoretical Coding
"I think, just to remember that they just need to hold those feelings in a balance because what their child needs is their love and acceptance because they're not gonna get it from everyone else. And that probably the parent can do their own journey to catch up. But if they can't feel it authentically, then better just fake it to start with, I think because the kid just needs that acceptance. They're so sensitive because rejection is so much a likely fact from the world. For a transgender child to interpret the slightest nuance of uncertainty in a parent is like criticism or rejection, whereas it can just be confusion or puzzlement." *(Joanna)*	Acknowledging the importance of showing their child love and acceptance.	Demonstrating unconditional love	Supporting gender identity exploration
	Managing own feelings as a parent to ensure child feels accepted.	Concealing concerns	Managing emotions
	Acknowledging societal risks against transgender individuals.	Mitigating societal threats	Protecting child from harm
"One of the reasons for volunteering is, I see as a parent. Generally, you need other parents. You know from all the way through really because you know you need somebody to just sort of validate your experiences and say 'Yeah, you're not going mad or being awful'. The same is true when you're supporting a child through a transition. Because people know my story, my son's journey, I've also been approached, you know, increasingly. *(Michelle)*	Gaining support from other parents by sharing lived experience. Gaining support through validation of experiences.	Seeking support	Managing emotions

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“Mm so mostly I do the normal parenting things like picking him up from places and stuff and I am spending a lot of time protecting him from sh*t that goes on in town and stuff. Recently we had a spate of Team TERF, hashtag team TERF stickers in the town, so you know. I found ways to keep him at home until I'd done a thorough investigation of every lamp post to make sure he doesn't see that sh*t. I'm still, you know, I'm paying into his private gender GP. It's £30 a month. I'm still paying that. I really can't afford it now. Umm, yeah, so we’ve still got that until he's on the NHS list. But I will always be there to take him to appointments and stuff. And you know whether he wants me there or not. I'm happy to sit in the car.” *(Lisa)*	Protecting child from experiencing harmful messages. Supporting child by accessing healthcare support. Taking child to appointments.	Mitigating societal threats Providing access to support	Protecting child from harm Accessing support for child
“I guess just letting her do what she wants to do. I kind of just follow her lead with things. If she wants to try something. Like wearing something or trying makeup or anything like that. I just allow it and see if she likes it or if she doesn’t like it. and I just follow her lead and let her guide me with stuff like that really.” (Stephanie)	Allowing child to explore different interests to see what they like. Being guided by the child.	Exploring gender identity with child	Supporting gender identity exploration