



Bachelor Thesis

Exploring Gender Euphoria among young Non-binary Individuals

Module 12

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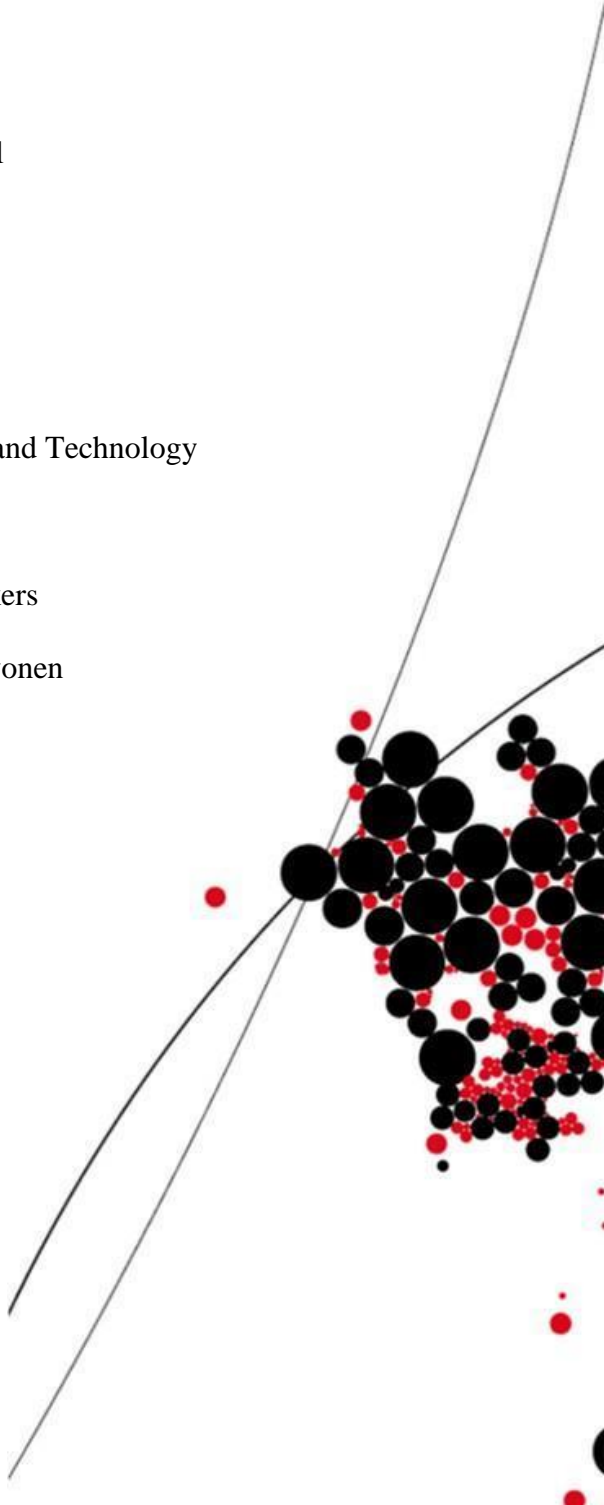
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Abstract

Sexual gender minorities (SGM) often experience mental health disparities which can pose significant effects in later life. Especially transgender and non-binary individuals are reporting increased mental health disparities. Therefore, the study explores the mental health aspects of non-binary individuals by using generative participatory design (GPD), allowing for their active participation in the design process. In this study, the concept of gender euphoria was explored among seven 18 to 27-year-old non-binary individuals. Gender euphoria is a joyful feeling when the gender identity of an individual is affirmed or aligned with one's gender expression. Two separate workshops were conducted, entailing multiple activities like open discussions and collective visioning. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns in the transcript data and construct themes. The thematic analysis resulted in six themes, namely: 1) Pride and Self-Acceptance in Discovering and Embracing Gender Identity, 2) Finding Acceptance and Connection: How LGBTQIA+ Community Supports Non-Binary Individuals' Gender Euphoria, 3) Gender Euphoria: An Organic and positive Experience, 4) The complex dynamics and individual nature of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria, 5) The journey of Self-Discovery and Challenging Gender Norms 6) Overcoming Challenges in the Journey of Gender Exploration. The insights can inform the development of specifically tailored eHealth interventions for non-binary individuals.

Keywords: gender euphoria, non-binary, thematic analysis, generative participatory design (GPD), eHealth, positive psychology

Exploring Gender Euphoria among young non-binary Individuals

Conventional notions of gender are challenged by the sheer existence of sexual gender minorities as they fluidify and break open the rigid male-female binary. In recent decades, sexual gender minorities have received considerably more visibility and encouraging recognition which led to a more comprehensive understanding of diverse identities, expanded social inclusivity, and the promotion of equitable opportunities and rights for all people regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation (Blakemore, 2023; Schudson & Morgenroth, 2022).

Sexual gender minorities (SGM) include a diverse spectrum of individuals whose gender identity and gender expression deviate from societal expected binary gender norms. Individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, intersex, transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming and two-spirit are all part of sexual gender minorities (Sex, Gender, and Sexuality, 2023). When discussing sexual gender minorities, it is essential to know the difference between sex, gender identity and gender expression. The term sex refers to biological characteristics assigned at birth, such as the binary genders male or female, based on physical attributes like reproductive organs and chromosomes (Sex, Gender, and Sexuality, 2023). Gender identity, on the other hand, is a deep internal sense of self of one's gender, regardless of the assigned sex at birth. Lastly, gender expression is how an individual expresses their gender to the outside world, for instance, by wearing gender-specific clothing or having some gender-specific features, or choosing one's pronouns (Sex, Gender, and Sexuality, 2023).

The majority of the global population feels that their assigned sex at birth and their gender identity match, hence identifying as cisgender. However, in 2021, on average three percent of the population of 30 countries identified as transgender, non-binary, gender fluid or else, deviating from the cisnormative experience and feeling that their gender identity does not

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align with their sex assigned at birth (Clarke, 2022; Statista, 2023).

Transgender individuals, for instance, experience a mismatch between the assigned sex at birth and their gender identity (Sex, Gender, and Sexuality, 2023). Additionally, the word transgender acts as an umbrella term, including all the individuals whose gender identity does not fully align with their sex assigned at birth, such as non-binary individuals (Sex, Gender, and Sexuality, 2023). Gender non-conforming individuals actively defy societal expectations associated with their assigned sex at birth, expressing themselves in ways that transcend traditional gender norms. In contrast, non-binary individuals identify themselves outside the binary gender categories of male or female, embracing the intricate and diverse tapestry of gender identities (Sex, Gender, and Sexuality, 2023).

Transgender and non-binary individuals face distinct challenges concerning their gender identity and gender expression (King et al., 2020). According to experts of the United Nations, there are societal, systemic and psychological challenges related to expressing gender identities that deviate from the male/female binarity (OHCHR, n.d.). There is the so-called anti-trans stigma that refers to the numerous ways in which societal ideas firmly enforce the male/female gender binary and systemically disadvantage trans and non-binary individuals (King et al., 2020). Anti-trans stigma can manifest in discrimination, harassment, victimisation, devaluation and hostility, and acceptance of negative views about one's identity (Tebbe & Budge, 2022). Apart from the internalised anti-trans stigma and negative attitudes towards transgender or non-binary individuals, there are multiple additional factors that transgender and non-binary individuals encounter, impeding their quality of life (OHCHR, n.d.). On the structural level, there are numerous anti-trans policies, for instance, restricted bathroom use only considering the sex assigned at birth or the difficulty of changing gender and according to name in official identity documents. Not only is there a lack of mental health

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professionals that are experienced and trained in working with trans and non-binary (TNB) individuals, but further they have been functioning as gatekeepers, assessing whether an individual is suitable to undergo gender-affirming treatments (Tebbe & Budge, 2022).

Additionally, there are many psychological challenges involved in discovering and expressing gender identities deviating from the cisgender norm that ultimately result in a more significant proportion of transgender and non-binary individuals reporting mental health disparities (Tebbe & Budge, 2022). Here, a central concept is gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is a negative feeling of dissonance or incongruence between one's assigned sex and body and one's current gender identity, which varies in intensity and is often reported by transgender and genderqueer individuals; however, it is not experienced by all transgender and non-binary people. Although gender dysphoria is not a mental illness, it is recognised as a medical condition that can significantly impede and affect social, vocational, and other areas of functioning and is thus closely related to the development of mental health disparities (Tebbe & Budge, 2022).

A systematic review showed that multiple studies report that there is an elevated risk for transgender and non-binary individuals to develop depressive symptoms, suicidality, substance abuse and feelings of anxiety (Valentine & Shipherd, 2018). Correspondingly, another study conducted among transgender adults in the US found that half of non-binary respondents indicated experiencing severe psychological distress (Matsuno & Budge, 2017). This prevalence rate is significantly higher than the rates reported for transgender men and women and the general population. Adverse mental health outcomes like eating disorders, depression, anxiety, and suicidality are linked to unique stressors that non-binary individuals experience due to their gender identity (Cusack et al., 2021; Lefevor et al., 2019). Matsuno and Budge (2017) report that over half of the respondents in their study, among non-binary and genderqueer individuals, experience clinical levels of depression, and more than one-third

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reported clinical levels of anxiety. Further, the cluster of non-binary individuals has a higher rate of attempted suicides than their binary transgender peers (Matsuno & Budge, 2017). In light of non-binary individuals' heightened vulnerability to mental health struggles, the aforementioned findings stress the importance of understanding and supporting non-binary individuals in mental health concerns.

Here, gender euphoria comes into play as it can serve as a crucial source of fostering well-being and countering mental health disparities that arise from feelings of gender dysphoria (Austin et al., 2022). Gender euphoria is not solely the absence of gender dysphoria but describes a state of subjective mental well-being and an accumulation of positive emotions brought on by having one's gender validated (Benestad, 2010) or experiencing a harmony between one's gender identity and gendered features associated with a gender that differs from the one assigned at birth (Ashley & Ells, 2018). It is essential to understand the phenomenon of gender euphoria among non-binary individuals to deepen the comprehension of the aspects which promote positive experiences related to their gender identity and overall well-being. While research on SGM has been on the rise in the recent past, the experiences and perspectives of non-binary individuals especially in connection to gender euphoria have not been covered sufficiently. In general, there is little research conducted regarding the concept of gender euphoria and transgender and non-binary individuals.

In 2021, Beischel et al. published an article exploring the concept of gender euphoria among transgender, non-binary and cisgender individuals using a qualitative survey on gender euphoria. Overall, the study found that gender euphoria is perceived amongst all genders as a highly positive emotional state. Whereas the concept was recognised as introduced by and predominantly present in SGM communities. Beischel et al. (2021) found that the participants perceived a connectedness between the positive feelings of gender euphoria and gender identity, gender expression, body and a supportive social environment. Other studies further

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support the importance of social validation of family members or peers for gender euphoria (Tebbe & Budge, 2022) and mental well-being in transgender and non-binary individuals (Fuller & Riggs, 2018; Katz-Wise et al., 2018; McConnell et al., 2016; Pflum et al., 2015; Sherman et al., 2020). Beischel et al. (2021) further described it as a joyful feeling of rightness in one's gender/sex, including feelings of confidence, attractiveness, affirmation and authenticity. Some of their participants perceived it as a strong antidote to feelings of gender dysphoria, while others did not share the idea of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria functioning as mutually exclusive opposites. Instead, these participants described a more complex relationship between the concepts (Beischel et al., 2021). Ashley and Ells (2018) specify that the connection between gender euphoria and gender dysphoria is rather contingent, as some individuals only experience one of the two, and others experience both asymmetrically. In like manner, for some, euphoria was experienced as more intense but less chronic than dysphoria, while others reported the reverse (Beischel et al., 2021). The authors explain the differing conceptualisations with the inherent nature of the gendered experiences, which are highly individualised. Thus, universalising statements are not able to represent the spectrum of varying experiences correctly. Nonetheless, the participants agreed on the positive contributions of gender euphoria to well-being (Beischel et al., 2021).

However, the study from Beischel et al. (2021) focused on diverse genders aged 18 to over 56 years, whereas my study focuses on young non-binary individuals 18 to 27 years. Moreover, some studies discuss the health of non-binary and genderqueer people (Scandurra et al., 2019) and others that review non-binary/genderqueer identities, mental health trends, identity development, and unique experiences of non-binary individuals (Matsuno & Budge, 2017). Still, most academic research focuses on discussing gender dysphoria, neglecting positive experiences of gender euphoria (Austin et al., 2022). Bradford et al. (2019) also recommend expanded investigations beyond deficit-focused research on gender dysphoria.

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Rather, they emphasise the need for further inquiry of gender euphoria. Correspondingly, when conducting a literature review, no studies were found that specifically mentioned gender euphoria in young non-binary individuals. There appears to be a lack of research on gender euphoria in young non-binary individuals. Thus, this study will contribute to closing the gap in research by exclusively focusing on young, 18 to 27-year-old, non-binary individuals to explore their experiences and perspectives on gender euphoria thoroughly. In order to be able to nourish feelings of gender euphoria, it is of uttermost importance to first identify which feelings and thoughts are related to gender euphoria in non-binary individuals to ultimately assess how mental health advocates can help transgender and non-binary individuals increase feelings of gender euphoria. Therefore, his study aims to identify and shed light on the multifaceted determinants contributing to the experienced gender euphoria. For the purpose of capturing intricate nuances, meaningful and new insights and complexities of non-binary individuals' experiences concerning gender euphoria, this research utilises qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews and group discussions. The adaption to a qualitative study design enables the researcher to conduct the research within natural settings or real-world contexts, and the researcher has increased flexibility when it comes to patterns in the data collection and analysis (Bhandari, 2023). Moreover, there seems to be a lack of qualitative research exploring gender euphoria among non-binary individuals adapting to participatory design approaches.

Participatory design enables the researcher to develop their interventions and end products together with the hypothetical end-user (Trischler et al., 2018). By conducting focus group workshops, the participants, which contemplate the end-users, are able to share their insights, give new input and are actively intertwined in the design process of the intervention or product. Thus, participatory design interventions are often more beneficial and effective for the end user (Trischler et al., 2018).

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By exploring elements which promote positive experiences of gender identity in non-binary individuals, the aim is to contribute to informing interventions, support systems, and policies that foster inclusive and affirming environments. The findings will reveal the factors that facilitate non-binary individuals' profound feelings of joy and fulfilment and thereby inform interventions and practices that promote affirmation, acceptance, and overall well-being for individuals of all gender identities within sexual gender minorities. Ultimately, this research aims to deepen the understanding of the positive dimensions of gender identity, conceptualised by gender euphoria, by delving into the experiences and perspectives of young non-binary individuals.

Therefore, the research question that will be explored in this thesis is as follows: “How is gender euphoria experienced by young non-binary (NB) individuals?”

Method

Researcher Description

The researcher themselves identify as part of a sexual and gender minority by being bisexual and non-binary. Moreover, the status quo of gender binarity and heterosexism have always been questioned by the researcher. With friends who also identify as SGMs, the researcher wishes to positively contribute to the progress of the LGBTQIA+ movement for greater acceptance and inclusion for all genders. Furthermore, there is a lack of mental health professionals trained in working with SGMs. As a result, the researcher feels it is critical to perform this study to establish what SGMs require from mental health interventions. It is possible to create more effective treatments to help improve SGM people's mental health if research gains better insights regarding their experiences and viewpoints. It is noteworthy that some of the participants had been familiar with the researcher in the past because they had both attended the same institution and been enrolled in the same program.

Design

This study utilised a qualitative research design to explore the experiences and perspectives of LGBTQIA+ individuals on mental health. Specifically, the researchers were interested in exploring the concepts of character strengths, depressive symptoms and gender euphoria. These topics were discussed over two workshops using generative participatory design approaches. Generative participatory design is a specific design where all stakeholders are involved in specific creative activities conducted for the research. This significantly differs from the traditional user-centred design approach, where the end-user is not actively involved in the process (Vandekerckhove et al., 2020). Therefore, everyone who is involved in the research gets to participate in coming up with new ideas and solutions together. Prior to conducting the research, the BMS Ethical Committee gave its approval (Request Nr. 230457; Appendix E).

Participants

Social media was used to purposely sample participants for the study. Using an Instagram post, the researchers asked for participation from people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and are willing to share their experiences on mental health. Individuals interested in participating in the study provided their contact details and eligibility for the study. The researchers collected multiple answers, and after determining whether they could attend the workshop, seven of them were able to ultimately take part in the study. Three participants were able to attend both of the workshops. The following inclusion criteria were used to choose the participants: (1) between the ages of 18 and 27 ; (2) able to speak English; and (3) identifying as LGBTQIA+. The median age of the participants was 22 years, with four identifying as non-binary, two identifying as female and one identifying as male.

Data Collection

Data was collected through two participatory workshops held on the campus of the University of Twente on April 25th and May 11th, both lasting 1 ½ hours. The first workshop was conducted by all three researchers and was designed to be participatory and collaborative.

Before taking part in the study, participants were asked to sign an informed consent (Appendix F). The participants were provided with information on how they can access mental health professionals on campus if they experience any problems or negative emotions regarding their participation in the workshops.

The first workshop occurred in a room in the play area at the Designlab of the University of Twente, designed for creative group workshops (see picture 1). Three researchers guided the participatory workshop, and six participants attended. The workshop lasted 1 ½ hours with a 15-minute break midway. Used materials included pictures or objects brought by the participants for the item description exercise and a PowerPoint presentation depicting the statements for the discussion exercise (see Table 1). The researchers agreed on each one facilitating one of the workshop exercises, either the item description exercise, the group discussion about the triggering statements and the group discussion about the eHealth interventions and generative participatory design (see Table 1).

Table 1*Procedure in Workshop 1*

Time	Action	Checklist
5 minutes	Participants fill in informed consent	Hand out written informed consent and let participants sign them + answer questions if participants have questions about it (email beforehand so they can read through it).
5 minutes	Name and pronouns round	Short introduction from both sides (researchers and participants).
10 minutes	In-depth introduction	Mentioning SEG principles, the content of the workshop, expectations what the participants can expect and what they expect from us), the end goal, + answer questions if participants have questions about it.
30 minutes	Item description	Prior to the workshop participants were asked to bring any item (picture, object, etc.) that represents what it means for them to feel well/better. This object could be something that makes them feel well or connects them to what makes them feel well.
10 minutes	Break	Hand out drinks and snacks.
25 minutes	Group discussion with statements	The researchers give statements, and the participants first raise their hands whether they agree or disagree, followed by explanations of the opinions of participants who feel comfortable. Repeated if needed in Dutch or German. In case of long discussions, make choices on stating not all statements. Statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am proud of being who I am. - Being LGBTQIA+ is a strength of mine. - As an LGBTQIA+ person, I am seen as a victim. - I possess strategies that help me overcome negative feelings or feeling down. - I feel happy and confident when I can express my gender identity authentically. - Being referred to by the correct pronouns is

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		a validating and euphoric experience.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Finding a community of people who accept and support my gender identity brings me immense joy.- As an LGBTQIA+ person, I experience more depressive symptoms than cisgender heterosexual people.- Being LGBTQIA+ goes hand in hand with depressive symptoms.
10 minutes	Group discussion eHealth and GPD	Asking participants about their ideas regarding the use of participatory design approaches when developing eHealth interventions aimed at improving the mental health of LGBTQIA+ people.
5 minutes	Closing comments	Thanking participants for participation. Leaving room for any questions from the participants. Providing contact information in case questions might occur afterwards.

First, the item description activity was introduced; participants were asked to bring an object or a picture they relate to feeling good. This was followed by a group discussion, facilitated by the researchers, that focused on nine triggering statements, for instance: “As an LGBTQIA+ person, I experience more depressive symptoms than cisgender heterosexual people.” or “I feel happy and confident when I can express my gender identity authentically”. Three statements were related to depressive symptoms, three were related to gender euphoria, and three were related to depressive symptoms amongst the participants. The purpose of this exercise was to enable a discussion about their experiences with these ideas and to create a variety of data for thematic analysis. Lastly, the researchers introduced the topic of generative participatory design (GPD). They asked the participants for their opinions on implementing GPD in inventing e-health interventions for SGM individuals, enabling a discussion.

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Picture 1

A picture taken by one of the researchers depicting the workshop session 1.



Note: The faces are blurred to ensure the participants' anonymity.

The second workshop's objective was to investigate gender euphoria among non-binary people. The workshop took place in the Vrijhof building in a project room that the researcher booked, it was facilitated by one researcher and four individuals participated in the workshop. It lasted 1 ½ hours with a 10-minute break in-between. The materials used in this workshop were a PowerPoint presentation to visually support the posed questions about gender euphoria, blank cards for the participants to write their ideas on and a big poster for the collective visioning exercise.

The researcher started by introducing a group discussion about what gender euphoria means to the participants and how they would define and conceptualise it. In total, the researcher posed nine questions that aimed at exploring the concept of gender euphoria in-depth, for instance: “Can you share a time when you experienced gender euphoria? What did it feel like?” or “In what ways do you think society can better support individuals in

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experiencing gender euphoria?”. Afterwards, the participants were invited to a brainstorming exercise, they were given blank cards and were asked to identify and write down everything they need to experience gender euphoria and what society can do to help trans and non-binary individuals explore their gender identity and experience gender euphoria. Finally, the participants were asked to take part in a collective visioning activity where they highlighted the elements necessary to envision a time or society when gender euphoria will be encouraged and supported (see Table 2).

A benefit of collective visioning is that it is highly important that a wide array of stakeholders, like marginalised individuals and communities, gets engaged to actively shape a vision (York, 2020). It further assures that the perspectives and experiences of transgender and non-binary individuals are integrated into the design process as their expertise and voices are considered. The inclusive nature of this approach potentially yields worthwhile outcomes. The result may be more comprehensive, representative, and reflective of the diversity of perspectives within society. By valuing and incorporating trans and non-binary voices, collective visioning raises transformative potential and inclusivity in the design process (York, 2020). The participants were asked to use the cards from the brainstorming exercise and they were also given blank cards to add something when they think an aspect is missing. A big poster was put on the table with three circles surrounding the middle one (see picture 2). The participants were asked to work collaboratively on the poster, discussing and identifying what elements are important to envision a future where gender euphoria is the standard, meaning that every individual experiences joyful feelings due to their gender identity being affirmed or aligning with their gender expression. The closer the items are to the inner circle, the more important they are for the participants to envision a future where feelings of gender euphoria are a standard, especially in non-binary individuals. After putting the cards on the poster and deciding which aspect belongs to which circle, the participants explained to the researcher

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which cards they put in which circle and why.

Picture 2

A picture depicting the poster used for the collective visioning exercise

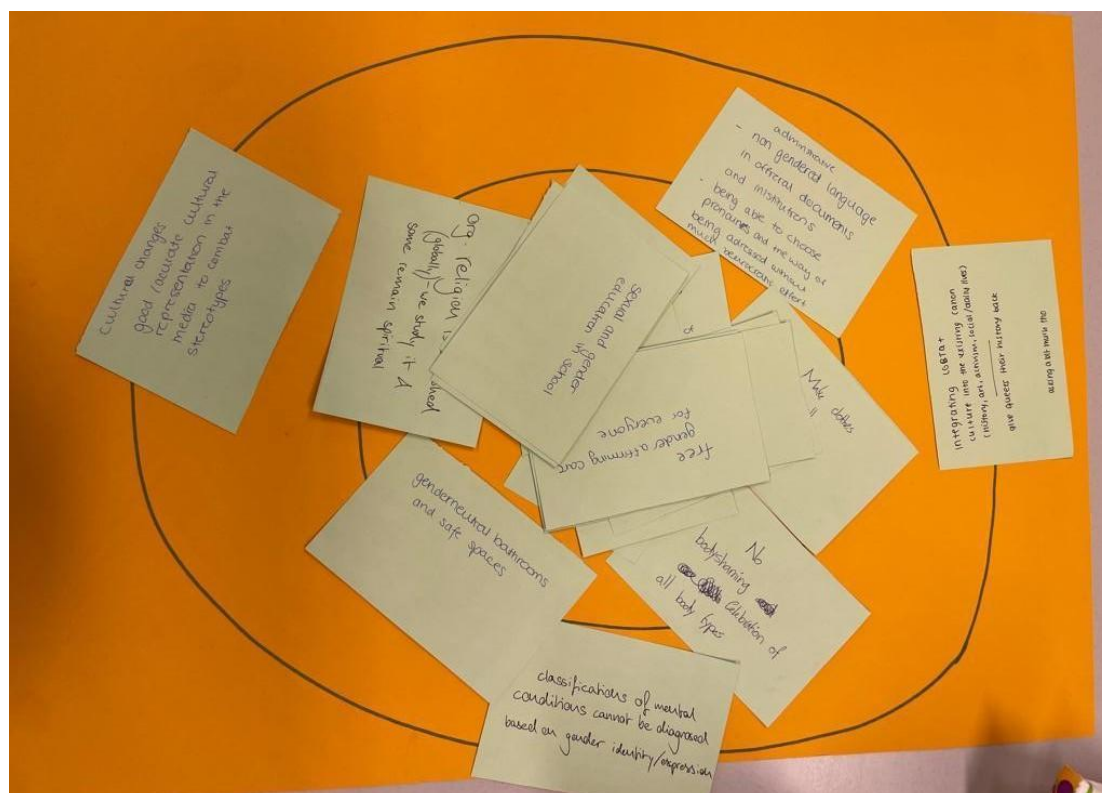


Table 2

Procedure in Workshop 2

Time	Action	Checklist
5 minutes	Participants fill in the informed consent	Hand out written informed consent and let participants sign them + answer questions if participants have questions about it (email beforehand so they can read through it).
5 minutes	Name and pronouns round	Short introduction from both sides (researchers and participants).
10 minutes	In-depth introduction	Mentioning SEG principles, the workshop's content, expectations what the participants can expect and what they expect from us), the end goal, + answer questions if participants have questions about it.

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20 minutes	Group Discussion	<p>In the first activity, the researcher aims to explore the understanding of the concept of gender euphoria among the participants. The participants will be asked to explain the concept of gender euphoria in their terms. The following questions will be used to nudge the group discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Are you familiar with the term gender euphoria?- What do you understand under the term gender euphoria?- Is gender euphoria related to gender dysphoria? In what way? How do they differ- Can you share a time when you experienced gender euphoria? What did it feel like?- How has exploring gender euphoria helped you in your journey of self-discovery?- In what ways do you think society can better support individuals in experiencing gender euphoria?- How do you navigate situations where you may not be able to express your gender identity or experience gender euphoria?- Do you think there are any challenges or barriers to exploring gender euphoria that is unique to transgender and non-binary individuals?- How do you balance the desire to experience gender euphoria with the need for safety and protection in certain environments or situations?
10 minutes	Break	Hand out drinks and snacks.
15 minutes	Brainstorming	The researcher gives the participants blank cards. The participants are asked to identify and write down everything they need to experience gender euphoria and how society can especially help SGM individuals to explore and experience gender euphoria.
25 minutes	Collective Visioning	For the collective visioning exercise, the researcher will draw a small circle on a poster with three bigger circles surrounding the middle one. The participants are asked to use the cards from the brainstorming exercise, moreover there will be

blank cards for the participants to fill out if they want to add anything. The participants will be asked to work collaboratively on the poster, discussing and identifying what elements are important to envision a future where gender euphoria is the standard. The closer the items are to the inner circle, the more important they are to the participants.

5 minutes	Closing comments	Thanking participants for participation. Leaving room for any questions from the participants. Providing contact information in case questions might occur afterwards.
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Data Analysis

The workshop sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed. Using pseudonyms instead of participants' real identities and ensuring that all data was maintained securely were measures we took to ensure participant confidentiality. Any identifying information that could potentially link participants to their responses was removed from the transcripts. Moreover, the audio recordings of the workshops were deleted after finishing the data analysis. The data was analysed using the reflexive thematic analysis explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) following a six-step approach. First, I familiarised myself with the data by reading the workshop transcripts multiple times. Next, I tried to find patterns within the data by separating and coding segments of the focus group transcripts that entail the same core idea related to aspects of gender euphoria. Once I identified and coded the patterns within the data, I was able to construct the first initial themes. In the beginning, I constructed eight themes. The fourth step includes reviewing the themes and checking whether they are coherent and help in answering the research question. I revised multiple themes and deleted two, as they were not of importance for answering the research question on how young non-binary individuals experience gender euphoria. In the fifth step, I named the themes to describe the essence of the codes that collated the theme. Lastly, I started writing the thematic analysis, indicating

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anonymised workshop quotes, supporting the codes and illustrating the workshop themes more vividly. In total, there were six important key themes identified by the researcher.

Results

Applying thematic analysis to the workshop transcripts resulted in six main themes that are of interest for exploring the experience of gender euphoria among non-binary individuals, namely: 1) Pride and Self-Acceptance in Discovering and Embracing Gender Identity, 2) Finding Acceptance and Connection: How LGBTQIA+ Community Supports Non-Binary Individuals' Gender Euphoria, 3) Gender euphoria: An organic and positive experience, 4) The complex dynamics and individual nature of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria, 5) The journey of Self-Discovery and Challenging Gender Norms 6) Overcoming Challenges in the Journey of Gender Exploration (see Table 3).

Pride and Self-Acceptance in Discovering and Embracing Gender Identity

Many participants expressed a sense of pride and self-acceptance in their gender identities once they have discovered and accepted their gender identities. Self-acceptance has been one of the key themes amongst the participants; they highlighted the challenging process of figuring out and embracing one's gender identity and how they found strength in the process of exploration. One participant remarked, *“I get to the exploration process. And just because that's kind of like, like, my identity is my creation. And that's why I find a lot of pride in it because I put work into it.”* - Participant D. The quote of this participant indicates that this individual realized they have and autonomy in determining their gender identity. They stressed that their gender identity is a product of their efforts of investing time in shaping their own identity. The quote further implies that gender identity is not fixed and should not be imposed upon an individual. The individual emphasised that actively constructing one's authentic gender identity can lead to feelings of pride. Moreover, another individual stated,

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“Still, I think that exploration and identity expression is central, which is why I think it's such a big strength that we can live

very authentically as ourselves as queer people.” - Participant C. The statement suggests that the ability to freely explore one's identity and live authentically is an integral part of the queer journey. The participant acknowledged the power that comes from embracing their identity and emphasised the value of living openly as a queer person. It implies that being able to express one's true identity is empowering and contributes to a sense of personal fulfilment and strength.

Overall, these quotes depict the experience of self-exploration, self-acceptance, and the transformative power of embracing one's true identity. The participants felt that the process of self-acceptance of one's gender identity and gender expression is crucial and acts as a source of feelings of pride and euphoria. The path of self-exploration and self-acceptance was described as a transformative journey filled with both challenges and empowerment. The individuals highlighted the importance of embracing their gender identities, living openly and authentically and thus being able to experience a profound sense of empowerment. One participant stressed the importance of realising one's own agency in the journey, they highlighted the feelings of satisfaction and empowerment that come with actively constructing one's gender identity.

Finding Acceptance and Connection: How LGBTQIA+ Community Supports Non-Binary Individuals' Gender Euphoria

The participants expressed the importance of finding a community that accepts and supports them. The participants specifically highlighted the importance of finding a sense of community and connection within the LGBTQIA+ community. By being part of the LGBTQIA+ community, the participants found the support, belonging and acceptance they sought. One participant described the impact the community had on them as transformative by

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saying, *“I feel the same because especially the community, it's so it's way easier to make friends to connect with people. Because when I was in my straight face, so like, it was so difficult to, you know, make new friends or you know, like, get to know people [...]. But ever since, you know, I was happy with who I am. And ever since I started communicating with people from the LGBTQIA plus community, I made a lot of friends like a lot. And it is a struggle because it gave me that social confidence that I always wanted.”* - Participant A. This individual stressed that they were longing for social connectedness, however, they struggled with making new friends and connecting to other people before exploring their gender identity. Once they defined their gender identity and started being active in the LGBTQIA+ community, they felt it was much easier to connect with people and make new friends. Moreover, one individual stated *“I think also when you have events like that, when you meet like minded people you are able cope with everything so much better when you have that connectedness with people and like you said earlier talking about your problems is so good.”*- Participant C. They emphasised that it feels way easier to connect with fellow queer individuals by talking about common experiences, openly sharing one's gender identity and sharing stories in open discussions. This sense of community positively influenced their social lives and boosted their self-confidence. Another participant shared, *“[...] I feel very comfortable around people, you know, who can actually get me so that does really bring me immense joy.”* - Participant A. This individual highlighted that they feel that fellow individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community have a better understanding of the lived experiences of non-binary individuals, and thus they feel more understood.

Overall, the participants felt that finding a community that fully accepts and supports them is crucial, especially as a non-binary individual. The participants highlighted the LGBTQIA+ community as a safe place for non-binary individuals to find a sense of belonging, connectedness and acceptance as well as the ease to make friends within the

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community. The participants expressed that this supportive, accepting and validating atmosphere of the LGBTQIA+community strongly enables non-binary individuals to authentically express their gender identity and ultimately facilitates feelings of gender euphoria.

Gender Euphoria: An organic and positive experience

The participants discussed gender euphoria as a feeling of happiness when there is alignment with one's body and gender identity. One individual described it as "*When you're happy about how you experience or express your gender.*" - Participant V. This quote highlights the profound significance of finding happiness in the expression and experience of their gender identity. On a deeper level, the quote discusses the journey for self-acceptance and the empowering force of embracing authenticity. Another individual explained that gender euphoria can occur when their physical appearance aligns with their gender identity, leading to a sense of ease and comfort in interacting with the world "*When I do anything, like style my hair more masculine, or wearing my binder like I do right now, then my body just also fits what's in my head, and then using my body to interact with the world also becomes easier. And it's just like this euphoric experience of like, Oh, my God, yes, it works. This is how it's supposed to be. And this feels good and organic and right.*" - Participant X. This individual experiences joy when their appearance reflects their gender identity, for instance, by styling their hair in a more masculine way and using a binder, they feel a deep sense of alignment between their mind and body. They perceived that their interactions with the world feel more effortless and genuine and highlighted the deep sense of authenticity, relief, and freedom that comes with expressing one's true self.

Gender euphoria can also occur spontaneously when an individual becomes aware of their gender expression in a particular situation. One individual described this experience "*When I suddenly find myself in a situation where I like, become aware of Oh, yeah, I'm like,*

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this is a very, I'm feeling very feminine right now. And then I'm also doing something kind of in concordance with that. That's always like, oh, yeah, like, Oh, my God, I'm doing a thing. And I really feel good about how I'm expressing my gender identity and whatever I'm doing right now." - Participant V. Some individuals may intentionally engage in certain actions or rituals to experience gender euphoria, as one individual explained, *"I mostly feel genuine euphoria when I just feel myself. And I can actually do it on purpose by doing certain rituals. Like waist training. activating my legs. Yeah, yeah. walking in heels."* - Participant W.

One participant underlined the importance of feeling validated, by stating, *"When it [a binder] came in the mail, I was like, Oh, let me try that on immediately. And I had to, like, physically sit down on my bed, because I just felt like everything was drained from me. And then I cried my eyes out because I was so happy that my chest was flat."* - Participant X. This validation aligns their self-perception with external appearance, leading to moments of gender euphoria. It serves as a reminder of what feels right in terms of gender identity and contributes to the overall well-being of the individual. The participant highlighted the significance of validation and self-perception in relation to one's gender identity.

Overall, gender euphoria is described by the participants as a positive and organic experience that feels "good and right" when an individual's physical appearance or actions align with their gender identity. To conclude, the exchange of experiences of gender euphoria shows that finding joy and alignment in expressing one's gender is crucial. Further, embracing authenticity and self-acceptance had a transformative effect for the participants. When the physical appearance aligns with the inner identity, or moments of spontaneous self-awareness, and validation occur, gender euphoria emerges. This highlights the outstanding significance of genuine self-expression, contributing to overall well-being and a sense of fulfilment.

The complex dynamics and individual nature of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria

Gender dysphoria and gender euphoria are two complex concepts that were discussed during the workshop sessions. Talking about these concepts sheds light on the complex experiences of individuals in relation to their gender identity. The quotes provided offer valuable insights into gender dysphoria and gender euphoria. They underscore the individualised nature of these experiences, the influence of context and the spectrum-like nature of gender euphoria and dysphoria. These aspects contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding gender dysphoria and gender euphoria.

One notable aspect regarding a participant is the heightened awareness of gender euphoria in individuals who have already experienced or experience gender dysphoria. As one participant expressed, *"If you already feel dysphoric about it sometimes, then you get more aware of the euphoric moments as well because then you also know how mismatch feels."* - Participant Y. This awareness arises from understanding the feeling of mismatch that accompanies dysphoria. It allows for a deeper appreciation of the moments when their gender identity aligns with their expression.

The participant noted that, contrarily, cisgender persons who have never questioned their gender identity most likely not experience any gender euphoria or dysphoria, *"They might not experience much euphoria or dysphoria, either, or they just don't think much about it."* - Participant Y. This quote indicates that similar experiences are perceived to be more common for individuals who explored their gender identity and encountered the discomfort of gender dysphoria. Additionally, one participant articulated, *"It's like this spectrum for me that I move around on, depending on how good I feel about my gender and gender expression."* - Participant X. This perspective acknowledges varying degrees of gender dysphoria, indifference, and euphoria, it establishes a more nuanced insight in affected individuals'

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experience and perception of their gender identity. Further, gender dysphoria and euphoria manifest significantly different depending on the context, as another participant illustrated, *"I'll notice that I do have a very masculine physique, being ginormous. And that kind of bothers me, but at the same time, working out is a medium for me to express femininity, strangely."* - Participant V. This quote indicates that the experience of dysphoria and euphoria is influenced by the corresponding activities and situations. In the gym, i.e., feelings of gender indifference might occur, while at the same time, dysphoria or euphoria, depending on certain physical aspects or expressions, can be triggered. Moreover, gender euphoria and dysphoria are not always opposites. As one participant stated, *"Sometimes the dysphoria, the euphoria can kind of be opposites, where one thing or a lack of a thing gives you dysphoria [...], but also sometimes it is completely separate."* - Participant W. The participant indicates that some dysphoric experiences may have euphoric opposites, while others do not implicate clear counterparts. Thus, gender euphoria and dysphoria can coexist simultaneously in certain situations, as a participant expressed by stating, *"The other day, I looked in the mirror, and I was really happy that my shoulders are getting super broad from working out. And then I looked down at my waist and my hips. And I was like, well, that's not so cool."* - Participant X. This individual highlights the intricate interplay of nuanced experiences of gender dysphoria and euphoria and emotions.

In conclusion, the participants felt that non-binary individuals have a heightened awareness for feelings of gender euphoria since they often already experienced gender dysphoria and are aware of the impact of the incongruent feeling between gender identity and gender expression. They believe that cisgender individuals are less aware of these gender euphoric moments. Moreover, it is suggested that gender euphoria and gender dysphoria lie on a continuous spectrum, indicating that individuals can experience varying degrees of discomfort and joy in one's gender expression. However, the participants felt that context,

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environment and the activities one engages in are highly important in shaping the experiences of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria, as different contexts and activities can trigger different emotions. It is important to note that gender euphoria and dysphoria are not always perceived as opposites, rather, they are perceived as being able to coexist simultaneously in complex and nuanced dynamics.

The journey of Self-Discovery and Challenging Gender Norms

The exploration of one's gender identity and the process of self-discovery was emphasised by participants who spoke about reflecting on their gender identity, trying out different expressions, and discovering what felt right for them: " [...] *where you think something is right for you. And then you brood on it for a bit, and then you finally get to try it, and then it works out or it doesn't. And if it does work out, then it just feels so like you discovered something about yourself, learned something. Yeah.*" or "*Before I bought the binder, I also tried to tape my chest with like, sports tape, because I wanted to, like try it out first. And I was really shocked by how much euphoria it gave me...And I got to think where I stand gender-wise at the moment. But it was very helpful, despite kind of like shaking my self-image up for a moment. But I think if I hadn't done that, I would still be in this weird limbo of not knowing what's going on in my head. And now I know more, and I can be more proactive to make myself feel good about myself.*" - Participant W. They highlighted the transformative power of these experiences, leading to a deeper understanding of oneself and personal growth. Exploring gender euphoria and pushing the boundaries of gender expression were seen as integral parts of this ongoing self-discovery process.

One participant shared their experiences they had as a teenager, grappling with their attraction to women while struggling to understand their own identity in a society dominated by heteronormativity. Eventually, they came to the realisation that their identity was that of a woman. They specifically emphasised the ability to embrace their femininity while still being

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attracted to other women or non-binary individuals stating: *"Yeah for me, I was like, as a teenager, very unsure, because I liked a woman. But I couldn't really conceptualize that, because I grew up a lot around a lot of heteronormativity. So I thought, okay, I must be more masculine than I thought, because I am drawn to women but actually, I'm just a woman liking women and that was also quite confusing, and that I can also just be very feminine in my energy and everything, and still be attracted to other females or non-binary people."* -

Participant Y.

Another participant described their experiences being gender fluid and non-binary, saying that they fluctuate between masculinity and femininity without fully aligning with either *"It's strange for me because I am Gender fluid, non-binary, how I explained it to myself is that I fluctuate between masculinity and femininity a lot, but I never really hit either. And I'm never like, fully, I'm a man or I'm a woman. So I have, like a lot of masculine traits that I love expressing. But then also, I have a lot of feminine stuff that I love to do."* - Participant V.

They recognized the need to explore and define their own gender identity beyond traditional binary definitions, explaining that they do not fully identify with either being exclusively male or female but rather experience a range of gender expression that encompasses both masculine and feminine traits. Additionally, participants conveyed the importance of questioning traditional societal norms and societal expectations as they embarked and might oppose their personal journeys of self-discovery. They discovered that their interpretation of femininity does not need not adhere to a male-centric lens or conform to external standards stating *"For me, it was more like a lot of femininity, if you grew up in a quite heteronormative environment is catered around impressing men, or getting the attention of men or pleasing men. So also for me, because to live my version of femininity, we're sometimes more androgynous expressions, it was for me to realise that it doesn't have to be catered to that, like, I can be a femme lesbian look like I want men to talk to me and I still don't."* - Participant Y. Instead, they experienced

true freedom by expressing their gender identity authentically and unapologetically, thereby rejecting the constraints imposed by societal conventions.

A participant highlighted the importance for everyone, regardless of their gender identity, to engage in deep introspection and discover new ways to express their unique identity. Every individual should critically examine the assumed binarity of genders. By embarking on this journey, individuals can transcend societal assumptions and delve into a profound understanding of themselves as suggested by a participant *“I wouldn't say even, but especially cis, people would, I think benefit from deeply and critically reflecting on their own gender identity and how, like how gender identity is expressed. Because like, on your side, you put yourself in a lot of boxes, and without reflecting on it, then how can you know your gender identity if you simply accept and how can you know anything about it if you simply accept something that you know as a given if you just accept, okay, I was like, I was born assigned male at birth, I'm told I'm a man. And that's all I need to know about my gender identity. If you never look at it and like try to find new ways of expressing it or pushing your own boundary, then yeah, how? How would you explore your own identity?”* - Participant V.

To summarise, the shared quotes vividly illustrate the profound significance of self-discovery in understanding and embracing one's gender identity. The statements underline the importance to view gender identity as a multifaceted concept that is a deeply personal and unique experience. The participants emphasised the imperative nature of challenging societal norms, embracing personal expressions of gender, and engaging in critical self-reflection. Through this transformative process, individuals described how they have been able to liberate themselves from the confines of binary expectations, enabling them to define their gender on their own terms. As a result, participants talked about a more authentic and fulfilling understanding of oneself.

Overcoming Challenges in the Journey of Gender Exploration

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Exploring and embracing one's gender identity, and ultimately experiencing gender euphoria, can be a personal and transformative journey. Within the workshop, the participants highlighted that the journey of gender exploration entails numerous challenges and barriers, especially for trans and non-binary individuals. These obstacles were perceived to arise from various aspects of society, from negative social attitudes to limited access to healthcare and cultural recognition.

One significant challenge lies in the face of social attitudes and the distress they can cause as one participant revealed *“With parents, so. And if with anyone who is who's sexist, or heterosexism, or sexist, anyone, like, if I know that a person has a negative opinion of queer people, I will be inherently and deeply distressed for the entire time that I have to be around that person. Especially if I am expecting them to also be if I expect that someone might say something, you know, like, I might know someone to be homophobic, but they haven't said something yet, I'm still expecting them to say something. And if I expect them, if there's a possibility, in any way of physical violence, then that's the absolute worst. But even just like verbally, I have zero, need to justify my own gender identity. We're explaining gender identity to someone who doesn't really want to understand it, they just wanted me to have to justify it. Zero Interest. It's so stressful, and it really hurts.”* - Participant V. This individual highlighted the profound distress and anxiety experienced when they are in the presence of individuals who hold negative opinions about queer people or exhibit discriminatory behaviour. The participant experienced a heightened state of vigilance and vulnerability in the presence of homophobic and discriminatory individuals, even when these individuals do not explicitly state their homophobic or discriminatory beliefs. However, the participant emphasised that the sole presence of these individuals is deeply distressing as they expect derogatory comments and even potential verbal or physical violence towards them. Moreover, the individual emphasised how frustrating and hurtful it is having to explain one's gender identity to

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someone who lacks genuine interest and understanding.

Regarding the participants, identity concealment and avoidance also pose substantial barriers. In situations where discussing gender identity may not be safe or may lead to negative consequences, individuals often resort to concealing their true selves, one individual explained “*Identity concealment. Yeah. Try not to talk about it. And if I do my makeup, I usually either say just goth or I like listening to rock. And, or I'm just gay, because that's easier. Like just saying you're gay or queer is easier than gender with genderqueer stuff. You know, where I try to, like, just avoid situations like that entirely.*” - Participant V. This individual stressed that sometimes, using simpler labels like "gay" or "queer" feels safer and more manageable than delving into the facets of their gender identity. The participant perceived that this avoidance perpetuates a cycle where exploration and self-expression are stifled, which can hinder the possibility of experiencing gender euphoria.

Accessing appropriate healthcare is vital for trans and non-binary individuals on their journey of self-discovery. However, one individual highlighted the challenges individuals face in obtaining necessary treatments, such as hormone therapy and psychological support by stating “*The conflict is that insurance will only pay for things that are like medically diagnoseable, but being trans is not a medical thing. And also, trans people do need the healthcare system, but they're not patients.*” Another participant added “*All challenges to exploring gender euphoria are unique to trans and non-binary people as a blanket statement because for cis people to explore or to feel gender euphoria, those are already deeply embedded in our society as correct. A woman going to or sis woman going to get BBL and laser hair removal and a guy getting Viagra. That's all Viagra is literally just gender-affirming hormone therapy, a BBL, laser hair removal, teeth whitening, boob jobs, like lip injections, all of that is gender-affirming care that trans and non-binary people categorically are refused access to on the basis that their exploration of their gender identity is deviant*”

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from societal expectations." - Participant V. This quote underlines how from the perspective of non-binary participants, the healthcare systems fail to understand the importance of gender-affirming care and categorise gender exploration as deviant. This lack of understanding and limiting access hinders individuals from fully embracing and experiencing their gender identity and gender euphoria.

Moreover, the participants perceived that there is an absence of LGBTQIA+ representation and recognition in mainstream culture which further aggravates the challenges faced by Trans and non-binary individuals to experience gender euphoria. The participants agreed that it is crucial to educate all individuals on gender identity and that integrating LGBTQ+ history, art, and narratives into the existing canon would validate and empower them as well as other Trans and non-binary individuals *"Integrating LGBTQ plus culture into the existing canon. So like, your history and art. Yeah. So like, give queers their history back. It's, I would put it like pretty far on. Like, it's not like I'm the last one. Not really that important, but I think it would be also validating experience to like, know that you have existed for a long time and like just as affirming care."* - Participant X. This quote suggests that it might be of importance for society to acknowledge the contributions and existence of queer individuals throughout history, enabling individuals to explore their gender identity and thus experience gender euphoria in a more inclusive and affirming environment.

Moreover, the bureaucratic hurdles and the complexities of official documentation add additional obstacles to the journey of self-discovery, one participant shared, *"I'm gonna say stuff that like that you are allowed to, in official documents or interested in your official institutions, whoever responsible for you, that you can choose your pronouns and the way you want to be addressed? Without much bureaucratic shit needed. Because currently, it's an absolute nightmare if you want to change your pronouns, or if you want to just make sure that you know, like the email and the company you work for actually addresses you with Sir*

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ma'am, or just like dear without any gender." - Participant Y. The cumbersome processes involved in changing pronouns or acquiring respectful addressing in official institutions can be frustrating and discouraging. Streamlining these procedures would eliminate unnecessary barriers and allow individuals to express their gender identity more seamlessly in various aspects of life.

Lastly, personal safety concerns, particularly in conservative or hostile environments, significantly impact one's ability to explore and express one's gender identity and ultimately experience gender euphoria. Fears of violence or discrimination often lead individuals to conceal their identity or remove visible symbols of pride, as stated by one participant, *"Used to take off my pride symbols when I went to work at festivals where I know the area was very conservative, or where I knew from crimes against queer people that happened there recently."* - Participant Y. The quote further illustrates the difficulty of engaging in open discussions about gender identity in such circumstances and fully embracing the joy and euphoria it brings.

In the same fashion as conservative environments, cultural settings can act as a critical barrier. One participant, who moved from India to the Netherlands, shared their experiences which can help recognise the relevance of acknowledging the cultural factor. They reported, *"[...] especially back in India, it's a very homophobic country. It's almost impossible to be openly gay in India. [...] The main reason I left India was because of the whole homophobic people around me, I never felt safe there. [...] I feel so happy for people who are like, born here. And I'm also so jealous of them. Because, you know, like, they don't exactly get it because they're born in a country where you know, most of the people automatically mostly accept you. It's not like back in my country."* - Participant A. This individual indicated a constant fear of expressing their gender identity authentically, feeling that it was not possible to live authentically, leading to increased identity concealment. They further highlighted the

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deep relief experienced when moving from a country that holds homophobic values into a culture that is more accepting towards SGMs. The quotation indicates that the societal acceptance of SGMs and thus their experiences of barriers for gender exploration are dependent on the culture in the respective country. Their experience suggests that the cultural context in the Netherlands is less challenging than in India.

Altogether, the conversations held within the workshop highlight the challenges individuals face in the journey of gender exploration with the ultimate goal of gender euphoria. The participants pointed out various barriers like negative social attitudes, limited access to healthcare, cultural recognition, identity concealment, bureaucratic hurdles, and personal safety concerns. These challenges substantially affect the ability to embrace and express one's gender identity fully, hence ultimately preventing the potential for gender euphoria. The participants of this workshop emphasised the importance of societal understanding, inclusive healthcare systems, LGBTQIA+ representation, streamlined bureaucratic processes, and safer environments for enabling individual exploration of gender identity and thus room for empowerment and joy. Moreover, the cultural factor was highlighted since it strongly influences the actual and perceived barriers and challenges to gender exploration. The gained qualitative insights underline the need for comprehensive support systems, societal changes in order to facilitate the journey of gender exploration and promotion of well-being and fulfilment of non-binary individuals.

Table 3

Overview of Themes

Theme	Description	Example Quote
Pride and Self-Acceptance in Discovering and Embracing Gender Identity	The participants highlighted the importance of autonomy and agency in defining their own gender identity, rejecting societal norms that impose fixed gender roles. They highlight the importance of embracing one's authentic self, leading to a sense of empowerment.	<p>“I get to choose who I want to be. And just because that's kind of like, like, my identity is my creation. And that's why I find a lot of pride in it because I put work into it.” - Participant D</p> <p>“Still, I think that exploration and identity expression is central, which is why I think it's such a big strength that we can live very authentically as ourselves as queer people.” - Participant C</p>
Finding Acceptance and Connection: How LGBTQIA+ Community Supports Non-Binary Individuals' Gender Euphoria	The participants stress the importance of finding a sense of community and connection within the LGBTQIA+ community. Furthermore, they describe that being part of this community has provided them with understanding, support, and acceptance.	<p>“I feel the same because especially the community, it's so it's way easier to make friends to connect with people. Because when I was in my straight face, so like, it was so difficult to, you know, make new friends or you know, like, get to know people [...]. But ever since, you know, I was happy with who I am. And ever since I started communicating with people from the LGBTQIA plus community, I made a lot of friends like a lot. And it is a struggle because it gave me that social confidence that I always wanted.” - Participant A</p>
Gender euphoria: An organic and positive experience	Gender euphoria was described as an organic and positive experience, occurring when an individual's gender expression aligns with their gender identity. Participants shared moments of joy when their appearance or actions reflected their true gender identity.	<p>“But when I do anything, like style my hair more masculine, or wearing my binder like I do right now, then my body just also fits what's in my head, and then using my body to interact with the world also becomes easier. And it's just like this euphoric experience of like, Oh, my God, yes, it works. This is how it's supposed to be. And this feels good and organic and right.” - Participant X</p>

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The complex dynamics and individual nature of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria

The participants reveal their thoughts on the differences or connections between the concept of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria.

“I finally saved up to buy a binder. And when it came in the mail, I was like, Oh, let me try that on immediately. And I had to, like, physically sit down on my bed, because I just felt like, everything was drained from me. And I was just like this. Like, for a moment, I felt completely numb, because everything was like settling in.

And then I cried my eyes out because I was so happy that my chest was flat. Yeah. And it just was this, this also this moment of validation of like, seeing these changes on my body, and then also feeling good, and it feeling great. And it's, it wasn't like, it was not a party feeling. But it was like this. Oh, my God, finally, like finally, this something feels really, really right. And that is something that I can like, remember what makes me feel good. So for example, for comfort, I can just put on the binder and then be like, all's good. Awesome for now.” - Participant X

The Journey of Self-Discovery and Challenging Gender Norms

The participants stress the importance of critically reflecting on gender identity and cisnormativity prejudices. They highlighted that challenging societal expectations allowed them to define their gender identity beyond binary definitions, contributing to a deeper understanding of oneself.

“I wouldn't say even, but especially cis, people would, I think benefit from deeply and critically reflecting on their own gender identity and how, like how gender identity is expressed. Because like, on your side, you put yourself in a lot of boxes, and without reflecting on it, then how can you know your gender identity if you simply accept and how can you know anything about it if you simply accept something that you know as a given if you just accept, okay, I was like, I was born assigned male at birth, I'm told I'm a man. And that's all I need to know about my gender identity. If you never look at it and like try to find

new ways of expressing it or pushing your own boundary, then yeah, how? How would you explore your own identity?" - Participant V

Overcoming Challenges in the Journey of Gender Exploration

The participants reveal challenges and barriers that hinder non-binary individuals to fully explore their gender identity and further highlight that these challenges must be overcome.

“One barrier to exploring gender euphoria is that for example, there's also just personal experience when I talked to my parents, like years back, when I wanted to have a more androgynous haircut, my my parents literally looked at me and were like, do you want to be a boy? And just assume that just because I want to be more androgynous or less feminine, because I'm FF, right? Yeah, that I immediately have to like catapult myself on the other end of the gender spectrum and be like I'm a boy now. And when I then wore a dress, they were like, well, but weren't you going to be a boy you know, and just this expectation to like, immediately know what fits and this expectation to like be put from one box to the other box to the third box back to the first box.” - Participant X

Discussion

This study aimed to explore intricate nuances and determinants of non-binary individuals' experiences regarding gender euphoria. By adapting to a participatory design approach, the study aimed to thoroughly explore the elements that promote positive experiences and feelings regarding gender identity in young non-binary individuals to answer the question: “How is gender euphoria experienced by young non-binary (NB) individuals?”

Broadly speaking, important insights into the experiences of NB individuals and their experiences of gender euphoria were gained by conducting the thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts. The thematic analysis resolved in six key themes for exploring the

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experience of gender euphoria among non-binary individuals, namely: 1) Pride and Self-Acceptance in Discovering and Embracing Gender Identity, 2) Finding Acceptance and Connection: How LGBTQIA+ Community Supports Non-Binary Individuals' Gender Euphoria, 3) Gender euphoria: An organic and positive experience, 4) The complex dynamics and individual nature of gender euphoria and gender dysphoria, 5) The journey of Self-Discovery and Challenging Gender Norms 6) Overcoming Challenges in the Journey of Gender Exploration.

The theme “Pride and Self-Acceptance in Discovering and Embracing Gender Identity”, was constructed because the participants expressed a deep sense of pride and self-acceptance once they discovered and embraced their gender identities. They emphasised the transformative nature of self-exploration and the empowering effect of actively grappling and constructing their authentic gender identity. Moreover, the participants stressed the significance of embracing one's true self, emphasising the deep satisfaction and joy that comes from expressing their true gender identity. Matsuno and Israel's (2018) resilience intervention for transgender individuals suggests that practising self-acceptance and hope can lead to increased resilience regarding internal and external stressors linked to their gender identity. In another study by Jacobsen and Devor (2022), practising positive gender affirmations was linked to heightened feelings of gender euphoria, aligning with our findings that finding self-acceptance and a sense of pride in one's authentic gender identity leads to feelings of empowerment and euphoria.

Secondly, “Finding Acceptance and Connection: How LGBTQIA+ Community Supports Non-Binary Individuals' Gender Euphoria”, entails the participants' perspective that being part of a community that accepts and understands them plays a crucial role in fostering feelings of belonging and acceptance. Our participants highlighted the LGBTQIA+ community as a safe space to authentically explore and express their true gender identities and

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attain support, acceptance, and social confidence. To foster feelings of gender euphoria, the importance of finding a supporting community was highlighted by our participants, aligning with the previous findings by Beischel et al. (2021), where participants connected a supportive social environment to increased feelings of gender euphoria. Numerous studies correlate with our findings, highlighting social validation and a supportive social environment as key aspects of transgender and non-binary individuals' mental well-being (Fuller & Riggs, 2018; Katz-Wise et al., 2018; McConnell et al., 2016; Pflum et al., 2015; Sherman et al., 2020). Tebbe and Budge (2022) further connected a validating and supportive community to the development of gender euphoria experiences.

Moreover, in “Gender Euphoria: An Organic and Positive Experience”; Gender euphoria was described as a positive and authentic experience when an individual's physical appearance and actions aligned with their gender identity. Some participants mentioned that feelings of gender euphoria could occur spontaneously, however, others stressed that feelings of gender euphoria can be actively produced. Especially highlighted were the importance of validation and the influence of context on these experiences. They further emphasised a significant sense of relief arising from being able to align their gender identity and gender expression following extended periods of incongruence. This experience of relief was often described as a deep emotional release, where the journey of not seeing oneself fully represented in one's identity peaked in a transformative moment of self-recognition and acceptance. In these contexts, participants described gender euphoria as a natural and organic experience or “how-it-should be”. Although the study of Beischel et al. (2021) investigated transgender, non-binary and cisgender individuals aged 18 to 56, the experience of gender euphoria is similarly described and perceived as utterly joyful and positive. Additionally, Beischel et al. (2021) similarly described the experience of gender euphoria as “joyful feeling of rightness in one's gender/sex, including feelings of confidence, attractiveness, affirmation

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and authenticity”, collaborating with our participants who report that the expression of their authentic gender identities feels natural and that this is “how-it-should be”.

In the theme “The Complex Dynamics and Individual Nature of Gender Euphoria and Gender Dysphoria”, participants discussed the complex interplay between gender euphoria and gender dysphoria, noting that heightened awareness of one could enhance the experience of the other. They also highlighted the continuum-like nature of gender euphoria and dysphoria, perceiving gender euphoria and gender dysphoria as not always being opposites, but rather as varying degrees of discomfort and joy one perceives in one's gender expression. Moreover, some individuals mentioned that they can perceive gender euphoria and gender dysphoria simultaneously in complex and nuanced dynamics, further highlighting the determining influence of context, environment and activities one engages in. The disparities in the perception of the relationship between gender euphoria and gender dysphoria was similarly reported by Ashley and Ells (2018), reporting some individuals which only experience either gender euphoria or gender dysphoria and others which experience both asymmetrically. Similarly to our findings, the coexistence, interplay and the spectrum-like nature of gender euphoria and dysphoria were discussed by Beischel et al.'s (2021), stressing that the relationship between gender euphoria and gender dysphoria is perceived as a varying individual experience that can not be universally described. This strongly corresponds, with the perception of our participants, that the relationship is individually understood and conceptualised. Further, the concept of gender euphoria was perceived as being especially present among sexual and gender minority groups, as they have a heightened awareness for gender dysphoria and thus may be more attentive to feelings of gender euphoria. Correspondingly, Beischel et al. (2021) found the concept was recognised and predominantly present in SGM communities.

Moreover, the Journey of Self-Discovery and Challenging Gender Norms was

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emphasised as a crucial aspect of understanding and embracing one's gender identity. Participants stressed the process of questioning traditional gender norms, pushing the boundaries of gender expression, and exploring what feels authentic to them. The conceptual framework by Heise et al. (2019) illustrates how the development of individuals that are assigned male or female at birth is influenced by intersecting forces, including sexism, patriarchy, racism, classism, and homophobia. These factors were identified to collectively shape pathways to poor health outcomes. Therefore, Heise et al. (2019) stress that it becomes crucial to question and challenge traditional gender norms, as they determine pathways to adverse health outcomes. Further, Matsuno and Budge (2017) strongly appeal to all mental health professionals to challenge the dominant binary assumptions in society to create a more inclusive and validating society for all gender identities. Challenging societal expectations allowed individuals to define their gender identity beyond binary definitions, contributing to a deeper understanding of oneself and personal growth. Generally, the journey of self-discovery was recognised as a transformative process that leads to a more authentic understanding of oneself, enabling feelings of gender euphoria.

In the last theme, “Overcoming Challenges in the Journey of Gender Exploration”, participants identified various challenges faced by non-binary individuals in the journey of gender exploration. Negative social attitudes, identity concealment, limited access to healthcare, bureaucratic hurdles, the lack of LGBTQIA+ representation in mainstream culture, and personal safety concerns were identified as obstacles faced by non-binary individuals.

It is reported that these negative attitudes and restrictive conditions stem from deeply internalised stigma and prejudice fueled by irrational hatred and gender-based violence aimed at those who defy traditional gender norms (OHCHR, n.d.) In accordance with our findings, the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner reported that it is crucial to tackle and overcome these prejudices and challenges, promoting acceptance and respect for

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the diverse expressions of gender identity (OHCHR, n.d.).

Overall, the findings of this study correspond with previous research conducted regarding gender euphoria experiences in non-binary individuals. Nevertheless, the concepts “organic” and “natural” have not been linked to feelings of gender euphoria before, therefore this is a particularly novel perspective that the participants highlighted. Understanding gender euphoria as organic and natural, offers transformative implications for SGMs. It validates that cisnormativity-nonconforming gender identities are equally authentic, ultimately empowering and affirming affected individuals. As cisnormativity gets challenged, it normalises the diversity of gender experiences and fosters acceptance.

The previously presented findings contribute valuable insights into the experiences and needs of non-binary individuals, highlighting the importance of acceptance, community support, self-discovery, and challenging societal norms in fostering feelings of gender dysphoria and promoting positive mental health and well-being in non-binary individuals. By identifying the dimensions of gender euphoria, the findings of this study can be used to inform future interventions that are targeted at increasing positive feelings of gender euphoria in non-binary individuals. In general, the findings of this thesis contribute to a broader and more profound understanding of the positive dimensions of gender identity and could help support systems and policymakers in creating more inclusive and validating environments for all genders.

The similarities between the conceptualizations of gender euphoria among transgender and non-binary individuals and between youth and adults, as reported by Beischel et al. (2021), imply that experiences of gender euphoria may transcend demographic differences. This resemblance could suggest that interventions designed to promote gender euphoria and well-being may be useful across demographic and gender identity clusters.

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Digital Interventions created for this purpose could focus on providing inclusive and safe environments where individuals can explore and express their gender identity authentically. Therefore, promoting open conversations about gender identity, access to special mental health resources for gender-related issues, and supporting social and emotional well-being could be utilised. Given that our findings showed similarities in conceptualisations of gender euphoria across groups, there might also be universal aspects of gender affirmation and acceptance that contribute to well-being. Hence, intervention design could also focus on emphasising self-affirmation, self-expression and empowerment regarding gender identity.

On the other hand, despite potential similarities in gender euphoria experiences, differences and unique challenges faced by distinct demographics, as well as individuals, must be acknowledged. Therefore, interventions must stay sensitive and adaptable to diverse needs. To conclude, if the research findings align well with the study of Beischel et al. (2021), demonstrating commonalities in gender euphoria experiences across age groups and gender identities, it opens the door to the development of more inclusive and effective interventions. By tailoring approaches that address the shared aspects of gender euphoria while considering the specific needs of different demographics, we can create supportive environments that promote a positive sense of self and well-being for individuals of all gender identities.

However, the implications regarding the findings of our study must be interpreted in the light of certain limiting aspects. One of the significant limitations of this study is the small sample size, as gender euphoria experiences were only explored among seven participants. While we hold the belief that each contribution and insight is deeply valuable and of unique character, we must acknowledge that the small number of participants and their viewpoints expressed may not thoroughly depict the individual and diverse range of experiences of the non-binary population regarding gender euphoria. A larger sample would have allowed for a more complete understanding of gender euphoria experiences among non-binary individuals

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since the journey of gender exploration is a unique process influenced by multiple factors. Another important limitation of our study is that it was conducted within a specific geographic and cultural context, namely the Netherlands. Cultural norms, societal attitudes, and legal protections regarding gender minorities can vary significantly from one country or region to another. Therefore, the experiences of non-binary individuals in the Netherlands may be influenced by unique cultural factors and social attitudes that may differ from other parts of the world. Additionally, the data collected was firsthand self-reported data, which can be subject to social desirability bias or recall inaccuracies. By using multiple methods, for instance, observations or interviews, a more thorough perspective on gender euphoria experiences could have been provided.

However, qualitative research aims at obtaining deeper insights and distinctive knowledge on specific concepts rather than ultimately being able to generalise findings and make inferences to a broader population as one does in quantitative research studies. Therefore, this study holds substantial importance as it addresses the current dearth of scientific literature examining the concept of gender euphoria focusing on young non-binary individuals through a participatory design approach. Within a qualitative research design, it manages to provide fresh and unique perspectives on this understudied subject matter.

There have been multiple benefits in applying a participatory design approach to this qualitative research design, especially since studying a gender minority group (Spinuzzi, 2005). First of all, participatory design enabled our participants to share their experiences in a natural setting, by giving them a voice, authentic and inclusive perspectives on gender euphoria can be explored. Rather than treating the participants as passive subjects, the participants are actively included in shaping the research process, which can lead to a sense of empowerment and more enthusiastic contributions within the study process. Moreover, the proximity to the participants and working with a small group of individuals enabled the

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researcher to thoroughly build trust and rapport. The individuals may have been more open and willing to share their personal experiences on the sensitive topic of gender euphoria since the researcher collaborates with the individuals, valuing and respecting their personal experiences and creating a safe space to share such experiences. Therefore, participatory design can be especially beneficial when addressing sensitive topics, such as gender euphoria, among minority groups (Spinuzzi, 2005).

Applying participatory design to this research also led to increased the validity, since all the experiences and perspectives expressed were firsthand experiences. The participants were able to thoroughly describe their experiences with gender euphoria, leading to a more nuanced, profound and contextual understanding of gender euphoria experiences. Additionally, firsthand experiences may be more applicable to the lived experiences of other non-binary individuals that may share similar experiences. Therefore, the insights are more meaningful and can act as a source of empowerment for non-binary individuals, reminding them that their perspectives and experiences matter and are important to explore.

Lastly, participatory research enabled community building within the study. Sharing sensitive experiences and validating them creates a sense of community among the participants as well as the researcher. Participants can learn from each other and share vulnerable experiences of gender euphoria in a safe environment, this can lead to a creation of a supportive network that can even persist and extend beyond the focus group workshops (Spinuzzi, 2005). The findings offer valuable insights into the experiences of non-binary populations, nevertheless, it is crucial to interpret them with care and avoid making broad generalisations without conducting further research.

As a researcher with a non-binary identity and due to my personal familiarity with the complexities of gender exploration, I was able to interpret the data from an experienced and sophisticated perspective. The thematic analysis benefited from my personal experience,

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subjectivity and stakeholding since that enabled me to conduct the coding process with heightened sensitiveness and perceptiveness. Utilising my own lived experience, I discerned subtle nuances and expressions of gender euphoria that might have eluded an outsider. This insider perspective allowed me to create themes capturing the unique dimensions of the participants' experiences of gender euphoria. As I was able to utilise my familiarity with the diverse facets of non-binary identities for deeper comprehension, the analysis resulted to be more nuanced. Embracing my subjectivity as both a researcher and a member of the target group, this thesis offers a valuable exploration of gender euphoria accentuated by the insights derived from my personal knowledge and experience. As I recognised my subjectivity towards the topic and its potential influence, I actively scrutinised my biases and remained reflective throughout the process of thematic analysis.

Given the limitations and strengths of this thesis, it is highly recommended that future research aiming at exploring gender euphoria experiences should additionally focus on other gender identities. As mentioned by the participants, experiences of gender euphoria and the importance of exploring one's gender identity are not exclusive to non-binary individuals and could potentially help individuals to better understand themselves and live more authentically. In this study, the focus group were young non-binary individuals, however, future research should explore the concept of gender euphoria among transgender, cisgender individuals and individuals of other gender identities to compare the experiences and being able to identify commonalities as well as possible unique challenges encountered by specific gender identities. As our findings show strong commonalities with Beischel et al.'s (2021) results on the experiences of gender euphoria among 18 to 56 year-old transgender, non-binary and cisgender individuals, there is a possibility that the determinants of gender euphoria experiences are independent of the demographic variables age and gender identity. However, in order to make valid and reliable inferences, future research should thoroughly explore

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commonalities or differences within these demographic variables.

The findings of the study at hand suggest that future research shall explore and compare the experiences of non-binary individuals among different cultures. One participant stressed the heightened perception of barriers and challenges in a country where SGMs are openly disadvantaged and discriminated, as well as the heightened level of identity concealment and anxiety that stems from living in such an environment. This study was conducted in the Netherlands, however, it is noteworthy that exploring the experiences of gender euphoria within various cultural contexts would be of great interest and could contribute to a broader and more complete understanding of gender euphoria experiences. While our study sheds light on the experiences of non-binary individuals within this particular context, it may not fully capture the experiences of non-binary individuals in diverse cultural settings. Therefore, future research should focus on intersectional identities to understand how aspects like ethnicity and race may influence gender exploration and the ability to experience feelings of gender euphoria within diverse populations.

Moreover, it would be advised to conduct longitudinal studies to observe whether or how gender euphoria experiences of non-binary individuals change across different stages of their lives. By conducting longitudinal studies, researchers can observe the evolution of these experiences and identify the long-term effects of interventions targeted at increasing feelings of gender euphoria (Thomas, 2023).

Lastly, adapting to participatory research approaches, as the one applied in this study, is specifically valuable when studying sensitive topics, such as gender euphoria among minority groups (Spinuzzi, 2005). Using participatory design, the researcher can create a safe and trusting environment for the individuals to authentically share their experiences and insights, therefore it is highly recommended to implement participatory design approaches in future research concerning gender euphoria. By implementing these aspects to future research, we

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can further advance our understanding of gender euphoria experiences and contribute to the development of more inclusive and effective support systems and interventions for SGMs.

Conclusion

Concluding, this research applied participatory design approach to thoroughly explore the experiences of gender euphoria among young non-binary individuals. Overall, gender euphoria is described as an inherently joyful and organic experience that emerges in various contexts when an individual's gender expression aligns with their gender identity. The transformative power of self-discovery and self-acceptance and the significance of community support was further highlighted by our findings. Additionally, there was a consensus among participants that challenges and barriers, stemming from cisnormative assumptions and prejudices, significantly hinder the experience of gender euphoria and must be overcome. This thesis offers valuable insights appealing to promote acceptance, empowerment and well-being for diverse genders. In the future, research can further expand the understanding of gender euphoria in various identities and cultural contexts, leading to more inclusive and effective support systems.

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230457 REQUEST FOR ETHICAL REVIEW

Request nr: 230457
Researcher: Bie, M.J. van der
Supervisor: Dekkers, T.
Reviewer: -
Status: Waiting for researcher
Version: 2

1. START

A. TITLE AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1. What is the title of the research project? (max. 100 characters)

Improving mental health of LGBTQIA+ young adults

2. In which context will you conduct this research?

Bachelor's Thesis

3. Date of the application

28-03-2023

5. Is this research project closely connected to a research project previously assessed by the BMS Ethics Committee?

No/Unknown

B. CONTACT INFORMATION

6. Contact information for the lead researcher

6a. Initials:

M.J.

6b. Surname:

van der Bie

6c. Education/Department (if applicable):

B-PSY

6d. Staff or Student number:

2632292

6e. Email address:

m.j.vanderbie@student.utwente.nl

6f. Telephone number (during the research project):

EXPLORING GENDER EUPHORIA AMONG YOUNG NON-BINARY INDIVIDUALS

+31646229753

6g. If additional researchers (students and/or staff) will be involved in carrying out this research, please name them:

Clara Sophia Odenthal c.s.h.odenthal@student.utwente.nl; Julia Petersen j.u.petersen@student.utwente.nl

6h. Have you completed a PhD degree?

No

7. Contact information for the BMS Supervisor

7a. Initials:

T.

7b. Surname:

Dekkers

7c. Department:

BMS-PGT

7d. Email address:

t.dekkers@utwente.nl

7e. Telephone number (during the research project):

+31534899741

8. Is one of the ethics committee reviewers involved in your research? Note: not everyone is a reviewer.

No

C. RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

9a. Please provide a brief description (150 words max.) of the background and aim(s) of your research project in non-expert language.

Sexual and gender minorities (SGMs) often experience mental health disparities. These disparities can have a significant effect in later life. Therefore, in this study, the focus will lie on improving mental health of these individuals through the use of a co-design. Co-design involves including the stakeholders in every step of the process, by designing and reflecting on a design artifact. As SGMs often face difficulties while accessing specifically targeted eHealth interventions, the rationale lies in involving SGM young adults aged 18 to 27 by exploring experiences regarding depressive symptoms, general character strengths, and gender euphoria. By exploring these concepts within two workshops, the aim is to let the participants effectively reflect and make plans for future situations. The gained insights can inform possible developments of specifically tailored eHealth interventions.

9b. Approximate starting date/end date of data collection:

Starting date: 2023-04-02

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End date: 2023-05-30

9c. If applicable: indicate which external organization(s) has/have commissioned and/or provided funding for your research.

Commissioning organization(s):

Not applicable

Funding organization(s):

Not applicable

2. TYPE OF STUDY

Please select the type of study you plan to conduct:

I will be collecting new data from individuals acting as respondents, interviewees, participants or informants.

4. RESEARCH INVOLVING THE COLLECTION OF NEW DATA

A: RESEARCH POPULATION

20. Please provide a brief description of the intended research population(s):

Sexual and Gender Minority young adults aged 18 to 27. The first workshop will involve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and non-binary individuals. The second workshop will be divided into three different populations, based on the focus of each researcher: 1) gay men, 2) lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, and 3) transgender and non-binary individuals.

21. How many individuals will be involved in your research?

Three researchers are involved, and it is aimed to study 4 to 6 individuals per researcher. The total can therefore range from 12 to 18 individuals.

22. Which characteristics must participants/sources possess in order to be included in your research?

Inclusion criteria: - Identify as a sexual and gender minority - Aged 18 to 27 - Available in person to attend the workshops
Exclusion criteria: - Existence of significant (mental) medical conditions

23. Does this research specifically target minors (<16 years), people with cognitive impairments, people under institutional care (e.g. hospitals, nursing homes, prisons), specific ethnic groups, people in another country or any other special group that may be more vulnerable than the general population?

No

24. Are you planning to recruit participants for your research through the BMS test subject pool, SONA

No

B. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

25. What is the best description of your research?

- Research using focus groups and/or stakeholder workshops

26. Please provide a brief yet sufficiently detailed overview of activities, as you would in the Procedure section of your thesis or paper. Among other things, please provide information about the information given

2023-03-29 14:12:56

3/7

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to your research population, the manipulations (if applicable), the measures you use (at construct level), etc. in a way that is understandable for a relative lay person.

First workshop (together): - Introduction. - Ice breaker (e.g., build a pizza). - Bring design artifact (e.g., photo, fictional character, book, object) that helps them to explain what it means for them to feel well. Second workshop (separate) - Go into detail about each researcher's concepts with the use of mind maps (1) depressive symptoms, 2) general character strengths, 3) gender euphoria).

How much time will each participant spend (mention the number of sessions/meetings in which they will participate and the time per session/meeting)?

1-2 hours per workshop.

C: BURDEN AND RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

27. Please provide a brief description of these burdens and/or risks and how you plan to minimize them:

Risks: - Talking about triggering topics/experiences - We as researchers are not trained/licensed practitioners
Minimize burden: - Defining criteria for discontinuity research at the start of research
- Provide sources of support when needed

28. Can the participants benefit from the research and/or their participation in any way?

Yes

Please Explain:

This research aims to improve the participant's insights into their experiences regarding depressive symptoms, character strengths, and gender euphoria. There is also the possibility of learning from experiences of others involves in the workshops. Lastly, the reflection's insights can help the participants in future situations.

29. Will the study expose the researcher to any risks (e.g. when collecting data in potentially dangerous environments or through dangerous activities, when dealing with sensitive or distressing topics, or when working in a setting that may pose 'lone worker' risks)?

Yes

Please Explain:

As we talk about triggering topics, this can also be impacting us as researchers as two of three researchers are a SGM as well. Another risk is the separate second workshop, in which each researcher is expected to carry the workshops out on their own, instead of together. This "lone worker" risk can lead to less support available during the workshops to ask questions.

D. INFORMED CONSENT

30. Will you inform potential research participants (and/or their legal representative(s), in case of non-competent participants) about the aims, activities, burdens and risks of the research before they decide whether to take part in the research?

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Yes

Briefly clarify how:

In the informed consent (through email), we include the aim, purpose and procedure of the research. On top of that, possible burdens and risks, their right to withdraw at any point of time, and benefits are discussed in understandable language.

32. How will you obtain the voluntary, informed consent of the research participants (or their legal representatives in case of non-competent participants)?

Signed

33. Will you clearly inform research participants that they can withdraw from the research at any time without explanation/justification?

Yes

34. Are the research participants somehow dependent on or in a subordinate position to the researcher(s) (e.g. students or relatives)?

No

35. Will participants receive any rewards, incentives or payments for participating in the research?

- Other, briefly clarify:

Drinks and snacks during the workshops.

36. In the interest of transparency, it is a good practice to inform participants about what will happen after their participation is completed. How will you inform participants about what will happen after their participation is concluded?

- Participants will receive the researcher's contact details, so that they can contact the researcher if they have questions/would like to know more.

E. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

37. Does the data collected contain personal identifiable information that can be traced back to specific individuals/organizations?

No

39. Will you make use of audio or video recording?

Yes

- What steps have you taken to ensure safe audio/video data storage?

During the workshops, we will use audio recordings via phones.

- At what point in the research will tapes/digital recordings/files be destroyed?

The recordings will be deleted after data analysis.

5. DATA MANAGEMENT

- I have read the UT Data policy.
- I am aware of my responsibilities for the proper handling of data, regarding working with personal data, storage of data, sharing and presentation/publication of data.

6. OTHER POTENTIAL ETHICAL ISSUES/CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

40. Do you anticipate any other ethical issues/conflicts of interest in your research project that have not been previously noted in this application? Please state any issues and explain how you propose to deal with them. Additionally, if known indicate the purpose your results have (i.e. the results are used for e.g. policy, management, strategic or societal purposes).

As we will be working together with participants that identify as SGMs, there is the possibility of misgendering, or using the wrong pronouns. Therefore, at the start of the workshops, we aim to openly talk about this and state preferences regarding this subject. On top of that, as SGM young adulthood might be a sensitive target group, we aim to work together respectfully and cautiously.

7. ATTACHMENTS

[informed-consent-form-mental_health_LGBTQ_youngadults.pdf](#)

8. COMMENTS

Dekkers, T. (29-03-2023 14:12):

Please revise a few aspects:

27: explain more specifically how the risk and burden will be minimized. Who will be involved to support participants and researchers, what do you by defining criteria for discontinuity?

28: please clarify how the insights can help participants in future situations. Remember that this question is about direct effects for the participants (rather than indirect effect through new interventions). If not applicable, please remove this sentence.

29: Do you have any strategies to mitigate lone worker risk in the second workshop? For example is it possible for each of the researchers to attend one other workshop as a notetaker/support? Or for these workshops to take place on campus during my working hours?

39: Please use a safe device for audiorecordings, such as a separate recorder, not a phone (can be arranged through BMS lab or the faculty, please contact me if you have questions)

39: Please retain audiorecordings up to 2 years after graduation, these can be stored on my UT harddisk.

40: Please clarify what you mean with 'respectfully and cautiously'. Be concrete about this. You can refer to the SEG inclusion principles of safety.

Informed consent form: Please ensure that the information sheet contains sufficient practical information for the participants, for example, how long workshops take, where they will take place, etc. I will send you an example.

9. CONCLUSION

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Status: Waiting for researcher

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Information Sheet
YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS SHEET

Dear reader,

The purpose of the research is to identify the participant's experiences related to positive mental health through participation in two workshops. These workshops are organized by three students at the University of Twente: Clara Odenthal, Julia Petersen, and Marieke van der Bie.

The importance of this study is related to improving mental health of Sexual and Gender Minorities (SGMs). Many studies that involve these individuals are related to their mental health problems. However, we are interested in your strengths, positive experiences, and what it means for you to feel well. This way, a more complete vision can be established, including both mental health problems, and positive well-being. Therefore, we ask from you to attend two workshops. The insights that we gain from your attendance and experiences will help shape interventions and future research.

[Still to be discussed] Explanation workshops:

- [Time and place (1-2 hours, at the UT)].
- [What they are expected to bring (photo)].
- [What will be discussed].
- Drinks and snacks are offered during both workshops.

Potential risks of participating in the study include the discussion of sensitive or triggering information. When this risk is experienced, it is advised to seek help from practitioner. Students of the UT can schedule meeting with student psychologist using the following link:

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<https://www.utwente.nl/nl/ces/sacc/begeleiding-advies/psycholoog-voor-studenten/>. Non-UT-students are advised to contact their general practitioner.

The research project has been reviewed and approved by the BMS Ethics Committee. You can withdraw from the study at any point without stating the reason. To analyse your experience, we will make audio recordings of the workshops. These recordings will be anonymized and given a number, stored at University of Twente, but will never be made publicly. The recordings will be used for this study and possibly following studies.

We hope that we informed you well. For questions during the workshop itself, you can ask the researchers directly. For questions after the workshops, you can contact via mail (m.j.vanderbie@student.utwente.nl, j.u.petersen@student.utwente.nl, c.s.h.odenthal@student.utwente.nl) or supervisor Tessa Dekkers (t.dekkers@utwente.nl, +31534899741).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee/domain Humanities & Social Sciences of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente by ethicscommittee-hss@utwente.nl.

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Consent Form for Study into Mental Health Experiences of SGM Young Adults

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS INFORMED CONSENT FORM

<i>Please tick the appropriate boxes</i>	Yes	No
Taking part in the study		
I have read and understood the information dated [_ / _ / _], or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part in the study involves being part of a focus group with two workshops of which audio recordings will be made.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risks associated with participating in the study		
I understand that taking part in the study involves the following risks: discussing sensitive topics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of the information in the study		
I understand that information I provide will be used for the reporting in thesis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as [e.g. my name or where I live], will not be shared beyond the study team.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent to be Audio/video Recorded		
I agree to be audio recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Future use and reuse of the information by others		
I give permission for the collected data of experiences that I provide to be archived in transcripts so it can be used for future research and learning. This data will be archived anonymously.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Signatures

Name of participant Signature Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands to what they are freely consenting.

Researcher name Signature Date

Study contact details for further information

Please contact the researchers via mail (m.j.vanderbie@student.utwente.nl, j.u.petersen@student.utwente.nl, c.s.h.odenthal@student.utwente.nl) or supervisor Tessa Dekkers (t.dekkers@utwente.nl, +31534899741).

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Appendix C

Transcript Workshop 1

Researcher 1

Okay, um, well thank you all for coming here. We would like to start with a quick name and pronouns round, just to be sure to get the right pronouns. So, I guess that's it. My name is X, and my pronouns are she/her.

Researcher 2

My name is X. My pronouns are she/her.

Researcher 3

I didn't say I'm also she/her.

Participant A

My name is X. I'm gender fluid. So I go with any pronouns.

Participant B

My name is X.

Participant C

My name is X. I'm also gender fluid and go by all pronouns.

Participant D

My name is X, I seem to be the third gender fluid person here and I go by he or they

Participant E

I am X, i go with she/her.

Participant F

X and she.

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Researcher 1

Okay, nice. Thank you. So I wanted to do a quick introduction to what this is. Maybe you already already the informed consent, a lot of information is already in here. But we first I would like to start with as eg principles that we would like to keep, this just basically means that we want to treat each other with respect here, because we're talking about mental health. Also, that we're open for each other to talk about stuff. So with respect, some other things is that we like to give a voice to everyone here and listen carefully. And there's no judgments or advice or counseling involved. We just want to know about your experiences. Okay. The content of the workshop was also in the improved concerns, we want to know about your experiences about mental health as an LGBTQ person. And for that, we wanted to do two workshops. This is the first one and this is just about general wellbeing. So instead of focusing on only mental health problems, we would also like to focus on well beings for the positive sides of psychology. And therefore, we will do first the item description, exercise of which he probably brought a photo or an object objects are something that we will talk about. Yes. And after that, we will have a break. We have some snacks and a lot of stuff for you guys. I'm out after that we will do group discussions with segments and about maybe an eHealth intervention that we would like to get some information about. And that's it. So the end goal for now is to just talk about your experiences. Basically, in a nutshell, very. Okay. So do you have any questions?

Participant C

With all that, what were we supposed to bring?

Researcher 3

That's the thing I didn't tell you because I wasn't sure whether you were like, I didn't know that you were going to come till today. So we also brought some objects and photos that you can like maybe you can choose one of those if that's also not a problem.

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Researcher 1

We're going to think of something right now, who will ask the question, whether the thing was is that we asked you to bring something that reminds you of food, makes you feel well, so in a positive way. So can you think of something maybe yes, yeah. Okay, then you can just talk about it. I think that's fine or explain the object or photo that you would like would have liked to bring. Yeah, there you go. Okay, okay. So yeah, yeah, can you can start with the item description then.

Researcher 3

If you have anything, if you want to go to the toilet just feel free to stand up or grab some snacks or water or whatever.

Researcher 1

Where do I go in the atrium? Yes, yeah. Like this is it's up. So I hope it works now. So yeah, we thought about, you could maybe talk about those things you brought, and what feelings or emotions come to your mind when you think about that object photo, or whatever. And how does it make you feel well, and why? So yeah, maybe someone wants to start.

Participant A

Yeah, sure. I can start. I got pictures. Yeah. And then I got four pictures. Yeah, so I'm from India. And now my cat, her name is X. And she's back home. So every time I feel lower, I'm not feeling so good. I look at her pictures, these pictures are always on my wall. So it's like, oh, she means a lot to me, because she was not one of those planned cats that I wanted to get like, I went there and I want to get a cat. It was nothing like that. I was depressed for like about six months. And for whole fucking six months, I did not leave my room. I did not leave my bedroom. I was in that bedroom for six months. And it was very horrible. And that was the time when all of my friends told me that there is a rescued cat. It was, she was actually a

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kitten. She was just 25 days old. And she was completely malnourished; she did not have any Farhan on her body. Like when I got her she looked like a fucking alien. My parents like they even scolded me for getting her home. But I wanted something to I wanted some reason to get out out of my room I wanted, I was looking for reasons to go out. And she was the reason and ever since I got her I started feeding her and she was she used to get sick often. So I had to take to take her to the vet for like, every three days, I had to take her to the ER, I had to take her to the vet. So that's when I started going out and she's the reason I'm not in depression anymore. And because of her I got out of the depression and that's when I applied here for the university. So in a way without our without her I don't think I would be here. So she means a lot to me.

Researcher 1

Thank you so much. Yeah thanks. I'm just looking at it. Can I see the pictures?

Participant A

That was a few days after I got her. Yeah.

Participant B

Yes, I also brought some pictures of me and my friends. Because I always Yeah, when I think about them, I think about like all the happy times we have together all the fond memories they had over the years. And they helped me a lot specially my best friend here. Yeah, she's always there for me when I need someone to talk. And yeah, we're really close. And that's always helping me out like when I feel down just to meet them get off my room. And yeah, just talk to some people also, like often when I think about stuff, it's always like, like inspiring my mind and when you talk to other people, then you break out a bit of the cycle and yeah, it helps to get a new view.

Researcher 1

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Yes, thank you, thank you.

Participant C

I brought x because for feelings and emotion, especially when looking at x with my partner, I feel like it's with a lot of things in life when I really don't want to do something or when I don't want to take care of myself when I feel worse. Then I always have a second reason to also do well because I want to do well to support another person and to actually have a happy life and everything and to try my best to actually also do well mentally and to achieve what I want to achieve. To kind of have a steady line to follow. That's always really helpful. There was I couldn't I couldn't go with the lighter because otherwise Yeah, I like smoking. I really like smoking.

Participant D

Oh, that caught me off guard. What I think of like, what some brings me joy. It's not as heartfelt but it's just like books. I really love reading and no matter if it's fiction or nonfiction, I was always like kind of this opportunity to just like take a break from the real world. And then kind of like recharge and when you're ready you can come back and just this this like, availability of like having like a way out that's not too harmful might learn something might see some some fun stories. It helps me like a lot. Thank you. Thank you.

Participant E

Yeah, actually completes this necklace, actually, because I grew up in a very Christian conservative village. And back in middle school, I was in the closet I knew always when I grew up wasn't not so sure about the boys board. But the there were only a few other queer people I knew there. And the thing is the one person that was out got beaten up one time we went to a club. So after that, I was just scared as fuck. So for me being able to walk around and where a pride symbol still doesn't stop straight meant to hit on me. But regardless, I'm

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still quite, quite proud that I can wear it and I just don't feel like I have to hide here anymore. And just, I mean, okay, it's still happens that you sometimes if I walk through the city and hold the hands of a woman or non binary person or whatever, you still sometimes get like, oh, Mike made fun of so but like, still genuinely feel safer. And I feel better here. And that's why this makes me really happy. Thanks for sharing.

Participant A

That actually reminds me like, this is the lock. I made this locket by myself. This is my cat's fur inside the locket. Yeah, so like, because I can't physically feel her. So I wear this all the time so I can feel.

Participant F

I brought my ring. I bought it at an island. I went to together with my mom, because my mom is my biggest supporter ever. And she was also one of the first groups I came out to and she was so supportive. And she didn't even have like these weird questions some parents have. She's always there for me, and I can always call her and she's one of my best friends. So I really like it, but I still get it because it reminds me of her.

Researcher 1

Thank you. Yeah. Okay. Yeah, yeah.

Yeah, we will take questions down for just give you some.

Researcher 3

Oh, yeah, yeah, sure.

Researcher 1

But you guys talked about it so well.

Researcher 3

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You they we didn't really had to say much. Something. Yeah, thank you. Thanks a lot for sharing. Yeah. And the next thing we're gonna do...

Researcher 1

...is to break the break.

Participant D

I want to grab a snack.

Researcher 1

Yeah, I think you have to explain what is what.

Researcher 3

You have like, how many time, 10 minutes?

Researcher 1

Let's continue so we can complete Yep.

Researcher 3

Okay, so in the following, we're just gonna show you some statements. And if you agree with them, we would just ask you to raise your hands, actually. And maybe if you want to share something about it and maybe like, elaborate on that. We would be very happy. Yes. So and, and they are some sometimes a little bit triggering. We wanted to. Yeah, we wanted to integrate that just to see some different opinions. So yeah.

Researcher 1

To also make sure that we don't agree with the statements necessarily. Yeah. Because they can be triggering. Okay.

Researcher 3

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Okay, so firstly, I miss I'm proud of being who I am.

Researcher 1

Yes, so who agrees? Okay, anyone who'd like to elaborate?

Participant C

When I walk through the city, I have, I mean, I'm very hard to miss because I'm very tall and I have a very big eyeliner. So I have a lot of people looking at me all the time. And that can be anxiety inducing, but through just stupid confidence and pride that I project outwards. cuz then I'm like, that helps me just kind of live my life. So I'm proud, like, very being very proud of words. Yep. Helps because there's always someone saying that I shouldn't be and that's stupid.

Researcher 3

Yeah. Okay, thank you. And yes, anybody else wants to share? Yeah.

Participant A

Okay, so like, a few years ago, probably like four years ago, I was totally not. Okay, being gay, I kept rejecting a lick, I didn't, I didn't accept myself, I couldn't do it. That was before I started started my Bachelor's, I was very unhappy with who I am, I was unhappy with my femininity. And I was like I was, I was really, I used to curse myself for being who I am. But then, when I started doing my bachelor, especially back in India, it's a very homophobic country. It's almost impossible to be openly gay in India. So, you know, you hear a lot of things. And you know, like, I've been bullied all my childhood for being feminized. It was really awful. But then when I started doing a bachelor's, I met people, I met a new crowd of people, I made friends with these people who accepted me the way I am, I did not have to hide myself anymore. That's when I realized there are also people who will accept me for who I am. That's when I started coming out to people. And it just went on and on and on. And now

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I'm really proud of what I am and who I am. I'm really, I'm really happy that I'm not straight, and I'm gay. Thank you.

Participant D

Yeah, I find the pride in being who I am that essentially nobody can really take that away from me. I've had some serious mishaps with the drugs that kind of fucked with my mental state a little bit. But in the end, I kind of noticed that like, just the essence of me, I always have it with me like the one thing and because nobody can take that away from me, and because that's how, like, I get to shape that. And I get to choose who I want to be. And just because that's kind of like, like, my identity is my creation. And that's why I find a lot of pride in it, because I put work into it.

Researcher 1

Yeah, but things well, yes.

Researcher 3

Thanks a lot. So we should continue with the second one, maybe. So yeah, being LGBTQ is a strength of mine. Would you agree? Yeah. Anybody wants to say maybe? Why? How was it a strength of yours? Or why do you feel like it's a strength of yours?

Participant B

Yeah, I feel.... Because like, I don't know, we have, like, such a nice community. I mean, obviously, it's had like, ups and downs. But it's like, I don't know, like, you have like a sense of community coming together, have activities together have some deeper connection. Like, sometimes when you meet straight people, it's like, a bit different always. With a straight and it's not usually as connecting, when you just meet some gay people, I feel like it's, you have some something nice, and that is the strength that you can easily connect with people from the community.

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Participant A

I mean, often I feel like, I feel the same because especially the community, it's so it's way easier to make friends to connect with people. Because when I was in my straight face, so like, it was so difficult to, you know, make new friends or you know, like, get to know people or the knowledge get in or like, don't like, like, you know, like, do all the activities and stuff you know, like, it was not so easy. But ever since, you know, I was happy with who I am. And ever since I started communicating with people from the LGBTQI plus community, I made a lot of friends like a lot. And it is a struggle because it gave me that social confidence that I always wanted. So like even now, like even here at University of a few of my straight friends. They're like, Oh, I wish I was gay so that I could make so many friends.

Participant C

I feel like a lot of times when I think about queerness, especially when I kind of have little opportunities to actively explore my own queerness it's In a very radical form of just pure self expression, you have this rejection of heterosis normality that is just embedded in the culture that we live in, right? Like it simply, you see everywhere that men and woman and have like two children, ideally, the nuclear family, that's how it's supposed to be. And the for me, queerness is then breaking fully away from anything prescribed, and focusing on myself and exploring myself and expressing that as well to the world. And I feel like a lot of people who say, Oh, yeah, I'm straight, and I'm cisgender. And they don't ever reflect on it, they don't have that, at least really thinking about it. Maybe they're not in an environment where they are able to really think about or where they are challenged to question their gender and sexual identity, even if you come to the conclusion that you resist it. Still, I think that exploration and identity expression is central, which is why I think it's such a big strength that we can live very authentically as ourselves as queer people.

Researcher 3

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Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. That's awesome. Perfectly for the second statement.

Participant C

Kind of be so nice to code this later. Yeah.

Researcher 3

It's so much good. Nice. So yeah, the third statement? Yes.

As an LGBTQIA plus person I am seen as a victim. Would you agree to the statement to us?

Participant C

Think a lot of LGBTQ plus people like to see themselves as victims, because that forgoes some, like, because it's just an association with any stigmatized group, it's easy to forego dealing with your own problems. But I don't think that it's generally, I don't think the queer community is generally seen as victims. I think, if anything, it's insane. How confident a lot of queer people are. And that's more impressive than anything else. Yep. Yep.

Participant E

I would also say like, just with the phrasing seen as a weakness, because sometimes you are just a victim of a hate crime. But like, it's, it's more about like the perception of others.

Researcher 3

Yeah, also like, how, how you perceive yourself. You also have the perception of others. But whether you perceive that

Participant E

not really and usually when I explained about okay, I just went have to meet it was kind of homophobic and unusually, just get more of a response of like a victim blaming rather than, Oh, yeah, that was actually not what was supposed to happen if we treat each other with respect or whatever. Yeah. So that's, I would say, No, most people don't like. Okay,

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Researcher 1

I think I can explain this quote, maybe, because, in research, a lot of LGBTQIA, people are researched on specific subjects that are related to being affected a victim instead of what their strengths are. So a lot of research is done into stigmatization, for example, or violence against queer people. So but less research is focused on what the strengths are of queer people, what they benefit from, and what they can actually bring to the table. So that's why do you now have a different opinion? Maybe.

Participant C

I feel like that's when people do see queer people as victims. That's, to me very patronizing. I like and also in connection with assumptions like, Oh, you're doing they're doing so poorly there. They don't fit in that's so bad for them. Or in general, like, oh, yeah, they're mentally ill. But I don't know if victim. Maybe I'm just not confronted with that. Personally. I consume a very big amount of positive queer content on the internet. So I'm, like, trained to be very proud.

Participant B

I agree. So I don't see too much negative content. I mean, Just recently more than the US like how (Inaudible) goes down. And I guess they're like, it's worse. But here, I feel like we are still like, I feel safe. When I go outside, I don't feel like that I'm getting attacked or whatever. And therefore, I don't know, I don't feel, I don't see myself as a victim.

Participant C

I think in the US, it's more that queer people are actually like villainized. And they're like, seen as like, like unnatural or new to be like, largely eradicated, but the political consensus seems to be in the US. But I don't think they're even victim is appropriate to us, because it's just one, like, the whole political pushback against trans people in the drag band, for example.

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That's all just hate coming from one side, I don't think that queer people see themselves were that many people see queer people as the victims, they're more the other side as kind of cringe.

Researcher 1

Yeah, but I hear a lot of positivity. So that's nice. So that's what we want to focus on.

Participant A

Okay, but yeah, like, for me, it's a very different situation. The main reason I left India was because of the whole homophobic people around me, it's, I never felt safe there. So like, every time like I, like, you know, I couldn't put on makeup or you know, put on eyeliner or nail paint. Anytime I want, I couldn't do that, I would only do that. If I'm going out with a bunch of my queer friends, I would do it only then I would never do it without them. So I never felt safe there. And a lot of hate crime. And like, last year 2022 There was a pride walk in my city. And during the pride walk as well, like we're done with the pride walk. And two, it was a pretty late at night, after the party, we were trying to get cabs back home, and of the me and three of my friends, we were waiting for a cab, and a few policemen came and they will be verbally started, you know, (inaudible) police monitors. It's that awful to be there. So right now with India, they are fighting for same sex marriage rights. The case has been in court for like three times now. Or in Supreme Court of India. And all the times the case has been rejected. So even this time, like a few days ago, the case was turned down. You just did not legalizing same sex marriage. I don't think they will. And even if they do, nobody will accept it will be only you know, as per the Constitution or something. But you know, the people, the population of India, they would It would probably take like, I don't know, 200 300 years for them to accept. So in India, I guess I was seen as a victim, but not anymore. I just want to leave all that behind.

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Researcher 1

Yeah. Okay, thank you.

Researcher 3

I think we can go into so I possess strategies that helped me overcome negative feelings of feeling down.

Researcher 1

Yeah, maybe if you have any sort of these in mind, you can share them.

Participant F

I love to dance. Especially when I'm feeling stressed or feeling really sad. I am lucky to have five housemates. And most of the time, I can just go to one of the rooms starts from music and then we'll just dance together. And it really lifts my day up. Like makes me feel happy. I can laugh and we can just share that nice moment. I also love calling people when I feel sad. I love calling my friends my family. The it always helps me to talk about my feelings and to just get off of the thing I want to say get it out and then I'll feel better.

Researcher 1

So social aspect. Yeah, yeah. Okay, nice. Anyone else?

Participant B

Similar thing, like, when I feel sad or so I just become my best friend. And yeah, she helps me to get through this. And we just talk about it. And then yeah, often, then we start talking about other stuff. And then I get to have like, some focus my mind on other stuff, and then already better. Or sometimes I just think about, hey, maybe it's just like a bad day. And tomorrow, everything is better. And then it's random. It's already like, that night, and I just go to bed. And often in the morning, it's surprisingly better. That had something to think like,

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Okay, well, maybe it's just in the past, well, new day new start.

Participant C

Through years of intensive introspection, I have trained myself to take a step back from my, from like, any situation and like, meta sense. So I can kind of reflect more or less objectively, at least evaluate situations and my own behavior. It's more difficult to then act in positive ways, given that evaluation, but the evaluation and like, yes, taking that step back, step back in any situation usually works really well. So that is one of the strategies whenever I feel bad, or, yeah, when I'm depressed, I can usually take a step back and be like, Okay, I feel like shit, but what's actually something I can do rather than than just sitting here and mulling it over?

Participant D

I do a similar thing with the med like, like going meta on the whole situation, but I journal and then I like kind of just like start writing down, because my thoughts tend to get extremely jumbled when I'm upset. So that I'm just sitting there like, Well, cool. I have this like, static in my brain. What the fuck do I do now? So I just like start writing. And at some point, it becomes like structured. And then I can like, read what I wrote. And we're like, oh, yeah, this is what happened. I understand. No, no, I can move on. Like, just close the notebook, put it away, and then I can just move on with my life.

Participant C

Also, talking about stuff helps a lot, just actually talking. When you speak out loud about your issues, you're forced to structure your thoughts, rather than just thinking about it where everything is more an abstract or an impression kind of an idea. But you never really have to fully structure any thoughts when you it's just in your head when you talk to people about it, which is why therapy helps you have a whole you were kind of forced to properly think about it and you're able to process a lot of information better when you speak about problems.

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Researcher 3

Yeah, okay. So talking about it writing down journaling anyone else wants to share nice.

Participant E

No, I've tried to do sports trying to drop the not so healthy coping mechanisms and replace them with more healthy one. So I go skating or I go bouldering or paint or whatever, or actually talk to a friend if I want to share but not always. Because like I'm not cliché where I'm the mommy friend where everyone comes to me but I don't go to people when I have except for a few selectors. So yes, so yeah, that's kind of what I do.

Participant C

One strategy I possess is smoking marijuana.

Researcher 3

Okay, nice. We have a lot of coping mechanisms. The Fit statement, I feel happy and confident when I get I can express my gender identity authentically. Do you agree, disagree? Agree. Any elaborations?

Researcher 1

or maybe if anyone feels comfortable talking about it? Why maybe not. This is not the case. Yeah, there's anything (inaudible).

Participant C

Inherently depends on the environment. Like if the, if the social context is right, if the if I'm in around people that I know won't become aggressive, for example, or if it's not a country that's super homophobic, for example. But if it's, if I feel very confident or confident and comfortable, if I'm around people that are at least like minded, then usually extremely. In response to the statement, extremely, Yes.

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Participant A

Oh, yeah, that helps to remind me something. So yeah, I do. Like, I do feel comfortable being with my gender identity, especially in the recent years, I feel really happy. And like X mentioned, happy and confident mentioning it, even when the crowd when even when I know that the crowd is not going to accept me, I still do that, because I have this thing. I like making, I like making homophobic people feel uncomfortable. Because of my identity. I feel like I'm just, I'm just who I am, I'm not even doing anything to you. And that is still causing you, you know, some trouble, you know, like, you're feeling uncomfortable just because of who I am. So, I feel like I know, sometimes I even asked, like, I feel like I have a superpower. You know, just because of who I am. You're just you're already feeling uncomfortable. And I kinda like the fact that these people get very uncomfortable because of who I am. Like, especially in India, especially, like I said, when when I go out with my family or friends, and then we dress super feminine, or like when we put on makeup and everything. And when we were walking down the streets, like, you know, there will be all these very typical Indian people judging us, you know, looking at us, or, you know, they like, when they pass by, you can actually feel the uncomfortableness in their face. And that makes me happy. Yeah, so. So in recent years, I really don't feel uncomfortable sharing my gender identity, almost anywhere. So they'll call it that.

Researcher 3

Nice. Okay. So we're all agreeing on that one. being referred to by the correct pronouns as a validating and euphoric experience.

Participant D

Sorry, I had to, the opportunity was too good.

Researcher 3

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Yeah, no, I know. I know. Yeah, so you all disagree? And how does it make you feel? Yeah, when the incorrect pronouns are used, when you're,

Participant A

For me, incorrect pronouns cannot be used because I go with everything so good. Anything.

Participant D

I actually am really chill about it, because I know that I am not the most passing trans mask person out there. So I don't expect anyone because I also don't want to like if somebody misgendered me, I want to scope the situation first. If I can come to that person be like, hey, actually, my pronouns are not her but he, they. But when somebody does, it's like, yeah, that's cool. It's like a little like happy moment. But misgendering is then in turn, surprisingly, not that invalidating. I mean, it's like when some people do it, for example, my mom, cuz like, It's my mom see? Is the person who like misgendered me the most, and also dead names me it's really fun. That kind of hits home a little bit for like, like a day or two. But if it's strangers, then I really don't care. Yeah, so it depends also on the person, yeah.

Participant C

I have. Yeah, being you having the wrong pronouns used, of course, kind of difficult for me. But being misgendered still that I just have such a strong disdain for when people are like gender is binary, you are a man. Then it's like, you know, no. And there is plenty of explanation out there, but it's not my duty to educate anyone either. So I won't go into like a long monologue about how my gender identity is actually valid. That's not I don't have time for that. But it stings. Because it it's not even just for me personally, where I'm like, Oh, I was misgendered I feel bad know that for sure, absolutely. But oh more in a larger societal context where it's like, ah, there is still a lot of people out there who more or less deny our existence as queer people. And that is just not the move in that makes me sad.

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Researcher 3

Okay, thank you for sharing the seven statement. Finding community of people who accept and support by gender identity brings me immense joy. I mean, we already discussed it a bit in the previous statements, but we have anything to add.

Participant C

Exaltio is a great organization. Come to the gala. Everyone.

Researcher 3

On the it's Friday, right? Yes. I wanted to run.

Participant D

From May 10 to May the 12.

Participant A

Yeah, something,

Participant D

Okay. But no way. It's like, anyway, what I wanted. Back in my hometown, before I moved here, I really didn't know any other queer people that didn't live like half an hour train ride, at least away from me. And the first like, two years that I was here, I also kind of isolated myself. And when I then finally, I think it was over one year, actually, that we got to the first lik, like, almost a year ago, actually. And it was like, like, such a whole new world of just like being able to express myself and not like having this constant fear of like, Oh, can I say that? Or is this gonna? Is this gonna tip the situation into like, the bad area? And it's been like, it's brought me so much joy that I've actually joined committee work. Which I still can't believe I am normally not that proactive. But apparently, I'm so happy that I started working there. So it's cool. It's good.

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Researcher 3

Do you have like, your, your all members of the exaltio like, Is it like a weekly?

Participant E

we have different activities? So we have also different committees that organize different things. So for example, we have arcaded organized drinks and sports activities and anything fun and act if you want to do together with the gays

Participant A

Yesterday there was an egg hunt. That was it was yesterday, right? The egg hunt?

Participant E

Yeah, for example. We went looked for chocolate vegan chocolate eggs around campus and had a picnic afterwards like, yeah. You have like relaxing. They're organized like bag events, movie nights. We're just crafting children better.

Participant C

UT Pride is also great. The one Tessa Dekker's does. Oh, yeah. You're gonna quote that.

Participant E

Then the Gala, for example, that organizes a gala because a lot of people don't feel comfortable bringing their gay date to their gala. So we are hosting our own Gala

Participant D

We will sing a close queer Gala should make it safe and fun. And I'm hyped.

Participant A Yeah, me too.

Participant E

Yeah, that's okay, etcetera, etcetera. There are a lot of things going on.

Participant A

For me too, because like no matter how many parties that I attend, or like, how many events that I go to, or with my straight friends who are really close to me, no matter how good that

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is, when I attend, you know, like activities or events, like she said, from events from exact your other stuffs when I attend those, the feeling is completely different. And that's something I would always choose over anything else. Because I feel very comfortable around people, you know, who can actually get me so that does really bring me immense joy.

Participant B

And you can also talk about some stuff you usually don't talk about with straights .

Participant A

Oh my god. Yes. That's very true.

Participant E

I love my straight friends. But there are certain things like if I talk about certain fixed you don't have to overlap and experience exactly explain a lot. Yeah, same way like okay, um, so I can talk for hours with a trans woman and binary or gender fluid person, and then they will still not 100% grasp what it means. But I can still like listen, or whatever, but I just feel sometimes like the three people can't even listen. They just have an idea. Yeah, they look at me and you're like, you're lesbian, I assure like you're gonna marry man and he and anyways then I'm like, yeah. And then they look at me because at the gas station, I have to exchange entirety to help them know I can do that myself. Thank you. Like, I don't know, man. It just kind of sucks. Yeah. Okay,

Researcher 3

I think it's the last one.

Researcher 1

Actually, this was another one.

Researcher 3

Okay, then the eight statement as an LGBTQIA plus person, I experience more depressive symptoms than cisgender heterosexual people. What do you think? Do you agree? Do you

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disagree?

Participant C

I very much agree. The reason that I personally do is from external influences that are implicit and explicit forms of discrimination in the environment, both things like getting called the F slur in like, randomly, to things like toilets being or a lot of toilets being separated by men and women. And clothing stores the same, like very, a very wide range of spectrum on micro aggressions to actual aggression. That hamper my mental health. And it's buffered by community resilience from the environment that I have with queer people.

Researcher 3

Anybody else wants to share some thoughts on that?

Participant B

I mean, me personally, I think I don't. But I mean, I mean, I don't know how much the precedents good people here, but I mean, I feel like it's it's been a while since I've been depressed, and it's better now. But yeah, I don't have I don't get to trigger, thankfully, by my daily environment. So that helps. So I think therefore, I guess, I mean, usually, big trigger for me is just like, relationships, often, but then. It's, I don't know. I mean, I guess also straight people have that sometimes. So. Yeah, for me, it's not really I don't I wouldn't say it's not maybe a little bit more. That's a but not too much difference I guess.

Participant C

You said, it changed at some point, like, did was it worse? And then, like, at one point got better or?

Participant B

Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Sometimes, I mean, I have sometimes some more depressing phases. More down. And then sometimes it's changing then I don't, sometimes wild.

Participant A

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It was very wild. For me, when I was in India, the depression, I mentioned that I was in my room for six months didn't leave it was because of all of the trauma that I had faced, in my early age, or due to some of physical abuse. So that that was triggered again. And that was what led me to depression. Also, the fact that the only reason I went to depression was because like I said, I started doing my bachelor's. And that's when, you know, I met those queer friendly people who helped me come out, like those people were, I felt they were my actual family, you know, because they actually helped me come out. And they always accepted me for who I was. So I was very comfortable with them. But then, because of my dad, we had to move to a different city. So had to leave all those friends back there. So that was also another reason that in this place, I basically had no friends. And the city where we moved to was way more homophobic than the city we used to live in. So everything just got into me and that's what led me to depression. But also, before that, whenever, you know, people used to call me out names, especially during my childhood, right? I hate my childhood. Like, I hate it so much, because I don't remember a day going to school and not crying. So it was that horrible. So for me, yeah, being gay did give me a lot of depression back then when I was in India, but then after I moved here, after living here for a while, you know, going out with my friends or just going me going alone outside here. I feel like I feel like I feel so happy for people who are like, born here. And I'm also so jealous of them. Because, you know, like, they don't exactly get it because they're born in a country where you know, people, most of the people automatically mostly accept you. It's not like how back in my country. So sometimes I feel like people who are, you know who are born here. I feel like they sometimes they do not appreciate the privilege that I got. But I really appreciate it because I know how hard it was back then. So ever since I came here, I feel like, okay, this is where I belong, and I just don't want to leave.

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Researcher 2

So, back in India, you would say that you experience more depressive symptoms. Yeah. It changed when you came here?

Participant A

Yeah, it was changed when I came home. Yes.

Participant E

So I've had that as soon as I return, I still work in that village, sometimes where I grew up in and it was more conservative. I mentioned that my friend got beaten up and I'm not it's not as traumatic as what you went through. But I still felt very unsafe there. And I still in the beginning, going back, it took my pride symbols off for work. Because I work often also at events in Germany in the Netherlands that are like shooting festival October 1, like these very ones had drunk guys in the 40s type of crowd that you bartending. I mean, I get a lot of tips list. It's funny because they have no clue I'm gay. Lovely, but besides that, it's not really safe, because not the gross. Nowadays, I still wear them, but it took me a long time to get that comfortable and be like, Okay, I'm gonna put the target on my bag. Because yeah, I'm a feminist. I have straight present privilege. I mean, by far, I don't know why, but so me, I still sometimes get very, like, Yeah, down when I go home home to visit the German part of my family. Because I'm like, always like, my girlfriends or my acquaintances. Apparently, if someone asks, okay, yeah, it is kind of like expertly when I go back. I'm more depressed than he like here. I'm fine because it can be myself in relation. Just don't do good, great environment does a lot know about it.

Researcher 2

Thanks for sharing!

Researcher 1

Then the last one. Yeah.

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Researcher 3

The last one is a bit more triggering, but

Researcher 1

I'm gonna make a picture for our thing. I'm gonna burn everyone's faces. So don't worry about it. But instead, everyone okay with that, but I will blur everyone but I just have to make a picture of what we're doing here. Don't get me you don't have to just go don't go

Researcher 2

Yeah, do you agree with?

Participant D

Oh, wait, no, definitely no. I, this kind of reminds me of this, like, really old claim in psychology that being LGBTQI is a mental illness, because it was classified in the in the DSM five for a long time. And it's, I don't I don't know how it is at the moment, but I surely hope it's not so.

Participant C

Being trans in the DSM five is still a mental illness. But being gay was taken out in the DSM three year.

Participant D

So, like, being LGBTQA is not a mental illness, it's literally just like, same as gender, it's a cultural thing. These depressive symptoms that LGBTQIA people experience only comes from these like implicit and explicit forms of discrimination and microaggressions that they're faced with in their daily life. I mean, we've seen that when you're in a community where you accept it and we you don't get called slurs or you don't get like belittled for your lifestyle choices as they call it. That you can be queer and perfectly mentally healthy. And yeah, I don't think that you can equate that.

Participant C Agree with x.

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Participant B

That also when I think about like people are not thinking about like, oh, we have the press

Yeah, think about like the press people I usually think about like happy people. Yeah.

Participant F

I think that if you would have an environment or community where everyone was in the

LGBTQ i A plus community I see that everyone would be like, happy and fine. And I think if

you had a statement that said, being LGBTQIA plus goes hand in hand with the environment

that you're in, and how acceptive that environment is. That would be a statement I would

agree to. Yeah. Okay.

Researcher 3

Okay, then we had all our statements. Thank you very much for all your input.

Researcher 1

Yes, by the way, didn't hear us asking much, many questions. But that's because we wanted to let you all due to talking. And it's not for us to give advice or say anything badness in

response to it. So that's why. Next, we would like just quickly to get your insights on some

ideas for an eHealth intervention. Do you guys know what that might be is or a digital

intervention for mental health problems of LGBTQIA people? That, for example, Disha, our

supervisor might be able to develop, and she'd like some insights into your ideas about how to

develop something like that. So for example, if you make an app or something else, or

websites, what might be relevant for you to use it to overcome mental health problems? Or

what for other workshops maybe like this, something like this? Because this is called general

Jarrett, generative participatory design workshop. What would it make for you to use it?

Actually? I don't know if I explained that. Well, you guys can add?

Researcher 2

Yeah, maybe also, what is your opinion about participatory approaches, and that means that

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we include the potential users but in general, all stakeholders, so if like this eHealth intervention is developed, during the developmental process, all stakeholders or potential users would be included. So they can actually design the app for whatever. So yeah, it's about your like, opinion, when you think about that.

Researcher 1

For example, in second workshop for me that one that I want to do in you as well, yeah, you as well. I wanted to do a making mindmap together, so something like that. So do you have any ideas? Big sigh?

Researcher 2

Do you think it's a good idea to like, include all stakeholders?

Participant C

In general, yes. Because it's nice. If I am the target audience to use an app, then, of course, I would love if the things that I'm worried about or in the app, and that that's that the things that I care about are taken into account. Very difficult to say anything specific. But in general, yes, very, very positive feeling about being included no idea what an app might need. what my needs are for that, though, I think especially is.

Participant E

I think what would be nice is that often people don't know what is under area for support things that you already have. So also to just have an overview, okay, okay, based on your location, or whatever, I'm here suggesting you 10 places have LGBTQ friendly places where you for sure know that you can go, or places that you can go to for I don't know, for hormones, voice training, all the things that you people in the community might need or whether they are certain, I don't know, pride things happening or something like that. So it's just that you can see what helps available to you. And which private organizations or which communities you could maybe access because if you are feeling depressed, it's like likely that

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you may be a bit isolated from the community. And that could help you a lot. Not saying that the community is going to be equal to therapy and you are not going to be depressed out of the sun. But it does help a lot to have people like you around you. Yeah. Or to know where you can get help. So I would like to have an app especially. Yeah, if it's Netherlands, like, oh, I don't know what your target group is except for young, gay and depressed.

All

LAUGHTER

Participant E

Yeah maybe something like that. There are a lot of cute mental health apps like (finch), love it, there you have a little well being birdie and you do the tasks for your mental health and the wellbeing of the birdie and because it is externally motivated of course you do it. You can buy little shit for the birdie

Participant D

Yeah, it worked on me. I am a slave to the finch.

Participant A

But like she mentioned, if those things would be built in the app I wouldn't even care about how much the app is asking. Like what she mentioned, associations and queer-open places, if these were in the app I would definitely use the app. Definitely 100%.

Researcher 2

So connecting to the community or other like minded people?

Participant A

Yeah exactly like you were saying, like queer-friendly places, lets say a Salon, so something like that that would actually be really nice.

Researcher 2

That means that content should be included especially for queer people? Because it is often

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found that e-health interventions that are aimed at improving mental health are not really tailored to LGBTQIA+ people. And why also the participatory approach should help with that. So feedback provided by queer people should be included.

Participant B

Yeah maybe also include some events, like when there is a queer movie night or whatever, so that when you need something or want to do something and there is something going on and normally you just don't know all the queer places or events.

Participant A

Like all in an announcement screen.

Researcher 1

So the social aspect is super important.

ALL Yeah

Researcher 2 Is that it?

Participant A

Because like all these events, (inaudible) by date or by time in the app could be very much detrimental to the mental health because for a lot of people including me, when I'm feeling low or something, I just want to take my mind of something that's triggering me and want to do something that is distracting me. You know, I always prefer to go to a queer-friendly event. So I think that's very helpful for a lot of people.

Participant C

I think also when you have events like that, when you meet likeminded people you are able to cope with everything so much better, when you have that connectedness with people and like you said earlier talking about your problems is so good, it helps organising everything so well. And the third thing I just forgot....

Ah Yeah, what I also think is going to events like that, especially queer events helps so much

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because a lot of queer people through being closeted like to think about their problems really really hard, and when your problem is the way you think about your problems, then you cannot make any progress and you actually need to do something about it and go out and confront maybe anxiety by actually going to an event and having fun. That is so much more valuable than any other mental health stuff that is just „reflect on this“ and „think real hard on this“ again about the same thing, that doesn't lead anywhere.

Participant A

Yeah, true. Because I have been to therapy as well but even if I would have to choose between a queer-friendly event or a meeting with a therapist I would obviously go to the event because that makes me feel way better than talking to my therapist.

Researcher 3

Thank you!

Researcher 2

What do you think then is the value of the participatory approach?

So during the developmental process to actually include you for example.

Participant C

Well if you are trying to develop an app you want it to be working, and you only have people like checking off requirements what the app needs to do, if the only people who are looking at that only want to make a profit or having efficiency in the design, like if its the people who finance the project or the people who actually code app, they already have different wants and needs and if in your case psychologists want to developing a mental health app, but even you guys have that aim of improving health and if queer people are the only people who can give genuine insight on what the people you are trying to help need.

Researcher 3

Thank you!

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Researcher 1

Alright then I think that's it.

Okay, then I want to thank you all for coming and making time for this because it took your free time and yeah we are very happy that you also talked a lot and gave extensive answers, that is very helpful to us! We will be doing three separate second workshops with all of our different focuses: gender euphoria, strengths, and different depressive symptoms. So we might ask you to join there if you are available, we also might try to find other people for even more insights. I think we will do that within one or two or three weeks. So we might contact you again. So it will be a bit like this but (inaudible) So thank you again! Do you have any questions?

Participant C

Can we invite friends to those workshops?

Researcher 3

Yes of course!

Researcher 1

They need to be queer and in the age between 18-27 then it's all fine.

Appendix D

Transcript Workshop 2

Participant V

They're just like so fucking boring. So it's always so like this toy psychologist no literally you like social workers are the whole are so much more important than psychologist because psychologist literally just sit there and maybe 20% of the more competent. It's okay shade No really? Yeah. of actual therapist like, fully licensed.

Researcher A

Yeah. So...

Participant V

the rest I'm sure you want to drink something we understand what they're talking about.

Researcher A

That's perfect.

So we're going to start first thank you all for being here. Very, very happy. So maybe we can introduce ourselves. I mean, I all I know, most of you. So yeah, I'm X. I'm doing my bachelor's in psychology right now in positive psychology. And yes, I'm doing the second workshop on gender euphoria the first workshop was on mental health in LGBTQIA plus individuals in general. And yes, so everyone here, yeah. Basically.

Participant W

X, She/her.

Participant X

I go by he/him or they/them.

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Participant V

I'm X, he/she/they.

Participant Y

I also, she/her.

Researcher A

I am also she/her. Yeah, especially here. Okay, then. So the purpose of the workshop is to identify like, factors that evoke positive feelings of euphoria. That is the purpose of this workshop. And I want to explore that with you. So let's go. We're gonna start with a group discussion. So I would love to hear some thoughts view be great. So the first question is, are you familiar with the term of gender euphoria? And what do you understand with that term?

Participant V

When you're happy about how you experience or express your gender,

Researcher A

There are no wrong answers.

Participant Y

My intuitive thing about looking...

Participant X

for me to gender dysphoria is kind of this moment where I actually feel a connection with my body and my gender. Because usually, it's just like, Okay, I have a certain gender identity. And my body's just kind of like there as a vessel to like, move around and interact with the world. But when I do anything, like style my hair more masculine, or wearing my binder like I do right now, then my body just also fits what's in my head, and then using my body to interact with the world also becomes easier. And it's just like this euphoric experience of like,

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Oh, my God, yes, it works. This is how it's supposed to be. And this feels good and organic and right.

Participant V

I have a very similar experience of it. I'd say, for me, it's always like, I am, like, you usually don't really pay attention to it. Like I'll pay attention to how I walk sometimes, or like certain mannerisms. But when I suddenly find myself in a situation where I like, become aware of Oh, yeah, I'm like, this is a very, I'm feeling very feminine right now. And then I'm also doing something kind of in concordance with that. That's always like, oh, yeah, like, Oh, my God, I'm doing a thing. And I really feel good about how I'm expressing my gender identity and whatever I'm doing right now. It's not something I can really aim for, though. I feel like it kind of just happens when we're the Yeah, I'm suddenly aware of it. Interesting.

Participant W

Yeah, mostly saying. Yeah, I mostly feel genuine euphoria when I just feel myself. And I can actually do it on purpose by doing certain rituals. Like waist training. activating my legs.

Yeah, yeah. walking in heels. Yeah. Okay.

Researcher A

Okie dokie. So for the second question is, do you think gender euphoria is related to gender dysphoria? And in what way how they differ? Do you all know the term gender dysphoria?

Participant Y

I would say like, if you already dysphoric about it sometimes then you get more aware of the euphoric moments as well because then you also know how mismatch feels Yeah, and I think for a lot of people that grew up, says never question it at all. They might not experience much euphoria or dysphoria, either, or they just don't think much about it. Yeah, I would say like, that's, like what I never saw a lot of straight people talk about, oh, today, I'm so happy that I

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feel very masculine, feminine, androgynous whatever. So I would say yeah, it's related so that you have more appreciation for when it's actually in sync and, and match when you know how it feels when it isn't.

Participant X

Okay, in addition to that, like I fully agree, and I also think that gender euphoria and dysphoria is not a binary pair, but it's like more of a spectrum with like, the gender, I'd say indifference kind of where you like, it's just there, you don't really think or bother with it. Like Kanye said, with the with sis people like just not really thinking about it, because it's not really relevant to them right now. But I, it's just like this, this spectrum for me that I move around on, depending on how good I feel about my gender and gender expression. Now, just the expression, I'm always kind of cool with my gender, I've come to terms with it. But the expressions is always varies. And if I wear a dress, as a gender fluid person, sometimes I'm like, Yeah, this is this is cool. And sometimes I'm dysphoric. So it's just it's a spectrum.

Participant V

I feel like if I envision it as a spectrum, so you're either gender dysphoric, gender euphoric, or gender indifferent in the middle, if that's the conceptualization we're going with, I feel like I'm always like, slightly in gender dysphoria, like just slightly, not a lot, but always kind of slightly there. And then there's these moments of gender euphoria, where it's like, very aware, and like, oh my god, there's a big change. So I actually notice, but then, yeah, it honestly really just depends on context, what I'm who I'm with what I'm doing. Like if the if I go to the gym, I'll sometimes the completely indifferent to it, because I'm like, my, my gender is gym, right now. I'm just working out big weight. But then sometimes I'll be like, I'll notice that I do have a very masculine physique, being ginormous. And that kind of bothers me, but at the same time, working out as of medium for me to express femininity, strangely. So it's difficult

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to describe, but I like it's definitely flare ups of, of euphoria that are very noticeable. Okay.

Researcher A

Do you all agree?

Participant W

Yeah. Not, per se, though. Like I think sometimes the dysphoria, the euphoria can kind of be opposites, where one thing or a lack of a thing gives you dysphoria when you do to think if you knew for me, but also sometimes it is completely separate. Like there's not really an opposite of a certain euphoric offense or certain dysphoric effects. Like, you know, if you get hate crimes, there's no euphoric opposite of that. Yeah.

Participant X

Yeah. I also feel that euphoria and dysphoria can occur at the same time. So for example, the other day, I looked in the mirror, and I was like, really happy that my shoulders are getting super broad from working out. I was like, oh, yeah, big man. Big Man, big shoulders. And then I looked down at my waist and my hips. And I was like, well, that's not so cool. Let me just ignore that to not feel bad about it. So it can happen at the same time for me, but that's very rare. That can happen.

Participant W

Yeah, no, I had one step further, where the same thing will give me both euphoria and dysphoria like my abs. I'm like, Yeah, muscle memory, you will and then it's only because of the testosterone, I don't actually work out and I didn't want to have to at this point, it's like,

Participant V

you still have ABS even though you don't work out. It just depends on how visible they are. And you have like, no body fat, so you'll always have that.

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Researcher A

Okay, let's go on to the second and third question. And yeah, I mean, we already discussed it. I already shared a couple of moments where you experienced euphoria. Maybe you want to share some more? What did it feel like? Maybe we can go more deeper in that question. What specific emotions do you feel when thinking of it? It's I know it's hard.

Participant V

A lot of the times it's just comfort like, Oh, this feels normal. This feels right. It's just a it's just comfort. It's not like a really big HOLY SHIT I need to ... Are you right? No, I had gender euphoria. Euphoria. It's more like a relaxed, like, yes. Nice.

Participant X

I had that. One week ago, two weeks ago, I have no concept of time. But I finally saved up to buy a binder. And when it came in the mail, I was like, Oh, let me try that on immediately. And I had to, like, physically sit down on my bed, because I just felt like, everything was drained from me. And I was just like this. Like, for a moment, I felt completely numb, because everything was like, settling in. And then I cried my eyes out, because I was so happy that my chest was flat. Yeah. And it just was this, this also this moment of validation of like, seeing these changes on my body, and then also feeling good, and it feeling great. And it's, it wasn't like, it was not a party feeling. But it was like this. Oh, my God, finally, like finally, this something feels really, really right. And that is something that I can like, remember what makes me feel good. So for example, for comfort, I can just put on the binder and then be like, all's good. Awesome for now.

Participant W

Yeah, I don't even know where to start. Like, there's so many events of gender euphoria. But it's mostly me just being perceived the way that I perceive myself in my head. Yeah. Okay, so

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like external.

Participant Y

Yeah for me, I was like, as a teenager, very unsure, because I liked a woman. But I couldn't really conceptualize that, because I grew up a lot wrote a lot of heteronormativity. So I thought, okay, I must be more masculine than I thought, because I am drawn to woman but actually, I'm just a woman liking women and that was also quite confusing, and that I can also just be very feminine in my energy and everything, and still be attracted to other females or non binary people, etc. And for me, I also grew up around a lot of my mother's was quite a tomboy. And like a lot of people, my family are not there necessarily valuing classic, the feminine expressions of wearing dresses, etc. I don't really like that, and I have more dresses than the month has days. I like wearing those. And that was also for me, I didn't wear much at home of those more like when I moved out because I felt more comfortable with it because I wasn't being judged for it. So I'm necessarily the same experience, maybe, because I'm a cis woman. But I still find quite euphoric moments of being able to wear dresses or also, I also once or twice in my life wore binaural, like a sportswear that compresses things, and I would still, I still feel quite sick. But I like to play with my expression a little bit. And I feel comfortable enough in my femininity to do that. And don't feel any less feminine, even if I do that. And that's also a euphoric moment. It's just comforting. And also just gives you confidence to give be, yeah, be okay with who you are, and being able to express that. It's just feels very good. Very comforting. You. I don't know not so good. Words. Perfect.

Researcher A

So come forward, come forward.

Participant X

It feels validating to me. Yeah. Yeah. Especially if you like, think about something for a long

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time. And then you try it, and then it works. And you're like, Oh, yes, I was on the right path with that one. Yeah, it's validating.

Participant V

It's strange for me because the i Gender fluid, non binary, how I explained it to myself is that I fluctuate between masculinity and femininity a lot, but I never really hit either. And I'm never like, fully, I'm a man or I'm a woman. So I have, like a lot of masculine traits that I love expressing. But then also, I have a lot of feminine stuff that I love to do. So I always feel like the expressing masculinity. I don't get gender euphoria from that. Because it's the like, even though it is an expression of gender behavior or masculinity. I still don't get euphoria from that because it's not like it doesn't feel I don't notice it. You know, it's the I don't really notice it. Um, I pay way more attention to femininity because I was taught that that's opposite to my nature. That's not something that I inherently shouldn't have felt connected to. So noticing femininity and myself like oh my god, what the fuck? What's happening? And masculinity is just like okay.

Researcher A

Thank you. There were great answers. Um, yeah, I think we were doing this one. How has gender euphoria helped you in your journey of self discovery?

Participant W

Yeah, I think X already kind of started talking about it where you think something is right for you. And then you brood on it for a bit, and then you finally get to try it, and then it works out or it doesn't. And if it does work out, then it just feels so like you discovered something about yourself learn something. Yeah.

Participant X

Before I bought the binder, I also tried to tape my chest with like, sports tape, because I

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wanted to, like try it out first. And I was really shocked by how much euphoria it gave me. So that was like saying, like, Well, fuck, I gotta rethink, I got to think about this again. And I got to think where I stand gender wise at the moment. But it was very helpful, despite kind of like shaking my self image up for a moment. But I think if I hadn't done that, I would still be in this weird limbo of not knowing what's going on in my head. And now I know more, and I can be more proactive to make myself feel good about myself.

Participant V

For gender euphoria and self discovery, because so much of life is so gendered, and because masculine and feminine and androgynous X, like behavior are manifestations of those are so closely connected to, well, I wouldn't say everyone but how at least I see myself like I have everything through like this masculine and feminine lens where I can tell whether my behaviors are more masculine or more feminine. So in that sense, exploring gender euphoria, or like pushing the boundaries, what my gender is, and how I define myself was specifically like the self discovery period, or like the the big journey ongoing of self discovery. Because I think outside of gender, I'm like, people just people like to describe themselves in hobbies, maybe what they study. But that's all of that goes through your gender and your gender expression, and how you interact with the world is like everything is inaccurate of gender. So I think, being open there and discovering new ways to define yourself and how to express that gender identity is very, like deeply essential to self discovery. Otherwise, it feels like it might be a little sort of surface level.

Participant Y

Awesome. For me, it was more like a lot of femininity, if you grew up in a quite heteronormative environment is catered around impressing men, or getting the attention of men or pleasing men. So also for me, because to live my version of femininity, we're

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sometimes more androgynous expressions, it was for me to realize that it doesn't have to be catered to that, like, I can be a femme lesbian look like I want men to talk to me and I still don't. And, and that's just also like the thing that to that I can be feminine the way I want to, and I don't have to do it to a certain norm. And even if I technically fit in the norm doesn't mean that it I do it for the same reasons. Like I yeah, that's also like a thing that also helped me with my self discovery sort of that I can express my gender on my own terms, and I don't have to go by what other people say that I should do, or just because I express myself a certain way, that doesn't mean that people can put me in a box. Yeah. So that's also, yeah, that took me quite some time. And that it's definitely helpful to experience like, Okay, this feels right now, so I want to do that again.

Participant V

I wouldn't say even, but especially cis, people would, I think benefit from deeply and critically reflecting on their own gender identity and how, like how gender identity is expressed. Because like, on your side, you put yourself in a lot of boxes, and without reflecting on it, then how can you know your gender identity if you simply accept and how can you know anything about it if you simply accept something that you know as a given if you just accept, okay, I was like, I was born assigned male at birth, I'm told I'm a man. And that's all I need to know about my gender identity. If you never look at it and like try to find new ways of expressing it or pushing your own boundary, then yeah, how? How would you explore your own identity?

Researcher A

Okay, so you all agree that it has helped you or it was essential even. Okay.

Participant Z

I'm staying for a very short while, but I really wanted to see what makes me very happy.

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Okay, hopefully time chosen for many people. That's true.

Researcher A

That's true. But I wasn't able to submit the design web. So it is what it is now. So

Participant Z

Where was I interrupting you with...

Researcher A

We only do group discussion about gender euphoria. So we already had a couple of questions about like, whether you experienced it, how what do you understand under the term and in

Korea? And so on? So on? We'll just go on with the discussion. And, yeah, oh, yeah. Okay, and how do you navigate situations, but you may not be able to express your gender identity or experience gender euphoria. Do you even have like?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. When do you have these kinds of situations?

Participant V

With parents, so. And if with anyone who is who's sexist, or heterosexism, or sexist, anyone, like, if I know that a person has a negative opinion of queer people, I will be inherently and deeply distressed for the entire time that I have to be around that person. Especially if I am expecting them to also be if I expect that someone might say something, you know, like, I might know someone to be homophobic, but they haven't said something yet, I'm still expecting them to say something. And if I expect them, if there's a possibility, in any way of physical violence, then that's the absolute worst. But even just like verbally, I have zero, need to justify my own gender identity. We're explaining gender identity to someone who doesn't really want to understand it, they just wanted me to have to justify it. Zero Interest. It's so stressful, and it really hurts.

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Researcher A

So what how do you start with your situation? What is your strategy?

Participant V

Identity concealment. Yeah. Try not to talk about it. And if I my makeup, I usually either just golf or I like listening to rock. And, or I'm just gay, because that's easier than Jen. Like just saying you're gay or queer is easier than gender with genderqueer stuff. You know, where I try to, like, just avoid situations like that entirely. I'm on a Discord server that I'm starting to race again. Like it's GTA racing. And I've been out of it for like, a long time. And the first thing I did when they tried to get back into racing was contact the owner of the server and be like, hey, what's the what's the stitch? Am I gonna get hate crimes? And he was like, yes, yes. You will. 100% are prepared for the absolute worst prepare for constant harassment, constant having to justify yourself, I gave like, go back to the I gave like four hours of tech support to a guy the other day who in his bio has identify as a man who only is allowed to refer to people by something by like the correct pronouns, which will be determined by the person's true gender. So real Stockholm Syndrome by myself, they're avoided as much as possible accommodate no conflict.

Participant X

I feel the identity concealment a lot when interacting with my mother. Because I have, I'm out to her. I don't think she understands what non binary means. Um, but she keeps dead naming me and, like, took me a lot to actually then talk to her and correct her because I just took it. It was like, doesn't matter if she's gonna be gone at the end of the afternoon. Am I gonna see her for a couple months again? But yeah, it was just like, letting it wash over me and be like, I don't care. I don't care. I don't care. I don't care. But I did care. Until I finally stood up and were like, Hey, dude, stop. i That's not my name. Yeah. And with like, strangers, I don't really

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hide myself being clear, consciously, but I try to only really talk about it when I know that the other person that I'm talking to or interacting with is He's not going to like swing on me or something. Because it's had it's happened before and that was like that stopped me from talking about queerness openly with strangers. Yeah, well, trauma. Yeah.

Researcher A

That's what this is for. Yeah. Thanks for sharing. Thank you so much.

Participant V

I would like to say this out loud so that it's on the record. Did you put a half eaten nuts

Researcher A

Yeah, I didn't know that before. There's Pacific solar. Sorry, but it tastes like ass. Oh, okay. I wanted to get a good nut mix. I don't like this.

Participant Z

It could not make sense to you. But you shouldn't eat more than two since they have something that you shouldn't have more than two.

Researcher A

Those are really? Okay. Okay, so speaking of quantum fluctuations.

Participant Z

I also just came out of a practical where we have like mock interviews. And also just considering, like, if this would be a real thing, how open would I be about my gender identity? At that moment? You know, like, how worth is it?

Participant X

I'm to have a currently in my uni, I'm doing a gender studies seminar that is like, it's a weekly

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meeting. And I have not build up the courage to text my gender studies professor to be like, Hey, I would like to enter the Zoom Room with my preferred name because I'm like, My full name is still how I'm enrolled in that university. So it's automatically that name, but I haven't built up the balls, like send her a fucking email, even though she literally specializes in trans studies.

Researcher A

Yeah, yeah. It's still hard though.

Participant Z

To get it reinforced so much as like a safety mechanism or something that you and other situations due to not be heard them, like make sense that it's hard to, you know, look past that.

Participant X

It's slowly getting better. Especially with like, German licensure.

Participant Z

Okay, I'm going to go now, it was amazing listening.

Got Swing Trainig in 15 minutes. But it was, it was great. I hope to gain the most from and yeah, look forward to..

Researcher A

Hopefully, enjoy it. Good luck with training.

I think they are part of the participants. But I didn't know that they were coming

Participant V

They read it in the trans me support group, I assume. Because I put the room in there. Like not expect to know.

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Researcher A

Things I want to like maybe pull up to questions through that would be fine with you. And then do a break. Yes. Sounds good. Okay, so it works. timing wise. Yeah. I mean, like the transcripts? Oh, yeah, of course. Sure.

Participant W

I avoid the situations as much as possible. But if I really can't, I will just turn inside myself. So my headphones, I'll fidget with my rings. Yeah. I'll think about you know, previous times where I slayed Yeah.

Participant V

The thing is about those situations, like if there is a situation where you can't talk about gender stuff where you can experience those are usually like legitimately dangerous situations. Because you can't like people who you can't talk about gender identity with. If you really can't talk to them about it, then they usually have like, it's usually pretty dangerous because most people are like, oh, yeah, man, I don't care about what queer people who are trans people, they either yes, you know, there are people or they literally fucking hate genderqueer people and will argue to the death so you actually are exposing yourself very real physical dangers. Which sucks.

Participant Y

Yeah, I mean, sometimes it's gonna happen like I was explaining to my family that I'm dating and gender fluid person or a non binary person to pass on money. I remember very confused by that. And it wasn't like not my own gender identity that moment that there was concerned but one of my partner And before they even visited, I just sat down with my family. And I explained to them for two or three hours because they were also a bit tipsy. So it took really different. In some of them, they're not necessarily transphobic or homophobic, but often like

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understanding because they never been, like in their generation, people were still queer. But then their same sex partners were always acquaintances, or they roommates, it was never really acknowledged, they have very little knowledge about it. And then especially like the idea of just lesbian, gays is already exotic to them. So if you then introduce trans and non binary to them, then they're like, What the fuck is this now? And they act as if it would be something super unnatural, something trendy, which isn't it has been around for centuries, it's been around since the beginning of human cultures that we have, like records that go back 1000s of years. But yeah, that was just also annoying, because that way by explaining it before I answered them, like when my partner actually came to visit, they had to confront less questions. But it's not always possible, you cannot always drag people to the side and be like, Okay, quick debriefing. This is how this works. And not everyone is willing to listen or willing to treat you with respect. Because of this. Sometimes you can seek for, like a conversation and try to explain things. And also save, you don't need to understand that you don't need to completely be like, I'm cool with it. But you still need to show people respect, because there's still people, but you cannot have these type of conversations with everyone. And sometimes it's really just not safe. And it's really hard. Even if you are an ally in that situation, to really make that call, can I now give someone sit down with them and give them this talk? And then afterwards, they're gonna have some understanding of it? Or should I not because I put myself and the other people in danger. And it's always like this very tricky thing that you need to decide. And also you don't owe people an explanation, but also you kind of want to because he didn't want to don't encounter this again.

Participant V

You know, the others I should you know, the other thing there is also most like, it's really fucking difficult to explain gender identity and non binary gender identities, for example, to people like, oh my god, it's so difficult if you don't exactly know yourself, because people

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will always have more questions about it, like, oh, I don't understand this point. And if you can't, if you like, are in a situation where you might be trying to explain it, but you are struggling to explain it, then that can be even more hurtful, because then you get people, then you get what people have now, where you have a very large group of relatively hateful people who all understand gender identity as this in like complete departure from nature's given order. And as this completes, like, all neologisms, like all words are new and everything, and it's like, sex and gender are completely different things. That's all super fucking hard to understand. Especially even more to explain.

Researcher A

Yeah. Okay, we go with the last question. Wait, no. Yeah.

Like you already gave, so, so much input that I am, like, I think like the last question we already answered, kind of, but I don't want to take it away. So we're just gonna do it. I hope you're not a like, maybe it'll take a bit longer than that. Okay. So do you think that any challenges or barriers to exploring gender euphoria that are unique to transgender and non binary individuals, but we already like?

Participant X

One barrier to exploring gender euphoria is that for example, there's also just personal experience when I talked to my parents, like years back, when I wanted to have a more androgynous haircut, my my parents literally looked at me and were like, do you want to be a boy? And just assume that just because I want to be more androgynous or less feminine, because I'm FF, right? Yeah, that I immediately have to like catapult myself on the other end of the gender spectrum and be like I'm a boy now. And when I then wore a dress, they were like, well, but weren't you going to be a boy you know, and just this expectation to like, immediately know what fits and this expectation to like be put from one box to the other box

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to the third box back to the first box. Its course it's annoying, and it's just such a such a weight on your shoulders when you're just trying to explore and when you're just trying to see like, hey, this might not be it. I still want to have tried it like I I fucking hate red wine. I still have tried red wine to see if I do like it. It's the same with I've tried a certain haircut and then realized while I fucked up this is a shit haircut. But I have still tried it. So no, I know more. Instead of this, well, I'm unsure. So I'm not going to do it. But just like then this this reaction of well, you are now this because you've done this and there is no no discussion as to if there is nuance to your actions and your intentions and feelings. But it's just like, you want to want to flip the switch. Okay, cool. You are one no, you can go back to zero. Yeah. It's always just like this binary. And yeah, but the gender binary is just the dumbest fucking thing in the world. Because why not even sex characteristics are binary. And yeah. But they don't want to hear that that's true.

Participant Y

Yes, just the access to medical care that you might need. Like if you are non binary or trans, you might need different access to hormones to different treatments that you might want to have. Or just the psychological help that you might need to figure shit out. Or to cope with the fact that how your environment reacts to it mostly right? I mean, you like usually you reached a point where you're fine with your identity, but at some point, it just becomes a struggle, whether everyone around you will be fine with it.

Participant V

All challenges to exploring gender euphoria are unique to trans and non binary people as a blanket statement, because for sis people to explore or to feel gender euphoria, those are already

deeply embedded in our society as correct. A woman going to or sis woman going to get BVL

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and laser hair removal and a guy getting Viagra. That's all Viagra is literally just gender affirming hormone therapy, a BBL laser hair removal, teeth whitening, boob jobs, like liposuction, all of that is gender affirming care, that trans and non binary people categorically are refused access to, on the basis that their exploration of their gender identity is deviant from societal expectations.

Participant W

Word I haven't even smoked this yet, I think makes me so angry. But there's also a lot of things are pointed to gender like clothes and clothing stores, frozen shifts, so it's true.

Participant Y

Also forms like a lot of forms. Like if you at a university or any other official stuff, like there's always just male, female or like, university put like, what was it

Participant X

intersexual and transgender? That's not even correct. Like

Participant V

what the hell that is? That was my highlight. Correct? That is very, very offensive. That

Participant X

was my personal highlight of we're trying to be inclusive, but we're massively failing.

Researcher A

We don't understand.

Participant X

I wasn't even offended. I was just like crying laughing because that's the only way I knew how to deal with it because it's just so violently stupid. And I did not expect it from the

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university.

Researcher A

Asked what what was it?

Participant V

It was the mobility online and Osiris, I asked for your gender. And the options were male, female, transgender, and trail and intersexual. Now male and female are not genders.

Transgender is also not a gender and intersexual. It's intersex. intersexual doesn't exist. Even then. The preferred term is inter so many, many, many things that went wrong there, but we're ready. We're getting them to change and I'm sending the email tonight probably if Anastasia doesn't reply.

Researcher A

Nice, that's good. That's really good. Okay, so we already talked about it a little bit, but do you balance the desire to experience gender euphoria with other needs for example, it needs to feel safe or to feel any other needs

Participant W

I'm buying more things and they would make me happy. But

Participant X

I personally wouldn't, for example, not wear a binder to a family gathering. Because I, I, for example, know that my uncle is violent. Like, I have one gay uncle and one violently homophobic uncle. So whenever they're together in a room with so it's a there's some tension. But I, for example, wouldn't want to be confronted with that. So I kind of decide to what's in English. Not do it. Yeah. I decided to like, just refrain. Yeah, I refrain from pursuing my gender euphoria, because I know that there's more value for my mental state, that if I go to

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this event, and not get harassed, yeah, just for my identity, always unprovoked. Because I don't talk to it about, I mean, you can see that I'm not straight, I don't look like a straight person. And when I then have like, some opportunity to make myself look more straight and go stealth, to be safe, and at least have some peace of mind and not stress during that event. And I value that more than just wearing a binder, I can always then like, cope at home, smoke some weed and where the binder compensate for what I had to go through.

Participant Y

Used to take off my pride symbols when I went to work at festivals where I know the area was very conservative, or where I knew from crimes against queer people that happened there recently. So when I worked apartments, or were just recently someone got stabbed, like a trans student got stabbed. So I was like, Yeah, straight passing privilege, which is, I'm just not having that conversation today. And also not dealing with people. Sometimes just not worth it. Yeah, somebody got stepped.

Participant W

Was this like the trans guy that stood up for other people.

Participant Y

to work at that bar, not that night. But like a different bar. Different, same city. So I'm not wearing the symbols anymore there. Because it's not worth the risk because I, as a feminist will have to strip passing privilege. And I'm using it in situations where I think I'm not safe. So if I'm here working for the city, I can wear them and most of the times I will say what if I'm home, like on my way home late at night? Like also, I will just, I mean it doesn't send me to January for it, but then I will dress more masculine or just appear more like that and hide everything that might be in any way. lead to some aggression just because of the fact that I'm queer or that I'm a woman. I mean, killer combo.

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Researcher A

So anyone else wants to add something?

Participant V

I would just say finances. Yeah. It really is a lot for finances. There is a beautiful Adidas white three skirt. That is just no beautiful. It's so nice. Such a nice construction. It's 350 bucks.

Participant Y

Can you buy secondhand on a tinted? Yeah, or something similar.

Participant X

We should go to a tentacle. They have large sizes and skirts.

Participant Y

Or something around us. A lot of nice skirts for tennis. They're not that expensive. Yeah, but

Participant V

I want you to have a spirit that I can prance on. You know, I need a skirt that I can pass off as a kilt. I can't just wear a skirt right now. Okay. We're getting there. Yeah, not yet. Yeah. You're doing when I have 85% bottom. When I have 85% muscle mass muscle mass then sure

Participant Y

Then then maybe then number but okay.

Participant V

Big weight. Big way. Anyways,

Researcher A

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So I think we're supposed to break. We're actually like..

Participant Y

Do some shenanigans with those papers. And again, like, we are doing something.

Researcher A

It's just like it's super cool word. I don't know what it means. Yeah, cool. Yeah.

Participant X

Yeah, word for word.

Researcher A

Yeah, we just in the second exercise, I'm gonna ask you Yes to do something oh okay.

Participant X

No.

Participant Y

Cigarettes.

Researcher A

For the last exercise of the workshop, basically I want you to visually envision like a future where like feelings of gender euphoria like a standard in non binary and transgender people and I want you to think of things or have you have anything that you would need or that you can think of that a society needs to get to that point.

So, when you I want you to write that down if you think of anything any aspects how abstract can I be, if I can explain Do you can say whatever you want like only for tgnc people or also like for everyone as I would write actually for everyone Yes, actually for everyone but yeah,

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yeah. So and you can get like you can have some cards and you can just write some down and in the end, we want I want you to to kind of discuss what is like, do you see the circles the small circle is like where you put the stuff which is most important in your like, in your opinion and what is not so important you can put on the outside what is still important but not like yeah, not a main priority.

Participant Y

Like priority that we give them?

Researcher A

Yeah, kind of what would you think is unnecessary.

Participant W

Yeah. What about if something's like more indirectly allowing more people to feel gender euphoria?

Participant Y

That would be more on the Arctic Circle I?

Researcher A

I think Yeah. Yeah. You can later like you can discuss you can also discuss with each other maybe make some revisions or whatsoever.

This one is I hope so.

Participant X

I will elaborate I can't really specify take a quick break writing down the full acronym so long. Really nice handwriting!

Participant V

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I was looking at your drawing and I was like What letter is she writing?

Researcher A

Not really a letter I was just also waiting to be your fifth.

Participant X

Can I take back my one of my cards?

Participant W

When you write gender conceptually what do you mean when you write down gender the word conceptually what do you mean?

Participant W

We talking gender performative theory or gender essentialism.

Participant V

I don't know when you write it down what do you what do you think

Participant X

literally umbrella term for anything gender, because that is for example, when you say you want sex and gender education then that means teaching about everything that falls under the gender umbrella term.

Participant V

Expression of....

Participant X

Like gender identity, like weird as like just feminist studies.

really if you want to, like you just need proper like education and like feminist stuff.

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Participant X

I sound so unqualified I've been studying this for months now.

Researcher A

I don't think so

Participant V

I don't think so. I think that's a difficult concept for that that's why I asked and I think what you said makes sense.

Participant X

Oh, like a retrospective interesting way I can also board a different think I can't really think of more.

Researcher A

We don't have to push. I think like if you really have to, like, push, like to get new ideas. I think you then you already have like, the most important thing. So yeah, we're just gonna do it. Yeah. Couple of minutes.

Participant V

Because it's, there's, there's something I want to say.

Researcher A

Okay, so so we all have everything right. Okay. So I'm thinking about how we want to do it either way we

Participant V

This way, even. That's kind of putting my let's do this this way. Yeah. And then we go into the middle.

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Researcher A

That's perfect. Yeah. Okay, let's do it like this.

Participant V

Universal gender affirming health care. Yeah, we that's all gender affirming care is, like covered by Universal like by health care and that health care is universal, although because what I said earlier, a lot of things are gender affirming care. So you also need to consider that the medical infrastructure needs to be of a certain, like a certain way so that that could work. But that's Yeah, I think that's important so that everybody can you know, if they feel like they need to change something about themselves to feel more like themselves, then they should be able to do that.

Participant Y

I had some middle because I think that's the thing that needs to happen is like one of the main priorities.

Participant W

I put no medical gatekeeping Oh, yeah. I guess. Yours is specifically about financial gatekeeping.

Participant V

Yes, but also like, oh, yeah, awesome. Yeah, medically, but I guess this was more financially. So that's actually also really a good aspect because it is super restricted, right. I'm living in a naive world.

Participant W

Yeah, like, even without a waiting list. There still restrictions on when you get allowed to do things. Yeah.

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Participant V

That's so terrible. I swear to god. Yeah.

Participant X

So no, what? No. So where would you put like, Okay, two things. You put it like in here and yeah, I put it in?

Participant V

Yeah, yeah. It definitely goes into center. Okay.

Researcher A

Okay, so we all agree on that to do administrative, non gendered language in, okay.

Participant Y

Maybe I just, I'm gonna say stuff that like that you are allowed to, in official documents or interested in your official institutions, whoever responsible for you, that you can choose your pronouns and the way you want to be addressed? Without much bureaucratic shit needed.

Because currently, it's an absolute nightmare if you want to change your pronouns, or if you want to just make sure that you know, like the email and the company you work for actually addresses you with Sir ma'am, or just like deer without any agenda. Like it's really not much effort, but they make such a big fuss about it. But actually, it's a really small thing. Right? I think guys, just unnecessary barriers, unnecessary barriers that are there and I think that everyone's life would be so much easier.

Participant V

In a lot of ways, it's like the singular they it would be easier than saying he or she is just saying they is way easier, grammatically correct. But no, that's that's somehow the limit. You can just use a name when you address someone instead of Dear Sir or Madam.

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Participant X

Your battery has been low for a while. Just wanted to make is it? Just wanted to make sure that the phone doesn't die on you.

Researcher A

70 percent so it is going to be fine. Thank you. Thank you, Gene. 17. Yeah, yeah, it's strong it goes wrong.

Participant W

And what category?

Participant X Language one.

Participant Y

I think that's like, important, but it's not one of the main things that necessarily is I'm like, I would say the focus of the Gemba. Turning care is way more pressing. But it's still important. So I would put it in the second or the first one, not the first one.

Participant X

Like, I would put it in the second one. Because while it is not. Well, there's no wait. I think that's like one of those more subversive. I don't want to call them micro aggressions. Yeah. Because that feels weird to me right now. But if I have to, like, read, like a letter from I had a fuss with the insurance here. And they kept like, writing. Hello, ma'am. You know, and that was, this was so disorienting, just so annoying to have to deal with that. And because it's so much, but you never really noticed that. Like, you don't have that much of an intense reaction. But there is a reaction and that all just falls away. It would be really nice. It would be really, really nice. So I would put it like it's quite important. Okay, first or second?

Participant Y

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Second.

Researcher A

So, I moved this bit further than it was this one, right? Yes. Everything is important. Yeah.

Basically, that is so hard. It's so hard.

Participant X

Yeah. Well, let's see. Let's see.

Participant V

systemic changes. Paper paperwork, stuff. Probably just paperwork stuff.

Researcher A

Yeah, that's true. Okay, then we got on with the integrating LGBTQ

Participant X

integrating LGBTQ plus culture into the existing canon. So like, your history and art. Yeah.

So like, you've queers their history back. It's, I would put it like pretty far on. Like, it's not

like I'm the last one. Not really that important, but I think it would be also validating

experience to like, know that. You have existed for a long time and like just as affirming care.

Like, like, is the firm off? You're doing good. shoddy. Yeah. give queers their history back.

Yeah. Okay.

Participant Y

Because often it's omitted. Like, if you learn about queer people in history class, it's just never

mentioned that the queer that later. Yeah. And you find these articles with guests who was

queer. And then there's like, these whole research publications about their work just

roommates? Sure, sure.

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Participant V

So many guys, were just roommates. Oh, my God. Yeah. It's insane.

Researcher A

Yeah, promotion of self discovery of identity and expression.

Participant X

Chef, this girl. Yeah.

Participant W

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, if we make everybody strictly adhere to traditional gender norms, then?

Yeah.

Participant V

Yeah, I think especially the promotion part. Like not just, it's accepted, or you could do it, but it's, you should do this. That's what I said. Like I said that earlier with, I think cis, the/ people even if, like, you are very convinced that you cis still explore, push your boundaries, you will learn a lot about yourself, and you will come out with a more complete person.

Participant W

But that wasn't really sure where to put it. This it's like, not something that can you can really point to like, this is how we're gonna do it.

Participant V

I think this is very similar to this. Yeah. Yeah.

Participant Y

It's more about changing like the norms right? Now. That's, I think that what will happen, hopefully also naturally throughout, like these more systemic changes, but it's definitely like a

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long term goal that you cannot just like,

Participant V

yeah. And I said that promotion of self discovery was similar to sex and gender, education, politics code that is further in the center so that we know what it was later.

Researcher A

Okay, so So shall we put it more into center?

Participant V

I think it already is. Yeah, yeah. Okay.

Researcher A

Are we going gonna go on with this one? Yeah, I think so. Classification Shouldn't have mental conditions cannot be diagnosed based on gender identity expression.

Participant V

Yes. Yeah, right now gender dysphoria, in the DSM five and the ICD 11 actually have the exact same phrasing. It's the I don't know, the phrasing, though, I just know that they're the same. But the is the distress about, like an incongruence market and persistent incongruence about your gender identity, and your physical or your gender assigned at birth, physical six characteristics. And that distress is the part that justifies it as a mental disorder. Because, of course, you know, you're you if you think you're trans, and that stresses you out, because it's like, holy shit, you know, society fucking hates trans people, I'm I might be trans, this is a stressful situation. Then, if a psychology or if a therapist goes, aha, gender dysphoria, you are distressed because of your gender identity, I diagnosed you with gender dysphoria, then that distress when that diagnosis can justify a conversion therapy. And, like, hate also just concealment, don't talk about it. Conversion therapy is literally the worst thing in the world.

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And not obviously not the worst thing. Pretty bad. And it justifies it. And it's still, that's still the senator, that's yesterday, we're still relying on that. And that's kind of rough, because conversion therapy is also still happening.

Participant Y

But I would say that can, you can only do that, because if there is free medical health care for everyone and the medical gatekeeping. But like, currently, the way the system is working now, is that you also need the diagnosis to get also a gender affirming care. Always trans. So this is always like this weird trade off like okay, now currently, we still need it, even though we know it's kind of bullshit. But, like I That's why I also feel like, but we would technically not need that anymore. So I don't know where to put it. To be honest.

Participant W

The conflict is that insurances will only pay for things that are like medically diagnoseable, but being trans is not a medical thing. And also, trans people do need the health care system, but they're not patients. So there's this word called Deep Breath localization. Yeah. So yeah, don't treat trans as a disease.

Participant X

Yeah, basically.

Participant V

Nice. I did not know that.

Participant Y

I think that's a priority also. Because that's really currently being like this stigma of being mentally ill or just not knowing what you want, or blah, blah, we just being confused. A lot of people still don't believe in the validity of those identity. So that's also just,

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Participant V

it's so crazy. How many people can't like just seemingly can't possibly imagine that someone else's experience could ever be different from their own. From their own expectations to it's crazy, like, literally people will go Oh, but I'm a man. And I'm like, okay, cool. That's your gender identity. You identify as a man. No, no, I am a man. And it's like, what fuck are you saying? Like Yes. Be masculine. Be a man feel good about that. Express your gender identity.

Why are you coming at me?

Researcher A

Okay, so we gotta hurry up a bit.

We got what? gender neutral bathrooms and safe spaces?

Participant Y

Yeah, I think we need them because they will change more cultural acceptance. So that it's not like super weird like on campus. We have some gender neutral bathrooms, but not all

Participant W

of those are directly gifts. gender euphoria.

Participant X

Yeah, we're using the bathroom. Yeah.

Participant Y

I just think that would help. But this is this wasn't more like a day to day thing that would help but not a systemic change. Like I don't know where to put it like maybe second or third. I don't know where to second what was it? gender neutral bathrooms.

Researcher A

Then we have sexual and gender education in school. I also read it like in the center.

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Participant X

Yeah, I put them in the center. Education one. Yeah. To end that people are just not educated and that a lot of the stigma comes from like, just not understanding. Yeah. And if you like It's a it's a whole, like can of worms that I could open with, like, by going into the education. But I think that especially that sex and gender education is more important, as well as politics too. Because if we're talking about the like, how to get to gender euphoria being the standard, then you also need not only transphobes to get educated, you also need queer people to organize them politically, to also, you know.

Participant V

You know, what the thing is rise up against the oppression, with education, especially in schools, you have a like, if you know the argument, like oh, you know, okay be be whatever you want, like the non binary, trans, we don't care, but keep it away from the kids, right? Children. Children are too young to understand queerness children are like, you know, they are they just be confused. No, short, like children can very much be trans and be sure about that and understand their gender identity, it's a matter of education and openness, whether you actually explain to your children well, that you like that, they might feel like they're more masculine or more feminine, and that they can express it and export that freely. If you explain it to children properly, then in like, you educate them, and you give them an environment where it's okay to explore stuff like that, then, and also in terms of sexuality, even though their children they might have preferences for like, just for who they want to hang out with, just in terms of friendships, because you just have, you know, like a kid, kids like to just hang out with other kids. And it's so much space for them to explore gender expression, but it's not taught it's not okay. It's, it's only boys and girls, and everything else will just confuse them. They're very much capable of an understanding. There's plenty of examples of kids who are trans or non binary, or in who understand their gender identity. Because they were actually

explained well.

Researcher A

We all agree that it's probably ghost in the middle, right? Yeah.

Participant X

Yeah. Yeah.

Participant V

Education is what?

Participant Y

Isn't it readings?

Participant X

Yeah, reading.

Researcher A

So the next one is cultural changes, good, accurate cultural representation in the media to combat stereotypes. Yeah.

Participant Y

That was kind of the same argument as with the education I think that just like often it's just about queer suffering and just kill the gay strobe you just see all the like, when do you actually see a trans woman who doesn't get killed on screen just for being trans for example, like it in so many storylines, dangerous die, and just never really also, but to you for? So what was what was the dysphoria? I think it would also just help to, like Zuul like, just queerness

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like the token queer best friend or the token queer, like in some shows, and it's always just stereotypes. Yeah. People like didn't think they never encountered a queer period person. They just don't know. They're very weird ideas about us.

Participant V

The Last of Us show did it so well with Frank and Bill. It was absolutely yeah, it was so beautiful. It's an it's a whole episode. It's like almost an hour. Just about these two guys falling in love. And then you like at the very, very, very end of the story. Like the main characters come back in. And they don't even eat. It's crazy.

Researcher A

Oh, yeah, I heard so much good about the show. It's

Participant V

just like this insane character study. Yeah. And then you got even five minutes.

Participant X

There's an argument that is the killer. Because yes, they both die at the end, but they die voluntarily. Yeah. And it's the apocalypse. So no.

Researcher A

No, oh my god.

Participant V

About the apocalypse.

Participant X

I Yeah, but I wanted to add that it is. Yeah, I

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Participant V

I get it six years.

Researcher A

Okay, so do do do do do

Participant V

Is it education?

Researcher A

No, there was representation in the media. Important but not as important as education.

Participant V

And we're here. I think it's the next word. Yeah, I think so.

Researcher A

Okay, so where are we at?

Participant V

No this was mine, we've talked about this every time.

Researcher A

Yeah, no, we have not talked about that. No body shaming celebration of all body types.

Preach Okay, no, of course.

Participant V

Thank you. Oh, good luck finding it.

Researcher A

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Okay, so

Participant X

yeah, like stop minding other people's business. Yeah, yeah. Like literally stop bothering people for their bodies. Like that's like that's the most fundamental part of you being in the world you have a body

Participant Y

Yeah, and you you don't choose the bottom of it like the fact just fuck off. Don't comment on it. Like even if we all would have the same diet and exercise the same way we would also look different people. And what's what's wrong about that?

Participant X

What does it matter ?

Participant V

I think for a way bigger like societal systemic change. We need to abolish things like fast food and garbage food and produce higher quality organic food that we can all enjoy that's very like a large variety of different things. Still, but none of this super terrible McDonald's burger fries fat for your health arthritis bullshit that kills people every year a pandemic us Oh my god. You know in the wall e movie in those the people

Researcher A

Yeah, I just watched it Yeah, man. That's crazy. I'm so scared that we get there I'm so scared okay fuck no I don't want to. So gender neutral bathrooms and setting up the we already have gender neutral was already had make clothes for all body types

Participant W

Yes. Certain heels so common circumstances so.

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Participant V

I can't even buy men's shoes. Yeah

Participant W

The same for like large breasted people.

Participant Y

Yeah some tops I don't fit in some sort of some an Excel someone and then meanings s just doesn't make sense.

Participant V

Oh, but also universal clothing sizes and made to certain centimeter Sanders instead of all the different outfit? Let L be an L yeah. Just take you the. Anyways.

Researcher A

So this one actually center, anti discrimination laws, legal protection, equality and in front of front of the law.

Participant Y

You are treated the same way like same sex marriage. Same sex couples can also adopt.

Participant X

Abolished death sentence for being gay. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, like

Participant V

and further also bodily autonomy. In America, you can get the death penalty for aborting.

Like literally right now. They just passed the law. They made it the death penalty again.

Yeah.

Researcher A

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I can't believe that.

Participant W

I just pulled up the autonomy Canada encapsulate some of the earlier things he also talked about this medical gatekeeper. Yeah.

Participant X

But like, yeah, that is pretty fundamental and bodily autonomy.

Researcher A

Yeah.

Then in the middle we have equity.

Participant V

Equity is where equality is the equal access to resources. Equity is a distribution of resources so that everybody is able to succeed in the same way. Still on a spectrum, but you're all getting there. It's not just throw a thing there and say, Oh, you but you had the opportunity. Actually try to get everyone there. It's the basic principle of forgot the Yeah, it is communism. It's like to everyone how much they need and from everyone how much they can give for something like that.

Researcher A

Okay, so we all agree that this belongs in the middle? Yeah. Then free gender affirming care for everyone. Yeah.

Participant X

I mean, it's health care and health care should be free too. Yeah.

Researcher A

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Okay. Original, or is orc is original, right? Organized, organized. Oh, I don't know what it means. well organized. Okay. Organized religion

Participant X

also organized organization. Yeah. So, okay.

Researcher A

Nice. I learned a lot.

Participant V

No, you're okay.

Researcher A

Okay, organized religion is

Participant W

what those comments do it's carpet.

Participant V

What's happening? Are you okay?

Participant X

No one getting bullied.

Researcher A

Hey, no bullying here

Okay, so organized religions abolished globally, study.

Participant V

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It's not religion, it's organized religion.

Participant X

Please finish.

Researcher A

Okay, we study it. And, oh, yeah, and yeah, and some remain spiritual.

Participant V

So spirituality is a wonderful spirituality is great for your health, and it's great for your mental health, and for your outlook on life. Organized religion is garbage. Because organized religion is like, that's the institution of the church. It's there's Christianity. And then there are those who pervert Christianity, to serve their own purpose, and to meet their own goals so that they can have authority over the people who identify themselves with affiliate themselves with that organized religion. And that cannot exist at the same time as pure spiritual and bodily autonomy over yourself, because organized religion always implies that you need somehow or that that organization somehow needs something from you. It can't just exist in a vacuum. It needs people and for those people to serve its purpose and that's not healthy for anyone it's what that's why that's also the separation of church and state. If you once again America have the like anti abortion laws in the transgender healthcare or gender affirming care bans all of that is just a function of oh it's against God it's not natural by God that God made Adam and Eve and so you can't Yeah and also Abortion is murder because God's you kill a soul or whatever. And then because that you they use that to justify controlling people and controlling their bodily autonomy. Yeah. Spirituality.

Participant W

I think that's a bit of a leap to say that organized religion should be banned. At the moment all

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organized, religion is doing shit. Yeah,

Participant Y

I also think that's a bit sparser because I do think you have to give people some freedom to express their religion. But as long as their religion doesn't discriminate against anyone else, they can do whatever the fuck they want, you can have your freedom. Freedom means that you can take up your second ticket mine, and we just don't, like don't necessarily interfere as long as or, you know, like, There's this quote like your freedom stops where someone else's freedoms begin so it's always a bit about this. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, we can slip, organize religion as long as you don't hate crime people move the reasoning of organized religion I'm completely fine with you were praying, we're doing whatever the fuck you want.

Participant V

Organized religion though isn't the same as being part of a religious community or being spiritual in a religious community having sharing the same faith, organized religion really goes into that idea of a hierarchy things like the pope somehow being closer to God than you. And you needing to go to the church and confess your sins in this box to be atoned or needing to pray in this church and get like give them money like donate. In olden times with in Germany where you could, I forgot what it was called, but you had to pay a plus 100 Thank you that. That is, that's the organized religion. I mean, I fully agree with what you said. Absolutely. I think that religious communities are still a great source of or a great social resource. But the the part where it gets hateful.

Researcher A

For some reason I disagree with you. Yeah. So maybe my mum put it in the middle, put it in center, put it in. What do you say?

Participant V

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Oh, the middle isn't the center.

Researcher A

Oh, yeah. No, no, it's the center. No, the middle is not the center. It's the middle center.

Participant X

I would say put it in the middle. Yes. Because there's so controversially Exactly

Researcher A yeah, yeah.

Participant X

So like, Yeah, but it's a good starting point. You know, for that kind of

Researcher A

Yeah, so we get go to the last one which is legal recognition of LGBTQIA plus people in all countries.

Participant Y

First priority on the screen. Like we are criminals and what 70 countries or so do you know?

Participant X

113 But the death sentence is in 13,14 and current and no same sex marriage is not recognized in 113 Being gay is a crime in like about 70 or 79 that sentence is punishable by death in 13 countries fun fact there's this is this inter like this one of the trends inter queer exhibit in the city.

Researcher A

Oh, oh yeah, I just saw it. Oh yeah.

Participant V

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That's so like wow,

Researcher A

I didn't have the time I just would like to so

Participant V

yeah, going back it's so worth it.

Participant W

Where is it ?

Participant V

In the city center by medikamente, die Grenze, it's literally just like a bunch of photos outside the canvas. It is really sick. It's between cancer and decadelong

Participant W

Oh, nice. Nice.

Participant V

It's insane. We walk there we read everything and x reads way quicker than me. So I really try to keep up and then as we left like somebody sat down and started crying and like ah, I felt so bad. I was frozen no idea what to do. Anyways, what else is there? Was that it?

Researcher A

That was it actually that was so these were I'm just gonna make a photo quick photo.

Participant V

But these were in the center.

