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### **Where voices are heard: An exploration of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) identity in the UK**

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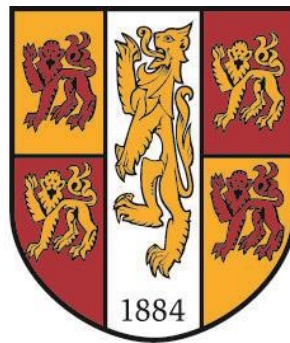
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**Where voices are heard:**

**An exploration of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) identity in the UK**

Jessica Stolberg

North Wales Clinical Psychology Programme



PRIFYSGOL  
**BANGOR**  
UNIVERSITY

Submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

Doctorate in Clinical Psychology

June 2022

## Table of Contents

<b>DECLARATIONS, ABSTRACT &amp; ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Declaration .....	5
Thesis Abstract.....	6
Acknowledgements .....	7
<b>CHAPTER ONE: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>The experiences of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) people in the United Kingdom: a meta-synthesis of qualitative research .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Abstract.....	11
Introduction.....	12
Objective .....	15
Method .....	16
Rationale for meta-synthesis .....	16
Data collection.....	17
Search procedure and outcome.....	18
Quality appraisal.....	19
Analytic procedure .....	24
Researcher reflexivity.....	24
Results.....	25
Summary of included studies.....	25
Meta-synthesis findings .....	26
Theme 1: Bound by the binary.....	32
Theme 2: Taking a risk .....	36
Theme 3. Knowing oneself.....	39
Discussion .....	44
Implications and recommendations .....	47
Limitations.....	49
Directions for future research.....	50
Conclusions .....	50
References .....	52
Appendix A – Data extraction form.....	60
<b>CHAPTER TWO: EMPIRICAL PAPER.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Discourses of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) people in the UK news press: A Foucauldian Exploration ....</b>	<b>62</b>
Abstract.....	63
Introduction.....	64
Rationale for research.....	67
Research aims.....	68
Method .....	68
Design and analytic approach .....	68
Ethics .....	70
Phase 1: Data collection .....	70
Phase 2: Data analysis .....	74
Sampling .....	74
Analytic procedure .....	74
Reflexive summary.....	76

Findings.....	77
Demographic observations .....	77
Foucauldian Discourse Analysis .....	77
Key concept 1: Valued Knowledge – Unvalued Knowledge .....	79
Key concept 2: Claiming Space – Denied Space.....	83
Key concept 3: Threatening - Threatened .....	87
Key concept 4: Monitoring-monitored .....	94
Discussion .....	100
Observations and Implications.....	104
Strengths and Limitations .....	106
Directions for Future Research .....	108
Conclusion .....	109
References .....	110
Appendices Index.....	117
Appendix A: University ethics approval .....	118
Appendix B – Final dataset considered for analysis.....	119
Appendix C – Articles analysed .....	122
Appendix D – Supporting quotes for findings .....	130
Appendix E – Example article .....	135
<b>CHAPTER 3: REFLECTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY AND PRACTICE .....</b>	<b>138</b>
Introduction.....	139
Statement of positionality .....	140
Implications for theory development and future research.....	143
Implications for clinical practice .....	147
Reflections on the research process .....	151
References .....	157
Appendix A – Qualification from Maastricht University .....	160

**DECLARATIONS, ABSTRACT & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

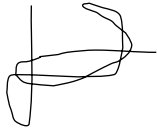
## Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

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Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jessica Stolberg', written over a horizontal line.

Jessica Stolberg

## Thesis Abstract

*“Hope is part of the human condition and trans people’s hope is our proof that we are fully human. We are not an ‘issue’ to be debated and derided. We are symbols of hope for many non-trans people, too, who see in our lives the possibility of living more fully and freely... Our existence enriches this world.”*

– Shon Faye

This thesis explored how Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) identity is understood and experienced in the cultural context of the UK. The thesis is partitioned by three chapters. Chapter one is a systematic review that utilised Thomas and Harden’s (2008) thematic synthesis procedure to synthesise qualitative research that investigated the experiences of 197 TGNC people in the UK. The findings highlighted three key analytic themes: ‘Bound by the binary’, ‘Taking a risk’, and ‘Knowing oneself’. The systematic review placed the findings in the context of the Gender Minority Stress Model (GMSM; Hendricks & Testa, 2012). Directions for future research were discussed. Chapter two is an empirical paper that utilised Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to understand how the UK mainstream news press constructed TGNC people. Findings revealed four key relational concepts: ‘Valued Knowledge – Unvalued Knowledge’, ‘Claiming Space – Denied Space’, ‘Threatening – Threatened’, and ‘Monitoring – Monitored’. The use and hierarchisation of knowledge of TGNC people was central to each of the dominant discourses and made room for subsequent power relationships and practices to be reaffirmed. Dominant discourses in the UK mainstream news press reaffirmed the positioning of TGNC people as deviant or ‘wrong’. There was a noticeable paucity of TGNC speakers within the discourses; where they were present, the news press incorporated ‘expert’ voices to undermine them. Directions for future research were discussed. Chapter three is a consolidative summary of the thesis, outlining the author’s positionality, implications for theoretical frameworks and clinical practice, and reflections of the research process.

## Acknowledgements

*“I’m so small.” said the mole. “Yes,” said the boy, “but you make a huge difference”.*

*- Charlie Mackesy*

To Jenny-Anne and all that I had the privilege of talking with at UNIQUE. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me so that we could create a research project that felt meaningful and valuable. It was a privilege to have been welcomed into your space and I hope that this research is a start in the right direction to shine light on the voices that matter.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW**

**The experiences of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) people in the United Kingdom: a meta-synthesis of qualitative research**

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<https://www.elsevier.com/journals/clinical-psychology-review/0272-7358/guide-for-authors>

## Abstract

The experiences of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) people are understood in theoretical frameworks such as the Gender Minority Stress Model (GMSM; Hendricks & Testa, 2012), which crucially must be placed within cultural contexts to be clinically meaningful. This meta-synthesis aims to produce novel insights into the experiences of 197 TGNC people living in the UK by synthesising the findings of 15 qualitative studies across a range of settings. Most studies ( $n = 12$ ) used interviews to collect data; two studies used focus groups, and one study combined interviews and focus groups. Utilising Thomas and Harden's (2008) thematic synthesis approach, studies were analysed to capture shared thematic constructs across a range of lived experiences. Three analytic themes were generated: 'Bound by the binary', 'Taking a risk', and 'Knowing oneself'. The findings illustrated the dominance of the gender binary in the UK and how this led to isolation, discrimination, and loss. The findings also illustrated that affirming experiences mitigated these stressors. Crucially, the findings highlighted that self-perception and gender expression were heavily driven in response to how others related to them. Key theoretical implications include the situation of the GMSM within a UK cultural context, including novel insights into the role that self-knowledge had on mitigating distress. Key clinical implications include the need to develop holistic, person-centred care in specialist services for TGNC people, as well as the importance of professional reflexivity to minimise biases when working with TGNC people in any setting. Future research directions are explored.

*Keywords:* transgender; non-binary; TGNC; gender; minority stress; lived experience; meta-synthesis; UK

## Introduction

Gender is increasingly recognised as a dynamic and diverse experience that exists beyond a binary of ‘male’ and ‘female’ that is typically ascribed to respective biological characteristics (Arcelus & Bouman, 2017). The term ‘Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming’ (TGNC) refers to people whose gender identity (their personal sense of their own gender) varies from the sex and/or gender assigned to them at birth. It is an umbrella term to include binary, non-binary, queer, and fluid gender identities (Fiani & Han, 2019; Tankersley et al., 2021).

It is estimated that there are between 200,000 and 600,000 TGNC people in the United Kingdom (UK), or roughly one per cent of the population (Government Equalities Office, 2018). The ‘true’ figure is thought to be higher (Stonewall, 2022) as prevalence estimations are largely dependent on a diagnosis of Gender Dysphoria (GD) and/or on presentation to specialist services.

The psychiatric diagnosis of GD is used in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (5<sup>th</sup> ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) to describe the incongruence between an individual’s gender identity and their assigned gender at birth. It is regarded as holding construct validity in capturing the psychological distress of many TGNC people, particularly in relation to TGNC identity disclosure and motivation to seek medical intervention (Austin, Holzworth & Papciak, 2022; Pulice-Farrow, Cusack & Galupo, 2020). A diagnosis of GD is a requirement for access to specialist services that facilitate medical interventions that aid physical transition of gender (Ashley, 2019; Coleman et al., 2012). However, this requirement has been widely criticised as pathologising and blaming, situating a ‘problem’ to be ‘fixed’ within a TGNC person (Davy & Toze, 2018; Schulz, 2018). It is increasingly understood that GD is not a static experience (Cooper et al., 2020) and can be mediated by gender-affirming experiences (Dhejne et

al., 2016; Olson et al., 2015) which can result in experiences of ‘gender euphoria’ (Austin, Papciak & Lovins, 2022; Bieschel, Gauvin & van Anders, 2021).

Though medical interventions are seen as an affirming part of the transition process (Murjan & T’Sjoen, 2017), many TGNC people do not seek nor engage with specialist services, otherwise known in the UK as Gender Identity Clinics (GICs) or Gender Identity Development Services (GIDS), for physical transition (Davy & Toze, 2018). Scarcity of, and demand for, specialist services in the UK has been posited to act as a substantial barrier for TGNC people to seek support (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018). For those that do seek support, preliminary research highlighted that TGNC people felt “hypervigilant” to conform to binary gender expressions whilst undergoing GIC assessment in fear of being denied care (Willis et al, 2020). This is particularly the case for non-binary individuals (Wright et al., 2021). This experience is mirrored in research outside of the UK which suggests that specialist services for TGNC people are often binarised, leaving TGNC people feeling pressure to perform exaggerated ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ gender expressions in order to be approved for treatment (Linander et al., 2019). Some TGNC people describe an element of strategy and negotiation, “playing the game” for the “gatekeepers” of care, in completing their desired physical transition (Davy, 2010; Spade, 2006; Zottola et al., 2021).

Identifying as TGNC does not automatically predicate a need for medical treatment, specialist services or diagnosis of GD (Zucker, 2017). Therefore, there may be many TGNC people in the UK who do not have a GD diagnosis nor are actively seeking medical treatment nor are engaged in specialist services.

Whilst these factors are helpful in understanding part of a TGNC person’s experience, researchers are urged to seek a more holistic understanding of TGNC identity (Schulz, 2018). This approach would broaden understanding of what it means to be TGNC. It is acknowledged that

researchers and clinicians need to move beyond the physical aspects of TGNC identity and broaden the scope of enquiry to include the psychological and social experiences TGNC people have. Transition is often a nonlinear, individualised and complex process (Coleman et al., 2012).

The experiences of TGNC people can be understood within a Gender Minority Stress Model (GMSM) (Hendricks & Testa, 2012) framework, an adaptation of the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003). The GMSM establishes TGNC-specific factors that contribute to the experiences of ‘distal’ external socially produced stressors (e.g. discrimination and actual stigma) and ‘proximal’ internal stressors (internalised and perceived stigma) that contribute to poor mental health outcomes. Indeed, it is well established that TGNC people experience actual and perceived stigma from society (Hibbert et al., 2018; Hughto, Reisner & Pachankis, 2015) and professionals alike (Benson, 2013; Brown, Kucharska & Marczak, 2018). Stigma is understood as a consequence of TGNC people being positioned in a societal ‘out-group’ (Jauk, 2013) which further perpetuates societal rejection (Byne et al., 2012; Rood et al., 2016), violence and discrimination (Lombardi et al., 2001; Valentine & Shipherd, 2018). This has been found to lead to the internalisation of stigma for TGNC people (Cogan et al., 2021). As a consequence, TGNC people experience poorer mental health outcomes than their non-TGNC counterparts (Bockting et al., 2013; Downing & Przedworski, 2018; Ellis, Bailey, & McNeil, 2015). In the UK, suicidal ideation in TGNC people is posited to be as high as 84% (McNeil et al., 2012) with 48% having attempted suicide and those most at risk having not yet disclosed a TGNC identity (Bailey, Ellis, & McNeil, 2014).

Mediators of distress in the GMSM include community connection and affirming experiences (Pflum et al., 2015). Sharing one’s TGNC identity with other TGNC people has been found to foster a sense of ‘belonging’ which may be a protective factor for a TGNC person’s wellbeing (Barr, Budge & Adelson, 2016; McCann & Brown, 2017; Sherman et al., 2020). In this

way, TGNC identity is understood as a collective experience as well as one that is uniquely personal, allowing for a sense of ‘identity pride’ (Singh, Hays & Watson, 2011). Affirmative experiences with non-TGNC people in their intimate circles (Westwater, Riley & Peterson, 2019; Wilson et al., 2016) and with professionals (Allen et al., 2019) has also been found to mediate the impact of both distal and proximal stressors on minority stress and contribute to wellbeing.

The existing literature situates the experience of TGNC identity within a social context. Though the GSM is a useful theoretical framework, it stresses the importance of placing these experiences within individual cultural contexts (Tan et al., 2020). The UK is encountering a rapidly evolving legal, political, and sociocultural climate for TGNC people (Faye, 2021). Though research into the experiences of TGNC people in the UK is emergent, it is typically partitioned according to phenomena relating to age (Kennedy, 2022; Willis et al., 2021) or specific aspects of gender transition (Ryan, 2020; Shepherd & Hanckel, 2021).

### *Objective*

No qualitative systematic reviews have been conducted to synthesise the experiences of TGNC people in the UK specifically. Developing an understanding of the experiences of TGNC people in the UK, across all ages and stages of transition, will be important in the pursuit of a more holistic understanding of TGNC identity within the cultural context of the UK. Improved understanding of TGNC people’s experiences may build on recommendations for gender-affirmative frameworks (Schulz, 2018), which in turn may facilitate improved psychological wellbeing and resilience for TGNC people (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). The aim of this meta-synthesis was to provide a comprehensive review of empirical, qualitative study findings relating



to peoples' experiences of their TGNC identity in the UK. Adopting Thomas and Harden's (2008) thematic synthesis approach, this research seeks to find the shared facets of TGNC identity across a broad range of experiences. By keeping the scope of enquiry broad, this thematic synthesis aims to capture a range of experiences. This research aimed to collate and synthesise existing qualitative research studies to answer the following question: What are the experiences of TGNC people in the UK?

## **Method**

### *Rationale for meta-synthesis*

The present review sought to capture and synthesise the experiences of TGNC people in the UK. Constructs of 'experience' are the foundations of qualitative psychological research (Ashworth, 2015), therefore this review aimed for a methodology that would allow a protocol for synthesis of qualitative studies in this area. Meta-synthesis is an 'umbrella' term used to capture a set of approaches that synthesise and provide interpretation of qualitative studies into a given phenomenon (Lachal et al., 2019; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007). Meta-syntheses may seek epistemological and methodological diversity in studies in order to explore how findings are conceptually related; original interpretations are preserved alongside the development of novel interpretations to establish a more global understanding of the issues explored (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003; Walsh & Downe, 2005). Adopting a meta-synthesis methodology for the present review afforded the scope to remain broad in order to capture a variety of experiences across the lifespan and across different settings in the literature. Meta-syntheses are regarded as additive in the pursuit of understanding phenomena of interest, identifying gaps in existing literature, and preventing the need for multiple research investigations (Finfgeld, 2003; Mohammed, Moles &

Chen, 2016). Consequently, meta-syntheses may assist the development of theory, health policy, and service implementation (Ludvigsen et al., 2016; Mohammed et al., 2016).

There is no ‘gold standard’ methodology for conducting meta-synthesis (Mohammed et al., 2016). Attempts to reduce meta-syntheses into a singular process would undermine the epistemological roots of qualitative paradigms that view knowledge as subjectively and multiply constructed (Finfgeld, 2003; Walsh & Downe, 2005). The approach selected for this review was thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Following an exploratory literature search by the lead author, heterogeneous methodologies and research settings were identified. Therefore, the thematic synthesis approach was deemed most appropriate given that it is routinely practiced for syntheses of qualitative studies with a range of data collection, analysis methods and theoretical backgrounds (Booth et al., 2016; Harden et al., 2018).

#### *Data collection*

This meta-synthesis was registered with Prospero (CRD42022323100). A systematic search of the literature was conducted in April 2022 guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) checklist (Moher et al., 2009). Five databases (PsycINFO, CINAHL, Social Sciences Core Collection, Web of Science, ASSIA) were searched to identify relevant studies. Studies from the last twenty years were included to ensure relevance. The Population, Intervention, Comparison and Outcomes approach (PICO; Liberati et al., 2009) was used to formulate search terms. In the abstract domain, the following Boolean search was conducted: (agender\* OR bigender\* OR “gender dys\*” OR “gender fluid” OR “gender free” OR “gender identity” OR “gender incongruence” OR “gender nonconforming” OR “gender queer” OR “gender reassignment” OR “gender transition” OR “gender variant” OR “gender atypical” OR

genderless OR intergender OR neutrois OR non-binary OR “non-gender” OR “third gender” OR “trans person” OR “trans m?n” OR “trans wom?n” OR “trans boy” OR “trans girl” OR “trans feminine” OR “trans masculine” OR transgender OR transsexual) AND (identity OR existence OR self\* OR experience OR “lived experience”) AND (qualitative OR interview OR “focus group” OR phenomenolog\*).

### *Search procedure and outcome*

The inclusion and exclusion criteria used to review eligibility are outlined in Table 1. Following the removal of duplicate results, the database searches produced 614 electronic publications. Titles were read by the first author in the first instance and any studies not meeting the inclusion criteria at this level were excluded. Abstracts ( $n = 154$ ) were then retrieved and assessed. Of the 154 retrieved, 39 articles were selected for full text review to determine eligibility for final inclusion. Considerable attempts were made to contact authors of articles ( $n = 2$ ) that were not accessible via University subscriptions or inter-library loan though, at the time of publication, these were not obtained. A final set of 15 articles were selected for quality appraisal and analysis. Queries regarding eligibility for final inclusion were resolved by consensus with the second, third and fourth authors. Hand-searching of articles citing the included studies was conducted which did not generate additional records. The search strategy is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Table 1.** Eligibility criteria

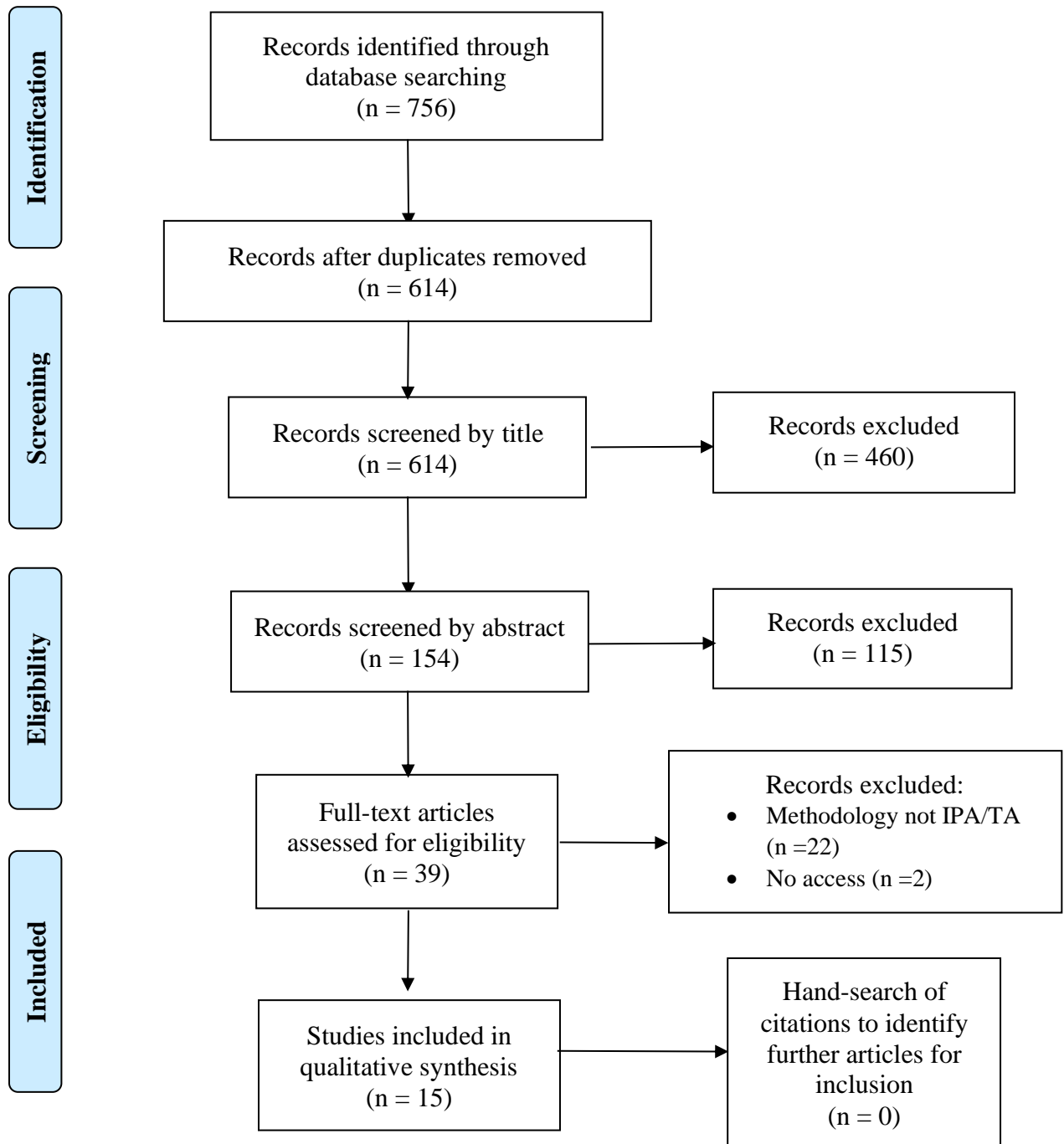
Element	Include	Exclude
<b>Participants</b>	Participants are Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) i.e., have a gender identity which is different from their assigned gender at birth	Participants are not Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) i.e., do not have a gender identity which is different from their assigned gender at birth
	Participants are of any age	
<b>Types of study</b>	Primary research studies that asked about, explored or found a theme relating to experiences of, or relating to, their TGNC identity	Research studies that focus on a specific subgroup in relation to TGNC identity (i.e., prisoners, refugees, neurodivergent people)
	Qualitative studies, or studies that used mixed methods and provided the results of qualitative research	Studies focusing on experiences of specific interventions (i.e. cognitive behavioural therapy, hormone replacement therapy)
	Studies involving primary data collection comprising first person accounts through interviews, focus groups or open-ended surveys with more than one participant	Quantitative studies, or studies that used mixed methods and did not provide the results of qualitative research
	Studies conducted in the UK, or studies that were partially conducted in the UK and the data was differentiated in the findings	Secondary data studies, observational studies, case studies or studies with one participant
	Studies using an analytical approach of either thematic analysis or interpretative phenomenological analysis	Studies conducted outside of the UK, or studies that were partially conducted in the UK and the data was not differentiated in the findings
	Published literature in a peer-reviewed journal	Studies using an analytical approach that was not thematic analysis or interpretative phenomenological analysis
	Studies available in English	Unpublished (grey) literature, reviews, commentaries or literature that has not been peer-reviewed
	Studies published after 2001	Studies not available in English
		Studies published before 2001

*Quality appraisal*

To appraise credibility and methodological rigour, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018) checklist for qualitative studies was implemented by the first author and is

summarised in Table 2. A random sample ( $n = 6$ ) of studies were independently appraised by the second, third, and fourth authors and discrepancies were resolved through discussion. All studies were considered to be of moderately high quality and therefore were included in the thematic synthesis. Around half ( $n = 8$ ) of the studies did not explicitly demonstrate that the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants had been adequately considered. This was useful to consider and be cautious of when making sense of those authors' second-order interpretations, as reflexivity is of fundamental importance in maintaining a high rigor of qualitative research (Finlay, 2002). Though the CASP (2018) checklist has been posited to omit contextual factors in the reporting of qualitative studies, such as journal submission restrictions and diversity of approaches (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006), it proved a valuable function of critical appraisal in this review.

**Figure 1.** Search strategy illustrated according to PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009)



**Table 2. CASP Qualitative Checklist**

Study	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Is there a clear statement of findings?	How valuable is the research?	Score
Applegarth & Nuttall (2016)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10/10
Benbow & Kingston (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	× - not appraised	✓	? - cannot assess	✓	✓	8/10
Carlile et al. (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	× - not appraised	✓	✓	✓	✓	9/10
Colliver & Silvestri (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	× - not appraised	✓	? - cannot assess	✓	✓	8/10
Floyd et al (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	? - cannot assess	✓	? - cannot assess	? - no discussion section	✓	7/10
Harrison et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10/10
Hunt (2014)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	× - themes are integrated in presentation of quantitative findings	✓	9/10
Jones et al. (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	× - not appraised	✓	✓	✓	✓	9/10
Lehmann et al. (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	× - not appraised	✓	✓	✓	✓	9/10
Ozturk & Tatli (2016)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	× - not appraised	✓	× - not reported	✓	✓	8/10
Storrie & Rohleder (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10/10
Tasker & Gato (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10/10
Taylor et al. (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10/10

<b>Wilson et al. (2005)</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	× - not appraised	✓	? - cannot assess	✓	✓	<b>8/10</b>
<b>Wilson et al. (2021)</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<b>10/10</b>

**Key:** (✓) assessed as possessing specified quality      (?) not possible to sufficiently assess if possessing specified criteria      (×) assessed as lacking specified criteria



### *Analytic procedure*

All 15 studies were re-read by the first author prior to thematic synthesis. An initial summary of key data from each study was extracted using a data extraction form (Appendix A) as recommended by Noyes and Lewin (2011). First-order (participant quotations) and second-order (author interpretations) were extracted into a database to facilitate familiarisation and preliminary analysis of the individual studies in advance.

Thomas and Harden's (2008) meta-synthesis approach was selected. The first author followed the three-stage procedure that allowed for an iterative and dynamic analysis process. The first stage involved line-by-line coding of the first and second order data that had been extracted during the data extraction phase. The second stage involved collating and refining the codes into descriptive themes. This was facilitated by cross-tabulation of codes to generate common descriptive themes that translated across studies. The third stage was an iterative process that involved the generation of broader analytic themes. The analytic procedure was reviewed with the second, third, and fourth authors and shaped through discussion.

### *Researcher reflexivity*

As with all qualitative research methodologies, meta-synthesis is a form of meaning-making in which researchers bring their own views and perspectives (Bondas & Hall, 2007) to the data. It is important to acknowledge that all authors have personal and/or professional experience, and stand in solidarity, with the TGNC community in the UK. It is recognised that the interpretations may be influenced in part by the authors' collective anecdotal understanding of the experiences of TGNC people in the UK. Assumptions, biases and reflections were regularly discussed through supervision. The first author, who at the time of writing was a Trainee Clinical

Psychologist working in a Welsh NHS setting with interests in the psychological, social and political experiences of minoritised groups, recorded a reflective journal throughout the analysis process.

## **Results**

### *Summary of included studies*

The 15 included studies, summarised in Table 3, were all qualitative research studies that interviewed TGNC people in the UK about experiences relating to their gender identity. Most studies ( $n = 12$ ) used interviews to collect data; two studies used focus groups, and one study combined interviews and focus groups. Six studies looked at TGNC people's experiences accessing care from professionals across various settings such as psychological therapies (Applegarth & Nuttall, 2016; Hunt, 2014), generic health and/or social care (Benbow & Kingston, 2022; Floyd et al., 2020) and TGNC specialist healthcare (Benbow & Kingston, 2022; Carlile et al., 2021; Lehmann et al., 2021). Three studies examined relationships to others, such as hate crime (Colliver & Silvestri, 2022) and disclosure (Wilson et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2021). Three studies investigated TGNC identity as a phenomenon in relation to experiencing gender transition (Harrison et al., 2020), being non-binary (Taylor et al., 2019) and thinking about parenthood (Tasker & Gato, 2020). Three studies sought to understand the experiences of TGNC people across a range of settings, such as university (Storrie & Rohleder, 2018), workplaces (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016), and sport (Jones et al., 2017).

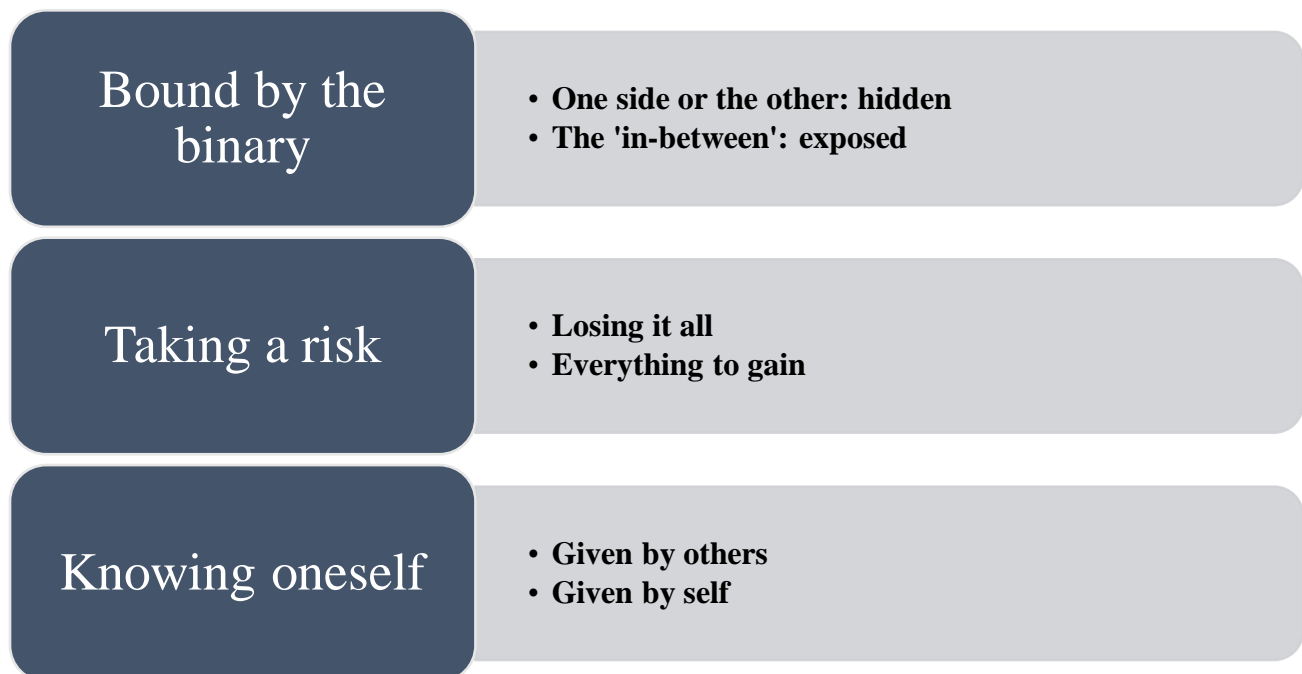
The present meta-synthesis reports the cumulative experience of 197 TGNC people across 15 studies. Participants had a collective age range of five to 67 years old. A variety of TGNC

identities were represented by the studies. Study publication spanned 17 years (2005-2022) with the majority of the research ( $n = 14$ ) being conducted in the last decade.

### *Meta-synthesis findings*

Studies were allocated a 'study number', as indicated in Table 3, and are referred to as such in the rest of the meta-synthesis. Thematic synthesis yielded three analytic themes with two sub-themes each (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Map of analytic themes



**Table 3. Summary of Included Studies**

<i>ID</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Relevant sample of participants</i>	<i>TGNC identity of participants</i>	<i>Topic(s) explored</i>	<i>Data gathering and Analysis</i>	<i>Summary Findings</i>
1	<b>Applegarth &amp; Nuttall (2016)</b>	6 Age range: 30-49	4 x “Identified as female, preferred female pronouns”  1 x “Identified as mainly female, sometimes as without gender; preferred female pronouns; moved between male and female for practical purposes”  1 x “Identified as bigendered and as human rather than gendered; preferred male pronouns”	Experience of TGNC identity when accessing psychological therapy  “What is the lived experience of the transgender client in talking therapies?”	Semi-structured interviews; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	Four master themes: ‘A fearful time’, ‘The Importance of the relationship with the therapist’, ‘Becoming comfortable with their personal gender’, and ‘Moving beyond therapy’.
2	<b>Benbow &amp; Kingston (2022)</b>	16 Age range: 50+	15 x “trans woman”  1 x “trans man”	Experience of TGNC people accessing health and social care	Interviews; Thematic Analysis	Three themes:  ‘Levers’ (sub-themes of ‘Age impact on seeking care’, Influential contacts with care’, ‘Partner and family relationships’, ‘LGBT identity/communities’, ‘Economic context’)  ‘Contextual forces’ (sub-themes of ‘Fear of discrimination/hate’, ‘Practitioner ignorance’, ‘Risk from others’)  ‘Positive Practice’ (sub-themes of ‘Administrative practices’, ‘Demonstrating inclusivity’, ‘Learning/training’, ‘Personalised care’, ‘Reshaping services’.
3	<b>Carlile et al. (2021)</b>	14 Age range: 5-20	6 x “trans male”  2 x “male”  2 x “trans male and non-binary”  2 x “non-binary”	Experience of TGNC young people seeking, finding, and engaging with clinical care in England	Semi-structured interviews; Thematic Analysis	Eight themes: ‘Approaching the family doctor’, ‘Lack of awareness in mainstream child and adolescent mental health services’, ‘Interactions with GIDS therapists’, ‘Non-binary young people at GIDS’, ‘Accessibility issues’, ‘Family expertise’, ‘A long wait for puberty blockers’ and ‘Gender-affirming hormone medication’

			1 x “trans female” 1 x “a girl”			
4	<b>Colliver &amp; Silvestri (2022)</b>	31 Age range: 17-67	44% “female” 31% “male” 23% “non-binary”	TGNC peoples’ experiences of hate crime	Semi-structured interviews; Thematic Analysis	Two themes: ‘Discursively constructed (in)visibility’ and ‘Intersectional (in)visibility’
5	<b>Floyd et al. (2020)</b>	8 Age: unspecified	Unspecified	Experience of TGNC people accessing healthcare including radiology	Semi-structured interviews; Thematic Analysis	Three themes: ‘Cultural competence’ (sub-themes of ‘Knowledge’ and ‘Education’) ‘Social stigma’ (sub-theme of ‘Fear of discrimination’) ‘Environment’
6	<b>Harrison et al. (2020)</b>	8 Age: 22-60	6 x “transgender woman” 2 x “transgender man”	Understanding lived experience of TGNC adults with gender dysphoria seeking treatment in the UK	Semi-structured interviews; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	Three superordinate themes: ‘Accessing healthcare services’, ‘Searching for acceptance’, ‘Impact of gender dysphoria on psychological wellbeing’
7	<b>Hunt (2014)</b>	5 Age range: 21-65	1 x “male” 1 x “male and genderqueer” 1 x “transsexual woman” 1 x “female” 1 x “transfemale”	Experience of TGNC people seeking and receiving counselling or psychotherapy	Interviews; Thematic Analysis	Three themes: ‘Barriers faced in seeking counselling’, ‘Generic experience of counselling’, ‘Gender identity and counselling experiences’
8	<b>Jones et al. (2017)</b>	14 Age range: 18-36	9 x “transgender males” 5 x “transgender females”	TGNC peoples’ experiences of physical activity and sport prior to, and across their transition	Semi-structured interviews; Thematic Analysis	Two themes: ‘Barriers to physical activity and sport’ (sub-themes of ‘Gender incongruence’, ‘Body dissatisfaction’, ‘Anxiety about others’ reactions’, ‘Changing and showering facilities’, ‘Sport-related clothing’, ‘Team sports’)

						‘Facilitators of physical activity and sport’ (sub-themes of ‘Body satisfaction as a motivator to be physically active’, ‘The accentuation of body changes as a motivator to be physically active’, ‘Gender confirming surgery as a motivator’, ‘Trans only environments’)
9	<b>Lehmann et al. (2021)</b>	40 Age range: 15-66	10 x “non-binary” 8 x “male” 8 x “female” 6 x “transman” 6 x “transwoman” 2 x “other”	TGNC peoples’ experiences seeking treatment in gender services	Unstructured interviews; Thematic analysis	Three themes:  ‘Beliefs and behaviours’ (sub-themes of ‘Gender dysphoria must be evident’, ‘Gender identity must be consistent and stable’, ‘Staff have binary view of gender’, ‘Mental health must be perfect’)  ‘Frontstage impression management’ (sub-themes of ‘Compliance with staff at gender services’, ‘Present ultra-binary’, ‘Access mental health support elsewhere’)  ‘Backstage outcomes of impression management’ (sub-themes of ‘Frustration related to impression management’, ‘Exhaustion related to impression management’, ‘Coping without mental health support’)
10	<b>Ozturk &amp; Tatli (2016)</b>	14 Age range: 28-54	6 x “transgender woman” 5 x “transgender man” 3 x “genderqueer”	Experience of TGNC people in the workplace	Interviews; Open-coding Thematic Analysis	Three themes: ‘Representation and visibility’, ‘Disclosure’, ‘Transition’
11	<b>Storrie &amp; Rohleder (2018)</b>	6 Age: 5 x 18-25, 1 x 50+	1 x “female to male transgender” 3 x “trans women” 1 x “non-binary” 1 x “non-binary/trans masculine”	Experiences of TGNC students at universities in the United Kingdom	Semi-structured interviews; Thematic Analysis	Two themes:  ‘University as a space of potential acceptance and empowerment’ (sub-themes of ‘University as an opportunity to make a ‘new start’’, ‘University as an opportunity for activism and visibility’)  ‘University as unwelcoming spaces’ (sub-themes of ‘Conflicting gender signals contribute to micro-aggressions’, ‘Being objectified and othered as trans’, ‘Risk of abuse in spaces of disinhibition’)
12	<b>Tasker &amp; Gato (2020)</b>	11	4 x “men/transgender men”	TGNC peoples’ experiences of gender identity and future	Focus groups; Thematic Analysis	Four overarching themes: ‘Balancing a desire for parenthood and desires for other life goals’, ‘Feeling that who I am doesn’t fit into the cisgender system of accessing fostering’, ‘Experiencing the conjoined

		Age range: 20-45	4 x “non-binary” 2 x “women/transgender women” 1 x “sometimes as a man and sometimes as non-binary”	thinking about parenthood		challenges of gender and fertility embodiment as I see them’, ‘Searching for a non-binary or gender appropriate self and the need for flexible future planning centred on reproductive capacity’
13	<b>Taylor et al. (2019)</b>	8 Age range: 18+	1 x “demi-boy/agender/boy genderfluid” 1 x “Male NB” 1 x “Non-binary” 1 x “Transfeminine” 1 x “Transfemale/Genderfluid” 1 x “None” 1 x “Genderless/Transfemale” 1 x Did not disclose	Experience of non-binary identity	Focus groups; Thematic Analysis	Five themes: ‘Invisibility’, ‘Managing non-binary identity in a binary world’, ‘Individuality’, ‘Gender dysphoria’, ‘Seeking interventions’
14	<b>Wilson et al. (2005)</b>	8 Age range: 14-17	6 x “male-to-female” 2 x “female-to-male”	TGNC young people’s experiences of identity and disclosure to peers	Interviews; Thematic analysis	Three main themes: ‘Bullying and homophobic abuse’, ‘Peer support’, ‘Disclosure’
15	<b>Wilson et al. (2021)</b>	8 Age range: 16-17	1 x “trans man” 1 x “male” 1 x “a transgender male” 1 x “I say I identify as male... I think in my brain, I’m rather just kind of, more gender neutral, I mean leaning on the masculine side... but physically, I feel that I	TGNC adolescents’ experiences of expressing their gender identity around new people	Interviews; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	Three super-ordinate themes: ‘Using gender expression to shape identity’ (sub-themes of ‘The need to conform to be seen as male’, ‘Moving the focus away from being transgender’, ‘Expression strengthening gender identity’) ‘Experiencing and making sense of others’ responses’ (sub-themes of ‘The impact of affirmation vs. misgendering’, ‘Others’ perceptions holding meaning’)

want my body to be a male  
body”

1 x “I’m a trans guy”

1 x “a guy with trans  
experience”

1 x “I identify as a man”

1 x “I identify as male...  
for me it’s just about umm,  
my relationship with my  
body the most”

‘A changing relationship with gender expression’  
(sub-themes of ‘Expression becoming automatic and  
natural’, ‘The changing importance of others’  
perceptions’, ‘Finding a balance between expressing  
as male and staying true to oneself’)



### ***Theme 1: Bound by the binary***

This analytic theme captured the extent to which TGNC people's experiences were encapsulated within the gender binary. The categories of 'male' and 'female' were actively considered in one's gender expression. Gender expression was governed contextually by one's sense of social safety. The gender binary was described by TGNC people as a "prominent" (8, p.230) construct that was often experienced as "restrictive" or "oppressive" (13, p.199). The gender binary was referred to in relation to how society was organised, such as changing rooms (5, 8, 10, 11), sports teams (10) and clothing options (8). The social context of the UK was described as relying "heavily on binary constructs of gender" (13, p.200). As a consequence, TGNC people had little room to express their gender beyond the binary: "*There was no language or model outside the binary for me to make sense of myself*" (P7; 13, p.198). This is explored in the subthemes below: 'One side or the other: hidden' and 'The 'in-between': exposed'.

#### ***Subtheme 1a. One side or the other: hidden***

The closer one aligned to the gender binary in their gender expression, the more "hidden" (13, p.199) their TGNC identity became (1, 10, 13). The function of this varied depending on the context.

Often, 'hidden' TGNC identity within the gender binary featured as part of non-disclosure and pre-transition (13, 14), or for non-binary individuals who were not seeking medical intervention (5, 13). Social context had a role to play in determining social safety of non-binarised gender expression, such as families (1, 4) and UK class culture (10). A motivating factor of binarised gender expression was one of survival (10); any deviation from the binary would mean:

*"Holy shit, they'd crucify me."* (P1; 14, p.311). Though social safety was maintained by non-disclosure, there were significant consequences to one's sense of self-worth (13, 14). As well as hidden from others, TGNC identity became hidden from oneself: *"It was about blocking out who I was inside. Cos generations it wasn't the done thing in our family. I had brothers it was a very macho male orientated environment. So I had to deal with who I was, I just blocked it out"* (Nikki; 2, p.72). In this way, TGNC people often lead "bifurcated lives" (10, p.794).

Another context in which TGNC identity became 'hidden' within the gender binary was during the process of gender transition. This was found to be related to accessing care from specialist services (1, 9, 13). Some medical interventions, such as laser treatment, were only accessible to TGNC people who presented to services as binary in their gender identity: *"you have to tick the whole 'male-to-female' box, so they wouldn't let me"* (P2; 13, p.200). The consequence of holding a gender identity outside the binary often meant that treatment was denied (1, 9, 13). Gender expression became performative and self-monitored: *"Most participants believed their gender identity needed to be consistent and stable and were concerned that inconsistent presentation could jeopardize access to treatment."* (9, p.3544). The performance of binarised gender expression was aligned to societal understandings of masculinity or femininity: *"I always made sure that I wore a skirt... full face of makeup...I looked as nice and in brackets "female" as possible... so that they know you're really serious about it"* (Lillie; 1, p.70). The correlation drawn between binarised gender expression and authenticity of ones TGNC identity was internalised by the TGNC community as a "sign of 'commitment'" during the transition process (11, p.322).

Concealing one's TGNC identity within the gender binary was often posited to mark the end of physical transition, constructed as the phenomenon of 'passing' (3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15). 'Passing' was described by some TGNC people as an achievement (11) or a goal (6). The

motivations behind this were two-fold. The first motivation was that ‘passing’ meant that TGNC identity became hidden again and therefore one’s sense of social safety was restored: “... *nobody would see the difference so I think that will definitely help... it is more socially acceptable as well so people tend to accept you more how you want them to*” (P9; 8, p.234). Rather than being perceived as TGNC, ‘passing’ allowed for people to be perceived as a “normal” (15, p.10) or “authentic” (10, p.791) by others. However, social safety was not guaranteed, as ‘passing’ post-transition brought with it a “stress around being... or how to discuss their birth-assigned gender with the people in their lives in future” (15, p.10). Though TGNC identity became ‘hidden’ again through physical transition, it was something many TGNC people had to work hard towards maintaining and planning for. The emotional consequences of ‘passing’ within the gender binary, too, became hidden. The second motivation was that ‘passing’ brought with it affirmative experiences. (3,15). This was maintained through societal responses: “*Strangers getting my pronouns right... a sort of ... gender euphoria*” (Kieran; 3, p.417). This was also maintained through internalised self-perception of binarised gender expression: “engaging in “masculine” behaviors also resulted in participants feeling more “male” in themselves” (15, p.16); “*I am happy with like my arms they are starting to get bigger and I am starting to look more masculine...*” (P8, 8, p.234).

#### *Subtheme 1b. The ‘in-between’: exposed*

Where expression of one’s TGNC gender identity fell outside of the gender binary, there was a real sense of exposure reported by participants (1, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14).

How others recognised someone's TGNC identity was pivotal for a TGNC person's sense of belonging or social safety: "*He (Doctor) said*" *you're not quite a woman yet and not quite a man, either are you? Sort of in-between, are you?*" ...*that was really unpleasant, and I was quite upset afterwards.*" (P5; 5, p.e42). For non-binary people, there was a sense that others were attempting to 'place' them, though this did not fit existing understandings of gender expression: "*Basically they were saying why are you here and you know who are you trying to be we don't understand you so you know it was like they were trying somehow to work out where I was and they couldn't fit me into anywhere*" (P2; 14, p.310). The lack of societal space for TGNC gender expression was internalised as "an absence of any gender identification" (13, p.200). As a consequence, non-binary people understood themselves as a societal "anomaly" (10, p.794) and were vulnerable to experiencing "*heavy consequences*" (P8; 13, p.199) in the form of "othering and marginalisation" (10, p.794), "harm" or "discrimination" (11, p.322) from others.

For some TGNC people, the act of disclosing one's identity came with a sense of intrusive objectification (5, 8, 10). This was particularly prevalent during times of physical transition, in which TGNC people reported being "viewed as fearsome or strange objects of fascination..." (10, p.792). During the transition process, TGNC people became aware of others' preoccupation with their bodily changes (5, 10) which could result in further discrimination: "*I have to think what sort of swimwear will I use because obviously there is going to be some bulging in the area and then that might trigger like nasty responses.*" (P11; 8, p.232). A TGNC person's body, that presented as outside of the gender binary, was understood as threatening to others in society. This led to TGNC people feeling watched, and some participants described experiences of feeling "controlled" (10, p.793) or "*challenged*" (P2; 5, p.e43) when entering binarised spaces such as changing rooms whilst undergoing the process of transition. As a consequence, some TGNC

people would remove themselves from these spaces in order to maintain a sense of safety: *“I don’t wanna be getting changed and y’know a cis guy comes in, he spots physical breasts and y’know beats me up.”* (P3; 8, p.231). The violence experienced by TGNC people at the hands of cisgender men was understood as “trans panic” in which TGNC people challenge their “...hetero- and cis-normative notions of sexuality.” (4, p.246).

### ***Theme 2: Taking a risk***

This analytic theme captured the sense of “risk” (14, p.311) that came with identifying as TGNC in the UK. To ‘come out’ as TGNC often involved uncertainty around how one’s gender expression might evolve (6), how others experience this change in gender expression (1, 7, 10, 14), and what spaces might become available (3 8, 15) or denied (8, 10) as a consequence. For some, the risk involved with disclosure would prevent them from doing so: *“I just couldn’t bring myself to talk. I really wanted to, but it was fear of being judged. All that fear.”* (Nikki; 1, p.70). The decision to ‘come out’ was varied: *“An individual may feel pressure internally, from a need to live openly, or may feel pressure externally, from family peers and society.”* (4). This highlighted that TGNC people might not always hold agency in the decision to disclose their identity and experience the consequences. The experiences of TGNC people illuminated two ‘outcomes’ as explored in the subthemes below: ‘Losing it all’ and ‘Everything to gain’.

#### ***Subtheme 2a. Losing it all***

It was highlighted that ‘social safety’, both physical and psychological, became disrupted following disclosure of TGNC identity. This involved loss of important support networks (2, 4, 6, 7, 14), loss of safety (2), and loss of resource (6, 10, 12, 13).

Many TGNC people reported that they lost important support networks following disclosure of their gender identity (2, 4, 6, 7, 14). Social rejection was experienced in intimate friendships (4, 14). For some people, they experienced exclusion from their immediate families (2, 4; 6, 7). Some TGNC participants reported that TGNC identity disclosure led to loss of roles within families, such as their role as parent (2) or partner: *"I was terribly frightened...it would be the end of my marriage"* (P5; 7, p.293). Some TGNC participants were excluded from their families as their TGNC identity was understood as an "embarrassment" (6, p.50) or bringing "shame" (Corrina; 4, p.245) to the family system. This created a sense of rejection which was deeply distressing for people: *"...cried for hours...it is hard not having your family accept you."* (Elizabeth; 6, p.47). A need for connection and acceptance was highlighted: *"...strong urge for acceptance...desire and multiple attempts...to rebuild family bonds."* (6, p.47).

Violation of safety and the consequent sense of vulnerability was a shared experience by some TGNC people (2, 6, 11, 14). These experiences were broadly referred to as 'transphobia' and included micro-aggressions (5, 11), bullying (2, 14), verbal abuse (8, 11), physical violence (2, 6), and sexual violence (3). Micro-aggressions included *"...incidences of being misgendered, asked inappropriate questions, or being stared at."* (11, p.322). With this experience came a sense of hopelessness and resignation: *"...most of us have just given up when it comes to pronouns."* (P2; 13, p.199); *"...it's a fight that I just really don't want to pick on a day-to-day basis"* (P4; 13, p.199). Experiences of physical and sexual violence left TGNC people feeling intensely vulnerable (2, 6) with an understanding that the perpetrators were sexually curious (2) about their gender presentation.

It was reported that a consequence of holding a TGNC identity in the UK was a loss of resource (2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13). For TGNC people who were planning parenthood, they reported

an awareness that TGNC people are typically excluded from certain fertility treatments and adoption services (12). Disclosure of one's identity and the subsequent life changes resulted in financial loss for some people: "*I left that world behind. I had nothing – but I ended up having everything in a plastic bag standing on a street corner with nowhere to live, no money, nothing.*" (Ann; 2, p.164). Visibility of one's TGNC identity was reported to result in exclusion from job opportunities (10, 13), and so TGNC people would attempt to hide their identity and revert to the gender binary where possible: "*...you are just gonna put male and female, so you can get a job*" (PI; 13, p.199). Where disclosures were made during employment, this led TGNC people to feel vulnerable to social exclusion (7) and felt as though they were a "...cause of panic and anxiety in their work environments." (10, p.792).

#### *Subtheme 2b. Everything to gain*

Whilst loss was a part of many TGNC people's journeys, there were also circumstances that facilitated a recovery of social safety and a sense of personal "*gain*" (2, p.167; Alice; 6, p.47; 14, p.311). This involved acceptance from others (2, 11), support from within the TGNC community (11, 14), and a sense of affirmation in one's gender identity (1, 3, 6, 8, 12, 15).

Acceptance from others was an important experience in order for TGNC people to feel socially safe (2, 11). This was especially important in relation to intimate relationships such as families: "*. . . my family were very accepting, but then I told my daughter and she lived in Central London and we lived in [another part of the country] and within a week she sent me a parcel of clothes, would you believe?*" (Ros; 2, p.164). Committed action by others to acknowledge someone's TGNC identity was an affirming experience and subsequently impacted on self-esteem

(2). Support through friendships was also found to be important (11, 14), especially through the period of physical transition (6).

Some TGNC people described connecting with other TGNC people as a validating experience that added value to their social life (1, 2, 11, 14). This network was referred to as a “family of choice” (2, p.167) in which people tended to utilise as a mentee-mentor type relationship during turbulent times of the journey (1).

Gender affirmation was experienced by many TGNC people which positively impacted their wellbeing (3, 6, 8, 12, 15). For some people, this was facilitated by the effects of medical interventions to assist with the transition process (3, 6, 8). Far from the experience of dysphoria associated with non-disclosure, participants discovered a “...sense of relief and a new joy in experiencing their bodies” (3, p.420). For others, affirmation came from their gender identity being recognised by others (6, 15). There was a sense that the affirmation felt more authentic where others “...*wouldn't even know...*” (Austin; 15, p.11) that they identified as TGNC; in other words, they had achieved ‘passing’. For some people this was a sign of “...*progress...*” (Zoe; 6, p.47) and that one’s journey of transition was “...*going in the right direction...*” (Austin; 15, p.12). This was experienced as an achievement that brought with it a sense of elation: “...*I wouldn't say it's euphoric but it is, it – you just feel like you ran a marathon and came first place.*” (Austin; 15, p.11).

### ***Theme 3. Knowing oneself***

This analytic theme captured “knowledge” (3, p.418, 5, p.e42, 8, p.231) in relation to ones TGNC identity in the UK. Many TGNC people spoke of the importance of who holds knowledge, and subsequent agency, of what it means to be TGNC: “... the importance of others’ perceptions



varied depending on context.” (15, p.14). Knowledge was considered to come from professionals (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12), society (1, 4, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14), the TGNC community (1, 2), and TGNC people themselves (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15). Importantly, who was deemed to hold knowledge had an impact in settings where access to care (2, 3, 5, 7) or considered gender expression (1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 15) was required. This had implications for TGNC people’s sense of self and wellbeing. This is explored in the two subthemes below: ‘Given by others’ and ‘Given by self’.

### *Subtheme 3a. Given by others*

The experiences of TGNC people accessing general healthcare highlighted that professionals either placed little value (2, 5) or too much value (7) on knowledge of TGNC identity. Where TGNC identity had little value, TGNC people felt as though knowledge of their gender identity and associated needs was lacking: “*A sexual health clinic . . . they didn’t understand why a trans man would want a pill.*” (Ian; 2, p.165). Where TGNC identity had too much value, it was experienced as overshadowing their other needs: “*They seemed to think that I was trying to deal with trans issues. Every assessment that I had started with taking a gender history and I was saying to them I’m not seeking referral for gender therapy.*” (P5; 7, p.294). The findings spoke to the importance of all health professionals holding an awareness of TGNC identity yet bringing in this knowledge where appropriate (5, 7). In specialist healthcare settings, specifically in GICs and GIDS, understandings of TGNC identity were not consistent between professionals. Some TGNC people experienced specialist services as too general with professional knowledge valued in “*theories*” (Derrick; 1, p.71) rather than the person: “*...they have this like, like one size fits all approach to it which is just, it just doesn’t fit everyone.*” (Shane; 3, p.419). At times, professional

knowledge was experienced as fused with personal biases: “...*One of the people that I saw at [GIDS]...said, ‘I wouldn’t do that to my own child’... she wouldn’t let their kid transition because she’d think it’s not an actual thing.*” (Charlie; 3, p417); “... *I just shattered all his [consultant] illusions... like he’s got really weird ideas about stuff!*” (Phil; 12, p9). At other times, TGNC people experienced the information provided around transition processes as not explained thoroughly (6). Professionals in GICs and GIDs were experienced by TGNC people as holding a “gatekeeping function” (9, p.3543). As a consequence, TGNC people reported feeling disempowered and having to conform in order to access treatment: “...*felt like I was in a game that I didn’t know the rules of.*” (Jason; 9, p.3543); “...*having to prove myself to be transgender...*” (Sarah; 9, p3545). The knowledge held by professionals had consequences on TGNC people’s sense of agency and wellbeing (3, 5, 7, 9, 12).

The meaning of being TGNC was experienced by many as held within societal frameworks of knowledge (1, 4, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14). Many TGNC people reported being given derogatory labels by others in society: “*tranny*” (P4; 14, p.309; Emmett; 4, p.247), “*freak*” (P5; 14, p.310; Julia; 10, p.790; Lee; 1, p.70), and “*disgusting*” (Alice; 6, p.47). These labels bore significance on how TGNC people then held knowledge of themselves, described as a “...persecutory inner voice representing society...” (1, p.70). The psychological impact was described by one participant: “...*it reinforces it and becomes death by a thousand cuts. It really puts pressure on you and makes you feel like you shouldn’t exist.*” (Zoe-Ann; 6, p.47). Another narrative that TGNC people reported being given was that of fantasy, curiosity or entertainment (10, 11). As a consequence, TGNC identity became devalued: “*People think of us as entertainers . . . Drag queens lip synching, people doing shows at gay pubs, working at sex shops . . . this is their view of us, so of course they can’t see us working in the same office with them...*” (Jackie; 10, p.790). It was understood that this

knowledge of TGNC identity as held by others increased the likelihood that TGNC people were asked intrusive questions about their transition. Some TGNC people talked about how others' lack of knowledge around TGNC identity made it difficult to share their own knowledge: "...we constantly reply with things we're not." (P2; 13, p.198). This experience left TGNC people feeling "objectified by others" (11, p.323) which prevented them from being seen as a whole person (11, 13).

A source of knowledge on TGNC identity was reported to come from the TGNC community in the UK (1, 2, 6). The environment in which this knowledge was sought appeared to change the meaning of the knowledge. When TGNC people were undergoing physical transition (1, 2, 6), staying connected with other TGNC people helped them to "...meet themselves, their past and their future..." (1, p.70). In this way, knowledge of TGNC identity became shared and valued. In other environments, particularly where TGNC people were older, knowledge of what it means to be TGNC varied within the community: " ...it is about younger people." (Ann; 2, p.164). Where one's own understanding of TGNC identity did not fit with other TGNC peoples' understanding, this led to fear of within-group exclusion (2).

### *Subtheme 3b. Given by self*

The knowledge given to TGNC people by others was reported to impact on the knowledge that TGNC people gave to themselves (6, 8, 11, 14, 15). For some people, knowledge was stigmatising and resulted in detachment from their body: "...not even human and a gross thing which shouldn't exist." (Zoe-Ann; 6, p.48). The internalised stigma created a self-knowledge that something about them was wrong (14), and this was connected to their moral character: "... you just immediate assume you're a bad person." (Ryan; 15, p.13). For other people, self-knowledge

was absent and resulted in feeling confused about their identity: “...*did not have the words for it.*” (Rebecca; 6, p.45). Where knowledge and language around TGNC identity was not readily available, at times this prevented disclosure or connection with others: “*I couldn’t really put a name to it or anything like that and it would have been difficult to talk to people.*” (P2; 14, p.311).

Over time, people described a sense of reclaiming their TGNC identity and having a deeper understanding of what this meant for them (1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 15). The process of this varied depending on one’s personal sense of gender, though for many it was perceived as “*empowering*” (P5; 13, p.199). For some people, it was important to identify as TGNC: “*I think I identified less as female and more as transgender... it also made it alright, it made it not a problem.*” (Lillie; 1, p.71). For others, their TGNC identity became a small part of a broader sense of self: “*I see myself as me regardless.*” (Roxy; 1, p.71); “*I just try and live my life as me.*” (Connor; 15, p.10); “*...always tried to maintain individuality over gender identity.*” (P5; 13, p.199). What was shared amongst this self-knowledge was a “*greater sense of humanity*” (1, p.71). For others, their TGNC identity was understood through self-acceptance and pride of not conforming to the gender binary: “*I was able to slowly stop putting on some hyper-masculine show and be able to be more confident in myself.*” (Jacob; 15, p.15); “*...other people might not realise I’m male, but as long as I know who I am I’m okay.*” (James; 9, p.3543). Gender expression shifted from maintaining others’ sense of gender to maintaining one’s own sense of gender (1, 15) which created a “*sense of agency*” (13, p.199).

Where self-knowledge was affirming and valued, this allowed some TGNC people to use their voice effectively (2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13). This was often described in settings in which TGNC people required access to care. At times, TGNC people took on the role of educator: “*I had to explain [to the radiographer]...to say I could not be pregnant (it’s impossible)*” (P8; 5, p.e41). In

this way, they became “expert patients” (2, p.169) with “a considerable level of expertise – not only in terms of...experience of gender, but on the academic peer-reviewed research” (3, p.418). There were times in which TGNC people were able to challenge and educate others in society who held stigmatising views on TGNC identity (11): “*“...I challenged them about misgendering me intentionally and, you know, making me trying to believe there I am a problematic thing for other people.”* (P8; 13, p.199). Self-advocacy often required “considerable time and energy” (11, p.321) that was driven by a sense of responsibility to the TGNC community (11, 5): “*think that, I feel like, the fighting back is brave and I respect people that do that.*” (P1; 13, p.199).

## **Discussion**

The aim of this meta-synthesis was to advance understanding of TGNC people’s experiences in the UK using data from qualitative studies in the last twenty years. The landscape of available literature captured parts of this experience across a variety of social contexts and life stages. Thematic synthesis of the literature revealed three salient and consistent analytic themes: ‘Bound by the binary’, ‘Taking a risk’, and ‘Knowing oneself’. These analytic themes captured the experiences of many TGNC people in the UK and developed the understanding that TGNC identity is complex and multifaceted (Cooper et al., 2020). The findings placed the importance of the social context on determining how their minority status was experienced and expressed (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). The studies included in the review were mostly conducted in the last decade, with the last few years in particular being an accelerated time of research publication in the UK. In reviewing what it means to be TGNC in the UK today, this meta-synthesis provides some insight into the isolation and distress, as well as the connection and affirmation, people may experience.

The analytic theme 'Bound by the binary' captured a framework of understanding the social world in which TGNC identity is situated within. The binary was understood as the categories of 'male' and 'female' as referred to in the literature (Arcelus & Bouman, 2017). This played a role in the facilitation or inhibition of gender expression and was governed contextually by one's sense of social safety. This was consistent across all gender identity presentations. It created two ways of understanding the expression of TGNC identity: 'hidden' or 'exposed'. Where TGNC identity was 'hidden', it was at times when it felt unsafe to disclose. Interestingly, this was experienced both before and following physical interventions for transition. During transition, many TGNC people reported conforming to the binarised expressions of gender placed on individuals by specialist services as a means to access such intervention, as frequently reported in previous research (Davy, 2010; Linander et al., 2019; Spade, 2006; Willis et al., 2020; Zottola et al., 2021). Where TGNC identity was 'exposed', one's sense of social safety or predictability became threatened. A lack of available language to define oneself, or space to be, was commonly experienced. As a consequence, TGNC people became aware of the 'threat' they embodied to societal ways of understanding gender. The gender binary was what established TGNC people as a minority in UK society. In both 'hidden' and 'exposed' states of being, there was a sense of shame and isolation which impacted significantly on their wellbeing, building on the literature's understanding of the role of internalised shame in TGNC people more broadly (Cogan et al., 2021; Hibbert et al., 2018; Hughto, Reisner & Pachankis, 2015; Wright et al., 2021).

The analytic theme 'Taking a risk' captured the scope of the psychosocial shift that TGNC identity can have for people in the UK. The sense of 'losing it all', experienced by many TGNC people, was poignant. To identify as TGNC would often result in the loss of, or disruption to, important support networks, sense of safety, and material resources. Many TGNC people

experienced complete social rejection and isolation, violence, discrimination, and loss of societal status. These experiences were psychologically distressing and destabilising, as reported in previous research (Byne et al., 2012; Bockting et al., 2013; Downing & Przedworski, 2018; Ellis, Bailey, & McNeil, 2015; Lombardi et al., 2001; Rood et al., 2016; Valentine & Shipherd, 2018). At the same time, there was also a reported sense of having ‘everything to gain’ when identifying as TGNC. This involved acceptance from others, support from within the TGNC community, and experiences that affirmed one’s gender identity. Where this was facilitated, the impact of internalised shame was mitigated. Crucially, this analytic theme highlighted the importance of agency and exposure to affirmative and supportive social contexts in the role of mitigating psychological distress for TGNC people (Barr, Budge & Adelson, 2016; McCann & Brown, 2017; Sherman et al., 2020; Westwater, Riley & Peterson, 2019; Wilson et al., 2016).

The analytic theme ‘Knowledge of oneself’ captured the interconnectivity between the knowledge that society holds on TGNC identity and the knowledge that TGNC people hold of themselves. It spoke to the dominant narratives of TGNC identity in UK culture and how these were made sense of, or experienced by, TGNC people themselves. Knowledge ‘given by others’ to TGNC people was commonly perpetuated by professionals, society, and those within the TGNC community. There were a variety of knowledges made available by others, ranging from insignificance to persecutory. These knowledges were often internalised, forming a knowledge ‘given by self’, and governed decisions around authentic gender expression. There were times where knowledge ‘given by self’ was reclaimed by the TGNC individual as their understanding of themselves deepened. This was often experienced as empowering and enabled people to use their voice for advocacy and regaining access to social resource. This analytic theme supported existing research that TGNC people’s sense of self is encapsulated within a cultural framework of

knowledge (Faye, 2021; Tan et al., 2020) and that when TGNC people are supported to understand themselves they can use this understanding to buffer the impact of minority stress (Allen et al., 2019; Singh, Hays & Watson, 2011; Westwater, Riley & Peterson, 2019; Wilson et al., 2016).

### *Implications and recommendations*

This meta-synthesis presented the UK cultural context (Faye, 2021; Tan et al., 2020) to place the experiences of TGNC people in, in relation to the GSM (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). The findings provided a richer understanding of the ‘distal’ external socially produced stressors for TGNC people (Byne et al., 2012; Hibbert et al., 2018; Hughto, Reisner & Pachankis, 2015; Lombardi et al., 2001; Rood et al., 2016, Valentine & Shipherd, 2018). In the UK, the discrimination and social isolation experienced by TGNC people stems from entrenched narratives around TGNC identity in relation to the threat it poses to the ‘norm’ of the gender binary. The consequences for TGNC people living in the UK often resulted in loss of social safety in a variety of settings, for example education, healthcare, sport, and workplaces. Understandings of ‘proximal’ factors of internally produced stress for TGNC people in the UK included a heightened sense of self-stigmatisation (Cogan et al., 2021), concealing authentic gender expression (Bailey, Ellis, & McNeil, 2014) and presumption of negative appraisal from others (Ellis, Bailey, & McNeil, 2015; McNeil et al., 2012). The findings also developed contextual understandings of how community connection and affirming experiences can mediate distress (Allen et al., 2019; Barr, Budge & Adelson, 2016; McCann & Brown, 2017; Pflum et al., 2015; Singh, Hays & Watson, 2011; Sherman et al., 2020; Westwater, Riley & Peterson, 2019; Wilson et al., 2016). For TGNC people in the UK, it was important that in both personal and professional relationships, others took an active and committed role in understanding what TGNC identity meant to the



individual, working to empower the individual to regain a sense of agency and social safety. The findings highlighted the fundamental role that others play in affirming TGNC identity for individuals across all contexts. The findings demonstrated that the experience of TGNC identity in the UK was uniquely personal, yet collectively shared.

The clinical implications of this meta-synthesis enable clear recommendations to be made for professionals across all settings when working with TGNC people. Crucially, the findings highlighted another dimension when understanding mediators of distress for TGNC people: their own knowledge. In the UK, many TGNC people were able to reclaim their sense of identity despite the challenges and hardships they faced. This finding should be considered by professionals when working with TGNC people across all settings. It is recommended that professionals consider the extent of their existing knowledges, biases and assumptions through supervision and reflexive working. This might help to alleviate the burden of responsibility felt by TGNC people in taking on an 'expert' role within a patient-professional relationship. Further this might enable TGNC people to feel affirmed in their experience and thereby mitigate internalised shame or self-monitoring behaviour. The findings illustrated that TGNC people experienced binarisation, rigidity and power imbalances when accessing specialist services in the UK such as GICs and GIDS. This is particularly important in light of the development of an informed consent model of care for TGNC specialist healthcare services (Schulz, 2018). It is hoped that this meta-synthesis will be used in support of a rapidly evolving evidence base to create holistic, co-produced, and psychosocially sensitive transgender healthcare in the UK.

### *Limitations*

Although the studies included in the meta-synthesis met an acceptable quality standard, there were limitations observed for individual studies. The CASP checklist should be used to consider the limitations of individual studies. It is important to reflect on the observation that many studies did not consider the relationship between researcher and participant (2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14). It might be possible that for some studies, reflexivity was not adequately committed to, which risks the interpretations of their data becoming enmeshed with researcher biases and assumptions. It is also important to note that one study (3) interviewed children in the presence of their parents which might have compounded which might have influenced the findings of this study. These considerations would limit the findings extrapolated from those studies in the current meta-synthesis. There was heterogeneity in research settings amongst the studies. Though this study aimed to capture shared thematic constructs in the data, it is acknowledged that contextual nuances might have been overlooked. Further, it is possible that more comprehensive studies, or studies investigating more similar phenomena, had greater influence in the development of themes for analysis. Of particular note, around half ( $n = 7$ ) of the studies included investigated TGNC identity in relation to healthcare settings. Caution must be therefore be exercised in generalising the findings to the experiences of all TGNC people in the UK and individual experience should always be considered. It should be considered that all participants in the studies were a self-selecting sample, those who felt empowered to use their voice. Specifically, it was observed that only one-third of ( $n = 5$ ) studies reported the ethnicity of their participants, with the vast majority of participants being 'White British'. It is important to consider that this meta-synthesis might be omitting the voices of many TGNC people in the UK who might have different experiences,

including experiences of how their TGNC identity intersects with other aspects of minority identity.

### *Directions for future research*

This meta-synthesis highlights the expanding landscape of research settings in which the experience of TGNC identity in the UK is being explored. Whilst many studies examined the experiences of accessing specialist healthcare and recruited their samples from such settings, it would be beneficial for future researchers to investigate the barriers and facilitators to accessing care from a community sample. This might broaden the experiences captured and include those who did not wish to seek or continue specialist healthcare as well as those that did.

As highlighted, there is a dearth of research investigating or considering the role of additional intersecting minority stress experiences on the experience of TGNC identity in the UK, such as being from a minoritised ethnic background. As minority stress is understood as situated within cultural contexts, it is imperative that future research captures this element in the UK. This study highlighted that the psychological experience of TGNC people was encapsulated in the knowledge, biases and behaviours of others. It would be beneficial for researchers to examine how professionals and families experience someone's TGNC identity and what support might need to be put in place to create affirming and safe environments for TGNC people in these contexts.

## **Conclusions**

This meta-synthesis reviewed 15 qualitative studies that investigated the experiences of TGNC people in the UK across a range of life stages and settings. The findings placed the Gender

Minority Stress Model (Hendricks & Testa, 2012) within the cultural context of the UK. The findings illustrated the dominance of the gender binary in the UK and how this lead to isolation, discrimination, and loss. Stressors were internalised and TGNC people became self-monitoring of gender expression and critical of their sense of worth. The findings also illustrated that affirming experiences mitigated these stressors. Connectivity, support, and empowerment were key components to enabling TGNC people to reclaim a sense of agency as a minority group. This was transformative for TGNC people to gain a sense of social safety, self-worth and wellbeing. Future research into the role of intersectionality, as well as research that explores professionals' and families' experiences of TGNC identity, will help to build an understanding the systemic framework that surrounds TGNC people in the UK.

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## Appendix A – Data extraction form

<b>Data extraction field</b>	<b>Information to be extracted</b>
<b>Context and participants</b>	Study setting, participants and demographic factors, intervention, research question, aims
<b>Study design and methods used</b>	Methodological approach, specific data collection, analysis methods, theoretical models used to interpret or contextualise the findings
<b>Findings</b>	Key themes or concepts identified. First order interpretations (participants' understandings, as reported in results section) and second order interpretations (author's interpretations of participants' understandings, as reported in results and discussion sections).
<b>Quality</b>	As assessed using appropriate checklist

*Adapted from Noyes and Lewin (2011)*

## **CHAPTER TWO: EMPIRICAL PAPER**

**Discourses of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) people in the UK news press: A Foucauldian Exploration**

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Submission guidelines can be found below:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?show=instructions&journalCode=wijt21>

## **Abstract**

This study utilised Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to understand how the UK mainstream news press constructed Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) people. A total of 132 articles from ten mainstream newspaper sources published between January 2018 and July 2021 were analysed. Discourses were analysed using FDA, a form of discourse analysis concerned with understanding hierarchies of knowledge, power relationships and hegemonic practices. Findings revealed four key relational concepts: ‘Valued Knowledge – Unvalued Knowledge’, ‘Claiming Space – Denied Space’, ‘Threatening – Threatened’, and ‘Monitoring – Monitored’. The key concepts were intentionally presented as relational and binary to reflect the process of binarisation that occurred within the discourses. The use and hierarchisation of knowledge of TGNC people was central to each of the dominant discourses and made room for subsequent power relationships and practices to be reaffirmed. Dominant discourses in the UK mainstream news press reaffirmed the positioning of TGNC people as deviant or ‘wrong’. The findings revealed a noticeable paucity of TGNC speakers within the discourses; where they were present, the news press incorporated ‘expert’ voices to undermine them. Future research should investigate alternative sources to the dominant discourse, such as online news and social media, to build on understanding hegemonic narratives of TGNC people. Continually reviewing the discourse as the social, cultural and political landscape evolves in the UK, will aid to understand how TGNC people themselves experience such dominant discourses and the impact these might have on their wellbeing and accessing services. Implications and limitations are discussed.

*Keywords:* Transgender, non-binary, TGNC, gender, news press, newspaper, media, discourse, Foucault



## Introduction

Gender is “performative” (Butler, 1990); it is constructed by the attributes, roles, and behaviours that society deems appropriate for ‘males’ and ‘females’ and expressed by individuals in ways that either conform or deviate from these normative and binarized expectations. Gender identity is considered to be moulded and governed by discursive constructions (Hodkinson, 2011a; Simpson, Mayr & Statham, 2019; Sunderland & Litosseliti, 2002). Far from the binarization of ‘male’ and ‘female’ assigned with their respective biological characteristics, gender is increasingly recognised and experienced as dynamic and diverse (Arcelus & Pierre Bouman, 2017). Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) identity refers to people whose gender identity does not align with the sex and/or gender assigned at birth and is an umbrella term to include binary, non-binary, queer, and fluid gender identities (Fiani & Han, 2019; Tankersley et al., 2021). To ‘come out’ as TGNC often risks societal rejection (Byne et al., 2012; Rood et al., 2016) and discrimination (Lombardi et al., 2001; Valentine & Shipherd, 2018). At the same time, sharing ones TGNC identity can also create a sense of ‘belonging’ to a community which may be a protective factor for a TGNC person’s wellbeing (Barr, Budge & Adelson, 2016; McCann & Brown, 2017). The varied experiences of TGNC identity alludes to the notion that the meanings made of identity depends on the contexts in which it is placed and societal discourses surrounding it.

Much of societal discourses are shaped and perpetuated by the news press. News press discourses are found to impact how TGNC people understand themselves and how they predict others will perceive them. Hughto et al. (2021) found that exposure to negative media messages adds to the existing stigma experienced by TGNC people, furthering their risk of mental health

disorder and psychological distress. Further research suggests that young people or people at the start of their transition journey are acutely aware of how the news press represent their identity; Pham et al. (2020) reported that TGNC youth experienced concerns about their mental wellbeing and safety following exposure to negative news coverage regarding TGNC issues, particularly at times of political and legal challenges. The authors emphasised that it was also valued by TGNC youth when news coverage was positive, as it served to increase visibility. Indeed, Pang et al. (2020) observed an association between increasing media coverage of TGNC related topics and increasing numbers of TGNC people presenting to specialist TGNC healthcare.

The news press is an established source of data when understanding how cultural values, power relations, and ideologies are represented in language (Bell, 1991; Fowler, 1991a; van Dijk, 1988). The news press is often analysed in various academic fields to better understand existing structures of knowledge (Matheson, 2005) as it gives voice to those deemed to be knowledgeable about the subject matter. Michel Foucault (1972) conceptualised that in doing so they award certain hierarchies of knowledge and power structures to be established or reinforced. The news press centrality in societal discourse is thought to be influenced by their investment in aligning with hegemonic narratives in order to maintain high volumes of readership (Fowler, 1991b). In doing so, they contribute to a ‘circuit of culture’ (Fowler, 1991b) that facilitates the reciprocal production and consumption of knowledge.

Many researchers have analysed the UK news press to examine discursive constructions concerning legal and political areas of interest, for example refugees (Baker & McEnery, 2005; Cooper, Blumell & Bunce, 2021), obesity (Brooks & Baker, 2022; Nimgeer, Patterson & Hilton,

2019), and Brexit (Goodman, 2021). It is posited that features of news construction – the “how” - provide insight into the function of news publishing – the “why”. One way of understanding the “how” is to examine a news article’s choice of knowledge sources (Fairclough, 2015; Johnson-Cartee, 2005a), linguistic patterns (Bignell, 2002; Richardson, 2007b), and news framing (Entman, 2004; Johnson-Cartee, 2005b). Another way of understanding the “how” is to apply Critical Discourse Analysis (Akerlund, 2019; Richardson, 2007c). In particular, Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) is often used (Feltham-King & Macleod, 2016; Hammond, Ncube & Fido, 2021; Jäger & Maier, 2016; Ubisi, 2020) to understand the “why” through the lens of Michel Foucault’s (1972) theories around hierarchies of knowledge, power relations, and societal shaping of hegemonic practices.

While there are recommendations for journalists on newspaper coverage of transgender issues, including UK specific recommendations (Trans Media Watch, 2011), violations of these guidelines are still pervasive (Billard, 2016; Bolzern, Mnyama & McMillan, 2019; Faye, 2021a). Newspaper coverage of transgender women is significantly higher than coverage of transgender men (Capuzza, 2014; Li, 2018). It has been observed that newspapers often perpetuate a ‘moral panic’ narrative by constructing TGNC people as powerful and threatening (Faye, 2021b). Akerlund (2019) draws attention to the discursive strategies that the news press employs to represent TGNC people as deviant from social norms and to minimise the issues that TGNC people face.

Some research is beginning to examine TGNC authorship in news press. Fink and Palmer (2020) interviewed TGNC people who were invited to author articles in mainstream US

newspapers. Participants described a sense of responsibility to their community; by risking personal privacy they may increase TGNC visibility in the dominant discourses.

Research into representations of TGNC people in the UK press, though scarce, is broadening. Polese and Zottola (2019) found that UK mainstream news press coverage of TGNC people became more frequent after the Gender Recognition Act (2004) was introduced in the years between 2004-2010. The language shifted to focus on physical sex characteristics of TGNC people, further perpetuating a narrow focus on how TGNC identities are expressed. In the UK mainstream news press, Baker (2014) revealed how discursive representations of TGNC people in 2012 positioned them as ‘oversensitive’ victims or as ‘sexually deviant’ villains, or as objects of jokes. The negative stereotypes about TGNC people are somewhat reversed in non-mainstream UK news press (Ferraresi, 2018), perhaps helped by their position of advocacy and ownership to deviate from the hegemonic narratives due to lower volumes of readership.

#### *Rationale for research*

This study is interested in understanding the discursive constructions (“how”) of TGNC identity in the UK news press in order to better understand its function (“why”) in maintaining hegemony. This study posits that the UK press has a crucial function in the construction and maintenance of dominant discourses surrounding TGNC people. Such discourses play a role in how TGNC people understand themselves in relation to others in society and will impact on their psychological well-being. There is limited research in the UK that have used newspapers as a data source to examine how TGNC people are represented in a time where there has been a rapidly evolving legal, political and sociocultural climate for TGNC people (Faye, 2021c). There is no

research that has examined TGNC representation in the mainstream UK news press in the last decade.

### *Research aims*

The aim of this study is to explore how TGNC people are discursively represented in recent UK mainstream press. This study will employ Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to investigate “how” TGNC identity is constructed. This study is particularly interested in narration (i.e. ‘who’ is given a voice) and hierarchies (i.e. ‘what’ is important) of knowledge, power (i.e. how power relationships are portrayed in the text and who it is given to), subject positioning (i.e. where TGNC people are situated, what practices are thereby facilitated or limited), objectification (i.e. where TGNC people are constructed as passive, de-personalised objects), subjectification (i.e. where TGNC people conform to dominant expectations of ways of being) and surveillance (i.e. who or what is monitored and regulated, what is the power relationship constructed). This will allow for findings to be placed in Michel Foucault’s (1970) relational frameworks of knowledge, power, subject positioning, subjectification, objectification and surveillance. These frameworks create a conceptual understanding of the function of these discourses – the “why”. In doing so, the study aims to develop understanding of the discursive worlds TGNC people inhabit in UK dominant discourses as maintained by mainstream news press. Attention will also be paid to emerging discourse strands.

## **Method**

### *Design and analytic approach*

This study adopts a post-modern stance within a social constructionist epistemological position; it is posited that language is used to construct understanding of the world and to give order to social contexts (Willig, 2008). Further, it is understood that language carries multiple

meanings and so the act of interpretation is too a social construction (Reicher, 2000). Discourses are understood as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). This study employed a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) analytic approach, as FDA applies a post-structuralist lens to its understanding of how discourses are used. Interpretation can be carried out on language sources ‘wherever there is meaning’ (Parker 1999) thereby news press can be held as a valued data source.

Analysts of FDA understand that discourses construct their subjects, whilst the opposite relationship is considered in other branches of discourse analyses (Willig, 2015). Foucault posits that discourses offer an array of subject positions (subjectivity) which shape certain ways of being and feeling in the world (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Willig, 2001). Subjectivity may offer an understanding of where people are socially and relationally positioned by discourses. Discourses facilitate and limit what practices can be done by whom, where and when (Parker, 1992). Discourses can reveal objectification of subjects, meaning that the subjects’ agency or self-knowledge is determined by others. As a consequence, subjects can become subjectified by discourses, complying to these practices and thereby maintaining dominant discourses (Foucault, 1977). Relationships between subject positions and the practices they facilitate are thought to produce and reinforce certain power relationships (Foucault, 1977). Power is conceptualised by Foucault (1980) as a productive relational process rather than an oppressive trait that people possess. Foucault described surveillance and self-surveillance as one of the most powerful mechanisms of control in power relationships (Foucault, 2007) and a mechanism that aims to maintain dominant discourses. Foucault further suggested that knowledge is a crucial factor when understanding power relationships (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Gutting, 2005). Discursive representations of knowledge are examined with the lens of who or what is posited as ‘expert’.

Analysts are interested in the hierarchies of knowledge produced by discourse as they serve to legitimize and reinforce existing legitimised social and institutional practices (Willig, 2008). Dominant discourses ultimately shape hegemonic ‘truths’ and ‘common sense’ in society. Simultaneously, there are many truths constructed through language and its meaning will be shaped by readers’ and researchers’ personal beliefs and experiences (Graham, 2011). Deviant and emerging discourses evolve as social, legal, and political contexts do, which is particularly important to consider as mainstream news press hold a self-serving function of maintaining high volumes of readership. A qualitative design is also supported by TGNC communities who urge researchers to follow non-pathologising and qualitative research procedures (Zitz, Burns, & Tacconelli, 2014).

### *Ethics*

Ethical approval for this research was granted by Bangor University School of Psychology (Appendix A).

### *Phase 1: Data collection*

A systematic search of ProQuest International Newsstream was conducted to collect newspaper articles published in the UK between January 2018 to July 2021. This period of investigation was a particularly important time in public discourse; the UK Government had initiated consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act (2004). It is understood that times of significance surrounding legal and political events shape the nature of journalistic reporting

(Richardson, 2007a) with typically more frequent debate in press discourse observed (Polese & Zottola, 2019).

Search terms to identify articles relating to TGNC people or topics were developed by consulting existing literature (Akerlund, 2019), a guide to TGNC terminology (Stonewall, 2021), and later a review of the data (Table 2). The database searches and screening were conducted by the first author. After removing duplicate records, retrieved articles were screened by headline and first two paragraphs for one or more of the search terms with the intent to ensure potentially relevant articles (Akerlund, 2019). It was noted that some relevant articles that were being excluded at this level as the headline or first two paragraphs would use alternative but relevant terminology. The authors reviewed a selection of data and generated an expanded search term list (Table 2). The first author conducted an additional search of the database using these terms, removed duplicate records and resumed the screening process. Full texts were then retrieved and assessed for eligibility. A subset of ten per cent ( $n = 60$ ) of articles were independently screened by the second, third and fourth authors and discrepancies were resolved through discussion. An overview of the eligibility criteria is provided in Table 1. Included in the final dataset were 2208 full text articles from ninety-one newspaper publishers. (Appendix B). The search strategy is demonstrated in Figure 1.



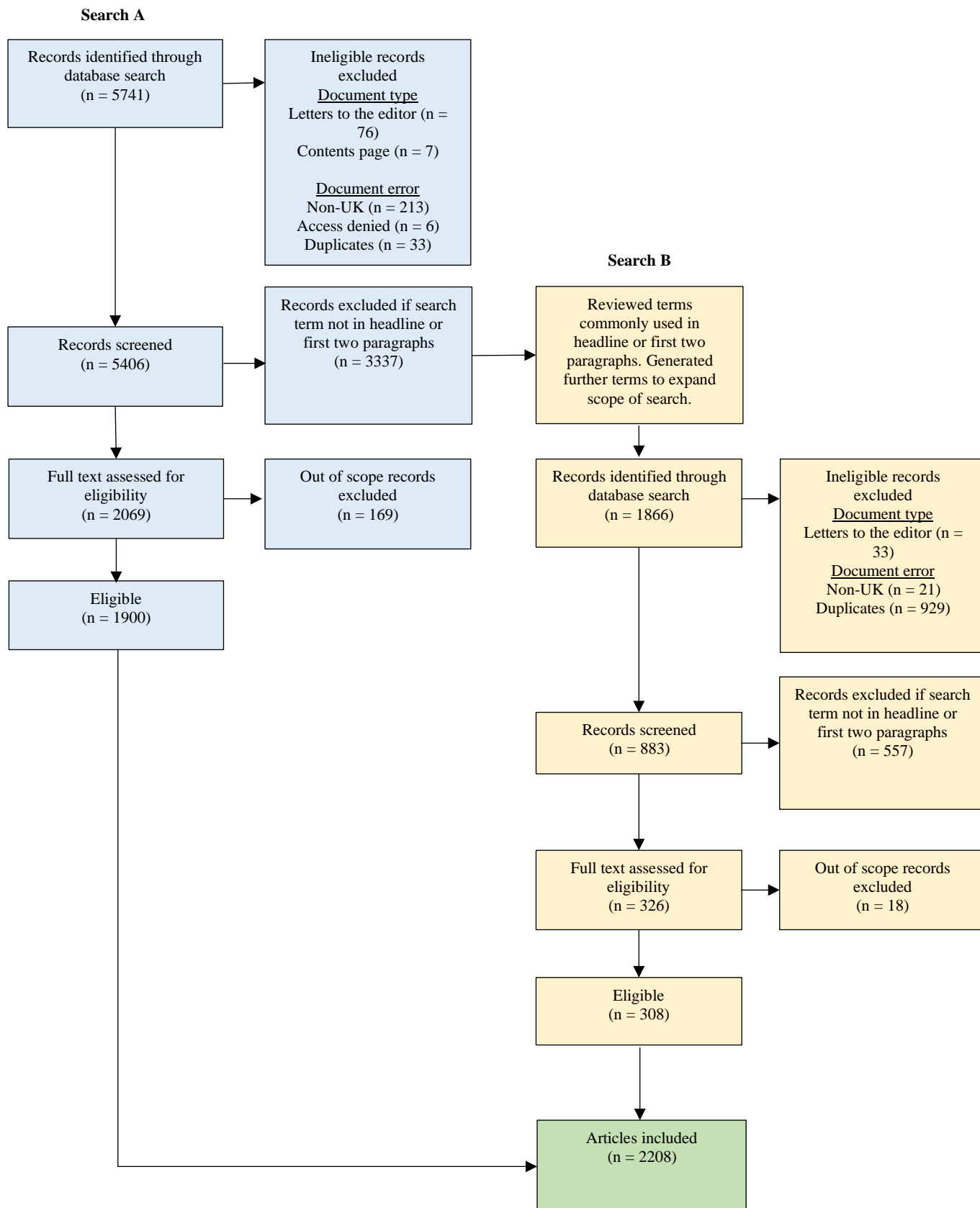
**Table 1.** Eligibility criteria

Element	Include	Exclude
<b>Publication</b>	Newspaper articles published between 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2018 – 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2021	Newspaper articles published before 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2018 or after 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2021
	Newspaper articles published in the UK	Newspaper articles published outside of the UK
	Newspaper articles written in English	Newspaper articles not written in English
	Document type is in category of News, General Information, Commentary, Editorial or Feature	Document type is outside of included categories e.g. Letters to the editor, Contents page
<b>Relevance</b>	Search term(s) present in headline or first two paragraphs of the article	Search term(s) not present in headline or first two paragraphs of the article
	Full text including commentary on TGNC people or topics	Full text not including commentary on TGNC people or topics (e.g. quiz of the week article) or main narrative of article is clearly not relevant
		Search term(s) out of context of this study e.g. ‘FTM’ being used to describe a financial software system

**Table 2.** Final search terms

Search ID	Search terms
<b>Search A</b> (informed by existing literature and guidance)	agender* OR bigender* OR crossdress* OR “ftm” OR “gender dys*” OR “gender fluid” OR “gender identity disorder” OR “gender incongruence” OR “gender non conform*” OR “gender non-conform*” OR “gender queer*” OR “gender reassign*” OR “gender variant” OR gender-fluid OR genderless OR genderqueer* OR gender-queer* OR gender-variant OR “inter gender*” OR intergender* OR “mtf” OR “neutrois” OR “non binary*” OR “non gender*” OR nonbinar* OR non-binar* OR nongender* OR non-gender* OR “third gender” OR trann* OR “trans boy” OR “trans feminine” OR “trans girl” OR “trans m?n” OR “trans masculine” OR “trans person” OR “trans wom?n” OR transgender* OR transsexual OR transvestit*
<b>Search B</b> (informed by data review)	“chang* gender” OR “chang* sex” OR “gender chang*” OR “gender clinic” OR “gender critic*” OR “gender free” OR “gender ident*” OR “gender recogni*” OR “gender self*” OR “gender swap” OR “gender switch” OR “gender transition” OR “gender treat*” OR gender-free OR gender-incl* OR misgender* OR pronoun* OR “self* gender” OR “sex chang*” OR “sex swap” OR “sex switch” OR “swap gender” OR “swap sex” OR “switch gender” OR “switch sex” OR transphob*

**Figure 1. Search strategy**



## *Phase 2: Data analysis*

### *Sampling*

A set of eight daily newspapers and two Sunday national mainstream newspapers were considered for analysis. This sample was purposively considered in line with the research aims; articles in the dataset were considered from newspapers in which they were most frequently published (Figure 2) to capture the dominant discourses observed in UK news press. At the data selection level, random sampling was conducted to minimise researcher bias.

A sample of 50 per cent of articles from two major newspapers (The Guardian  $n = 37$ ; The Sun  $n = 39$ ) were selected for analysis in the first instance. These newspapers are generally considered antithetical in political leaning and market position (Chauhan & Foster, 2014; Hodkinson, 2011b; Nimegeer, Patterson & Hilton, 2019). From the remaining sample, five per cent of articles were selected for further analysis until saturation was reached and no further new concepts were identified (Daily Mail  $n = 8$ ; Express Online  $n = 5$ ; Mail on Sunday  $n = 5$ ; Sunday Times  $n = 8$ ; Telegraph.co.uk  $n = 8$ ; The Daily Telegraph  $n = 7$ ; The Independent  $n = 4$ ; The Times  $n = 12$ ). In total there were 132 articles analysed (word count = 93,775) (Appendix C).

### *Analytic procedure*

There is no singular method to conduct FDA; Foucault actively resisted defining such an analytic procedure as doing so might suggest a single truth and limit scope for meaning-making across various sources of discourses (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Foucault emphasised that the work should “function” in discovering new perspectives (Hanna, 2014). It was decided to follow a framework as established by Willig (2015) to guide the analysis whilst holding in mind key Foucauldian concepts. Stage one of analysis was concerned with the ways discursive

phenomena were constructed within the text. This went beyond noting key words, it was equally as important to look for what was not being said or what language was omitted. Stage two of analysis placed its focus on locating the various discursive constructions of the phenomenon within wider discourses. It sought to identify differences in how the same discursive construction (i.e. 'TGNC') was represented in relation to wider discourses (i.e. medicine, legality, economy). Stage three of the analysis involved a closer examination of the context in which the discursive construction was placed. It asked what was gained constructing the phenomenon in this particular way in that particular point of the text, in other words, it sought to understand its function. This stage referred to the 'action orientation' of text in that it allowed an understanding of what the various constructions of the phenomenon were capable of achieving within the text. In this study, this helped to understand how and when TGNC people were represented, particularly thinking about its function for the desired overall message of the article. Stage four of the analysis was concerned with the subject positions within the text. A subject position within a discourse identifies 'a location for persons within the structure of rights and duties for those who use that repertoire' (Davies & Harré, 1999). This helped to understand how and when TGNC people were 'positioned' within the text and its function. This also extended to thinking about the positioning of knowledge sources that were used within the text. Stage five was concerned with how discourse translated into action or practice. Specifically, what was 'allowed' or enabled as a consequence of the discursive representations of the phenomena. Stage six of analysis focused on how discourses shaped social and psychological realities or 'truths'. This helped to understand how the data informed public perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of issues related to TGNC people. Willig (2015) noted that FDA is both a de-construction (in staged analysis) and re-construction (in making sense and writing up) in its process. The first author utilised consultation with the other authors;

they reflected on their personal position and how this may interact with their interpretation of the data. In the analysis special attention was paid to discourses related to the Foucauldian concepts of subjectification, power, knowledge and surveillance.

### *Reflexive summary*

As knowledge, and the act of interpretation of knowledge, is socially constructed, the meaning given to the data was influenced by researchers' personal beliefs and experiences (Graham, 2011). All researchers have experience personally and/or professionally with the TGNC community in the UK. Consultation with local third sector organisations providing support for TGNC people was conducted at the outset of this study to clarify research aims. At the time of writing, the first author (JS) was a Trainee Clinical Psychologist working in a Welsh NHS setting with interests in the psychological, social and political experiences of minoritised groups, particularly those who identify as TGNC. Author GF worked as a Lecturer in Film Studies at Bangor University; they have extensive expertise in the political and ideological underpinnings of the media and have a particular interest in hegemonic discourses concerning gender identity. Author CL is a clinical lecturer, has particular expertise in Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and holds a keen interest in the experiences of TGNC people. Author LS works as a Senior Clinical Psychologist in a Welsh NHS setting; at the time of writing LS was completing a Postgraduate Certificate in Theoretical Foundations for Gender Identity Healthcare and holds an interest in the experiences of TGNC people. The analysis and formulation of findings have benefitted from the different perspectives of the research team, who all had a supportive outlook towards TGNC people. The findings, and their interpretation, must also be viewed within the evolving cultural context of the United Kingdom and through the lens of observable mainstream news press

discourses. Positioning the findings in this way may allow a reader to assimilate their generalisability and utility as appropriate.

## **Findings**

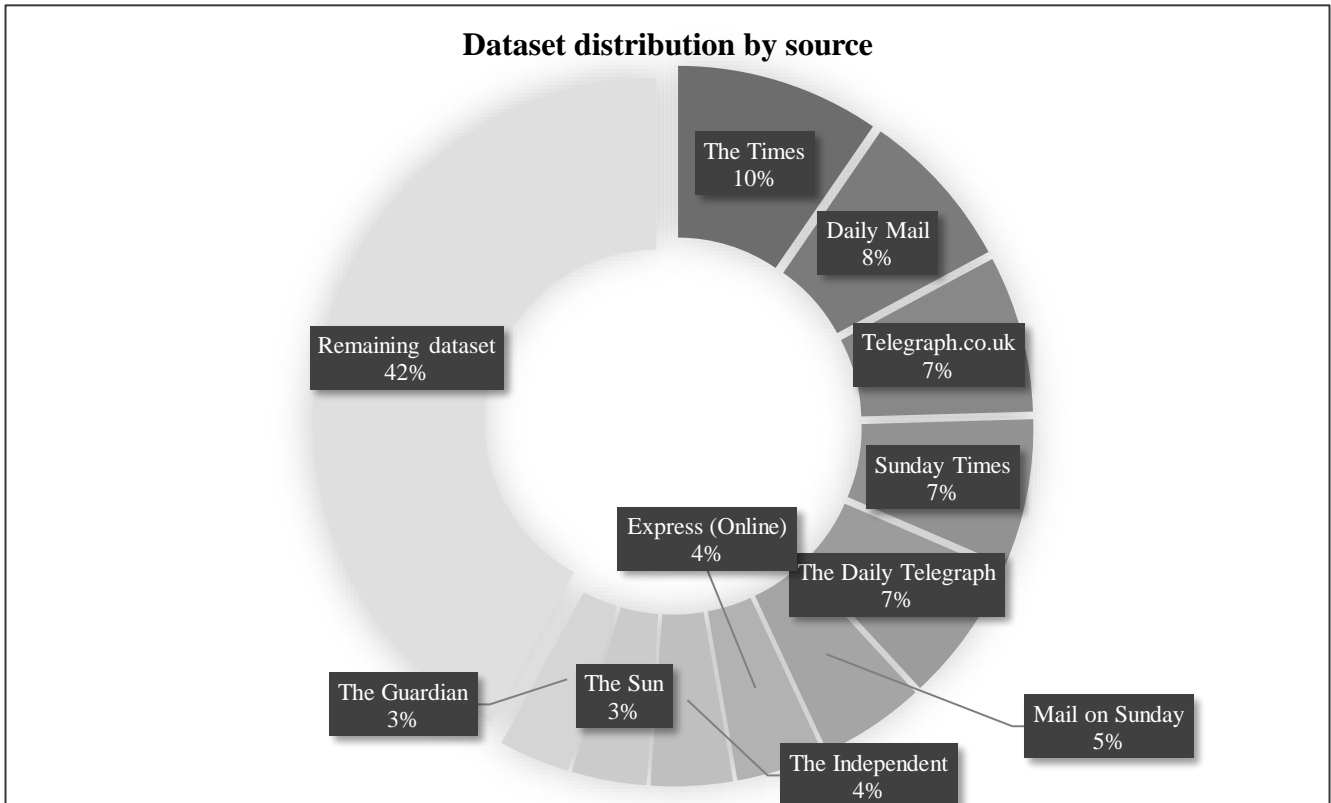
### *Demographic observations*

The set of ten newspaper sources used for analysis comprised the majority of overall publications in the dataset (Figure 2). It was observed that articles were more frequently published in 2018 and 2019. The publication rate appears to drop around February 2020, at which time the outbreak of Covid-19 became a focus of UK news press (Nerlich & Jaspal, 2021). Distribution of publication rates are outlined in Figure 3.

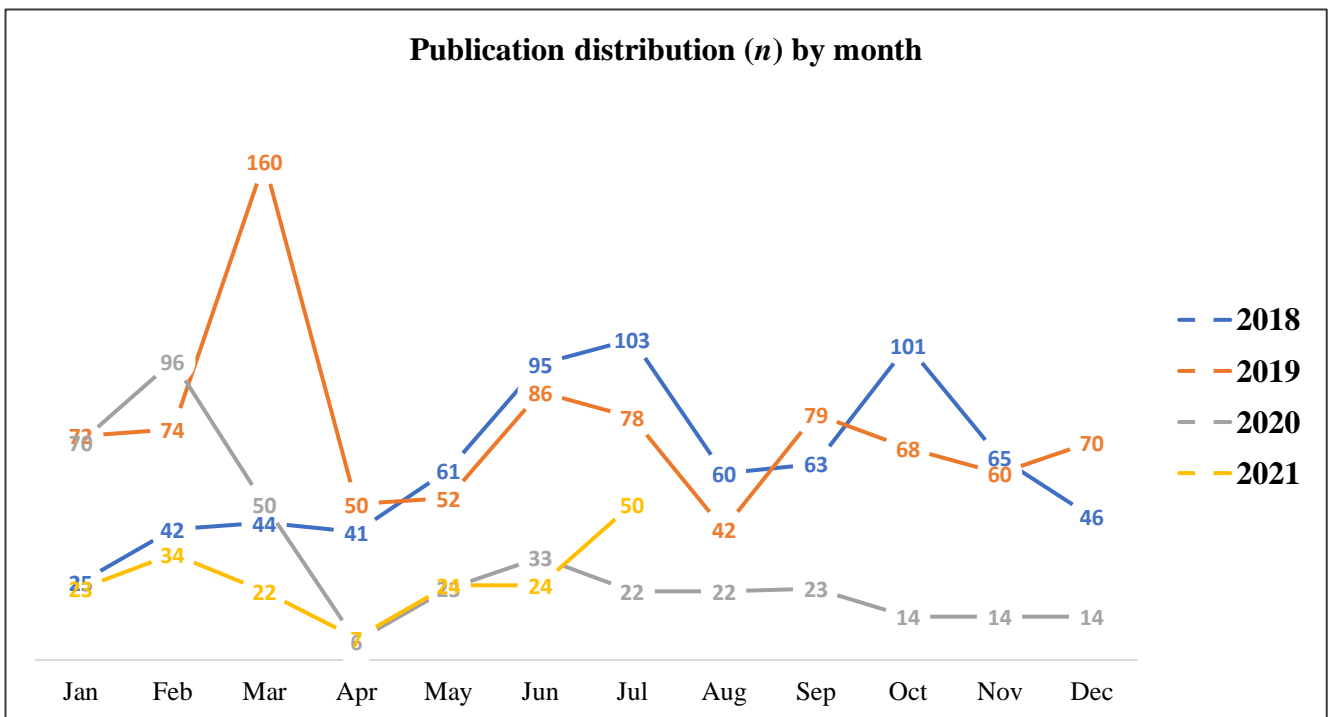
### *Foucauldian Discourse Analysis*

A central finding in the analysis was the presence of reciprocal relationships within concepts. A duality was observed: though key concepts were shared in the discourse, whom or what the concept was allocated to depended on the speaker or context of the article. Four key relational concepts were identified in the analysis. The relationship that the concepts had to each other is illustrated in Figure 4. Key concepts were interrelated and captured Foucauldian ideas of power, knowledge, subject positioning, objectification, subjectification and surveillance.

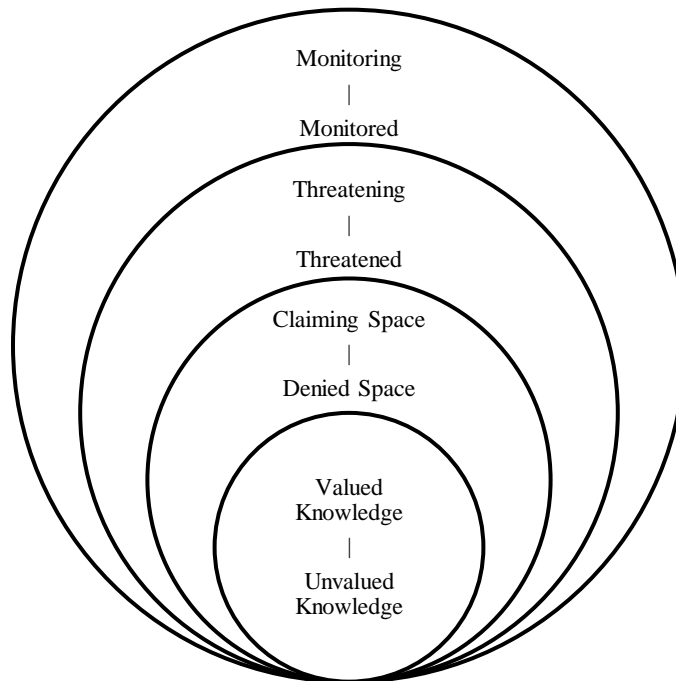
**Figure 2. Dataset distribution**



**Figure 3. Publication distribution**



**Figure 4.** Concepts identified



***Key concept 1: Valued Knowledge – Unvalued Knowledge***

*“What and who is trans? What makes someone trans?”* (929, Mail on Sunday).

Such questions epitomised much of the discourse surrounding TGNC people in the mainstream news press. The question of *whose* knowledge and *what* knowledge was valued was central in this discourse. As various strands around this discourse emerged, they all exercised a function: establishing a hierarchy of valued knowledge concepts of TGNC people, influencing and directing which associated practices could be sustained.

A discourse strand revealed how TGNC identity was understood in relation to existing knowledges of gender:



*“...gender identity is separate from one’s biological sex...there must be a recognition of complexities beyond binary definition.”* (2325, The Guardian).

This strand constructed gender identity as a valued concept in its own right. It positioned “*biological sex*” and “*binary*” as being the dominant knowledge constructs currently in the discourse and opened up space for “*gender identity*” to become another valued knowledge construct. A TGNC speaker substantiated this discourse strand from their own experience: “*It took me a long time to separate identity from biology.*” (1774, The Guardian). A judge, usually considered a speaker holding a position of power, endorsed this discourse strand as a ““*...social and psychological reality...*”” (2036, The Guardian). These discourse strands made room for alternative knowledges of gender identity to be given value.

However, the introduction of this emerging discourse strand was met with resistance, conceptualised in the wider discourse as the “*...sex and gender debate...*” (2325, The Guardian). The term “*debate*” positioned the concepts of ‘biological sex’ and ‘gender identity’ as competing rather than co-existing knowledges. The ‘biological sex’ concept was positioned as a hegemonic ‘truth’ in its construction as a “*reality*” (1944, The Guardian). Speakers who were deemed to hold a legitimised position of power in society were invited to substantiate this knowledge concept, thereby adding value to the knowledge claim:

*“Calvert [a representative from the Christian Institute] said: “All the posturing in the world can’t erase the hard-wired reality of male and female.”*” (1628, Sunday Times);

*“Plan to ignore birth sex in census alarms academics.”* (1383, The Times);

*“Dr Kath Murray said... ‘It is particularly concerning that officials have ignored the advice of 80 of the UK’s most eminent academics, working in relevant disciplines, who have called on the census authorities “to retain the integrity of the category of sex, and not to conflate this with gender identity”.’”* (1206, Daily Mail).

The “*category*” (1206) of “*male and female*” (1628) “*sex*” (1206) was awarded the value of “*integrity*” (1206) by legitimised speakers. As a consequence, the discourse strand positing ‘gender identity’ as a knowledge concept was undermined and devalued, and the dominant discourse positing ‘biological sex’ as a knowledge concept was strengthened. Indeed, the discourse employed language to further devalue the discourse strands concerning ‘gender identity’:

*“...make up the science....Trans may, in years, to turn out to be psychologically or biologically provable...”* (929, Mail on Sunday).

Thereby ‘gender identity’ was positioned as deficient of the existing requirement for knowledge to hold scientific evidence in order to be given value and a legitimised place in the dominant discourse.

The news press sought to contain these two competing discourses by ascertaining an order of valued knowledge: “*They [trans rights activists] argue that... they do not deny the reality of biological sex...*” (2325, The Guardian). The ‘gender identity’ knowledge concept was given value and was placed under the condition that it does not devalue the “*reality*” of the ‘biological sex’

knowledge concept. A hierarchy of knowledge was thereby established: the discourse strand positing a 'gender identity' concept of knowledge was permissible only when the dominant discourse positing a 'biological sex' concept of knowledge was valued as more legitimate. The introduction of emerging discourses positing alternative concepts of knowledge about TGNC people in the news press resulted in the reinforcement of dominant discourses sustaining hegemonic concepts of knowledge. Where this knowledge hierarchy was challenged by TGNC voices, concern of "erasure" (1628) of hegemonic truths and practices were expressed: "*The implications of this shift should not be underestimated.*" (1796, The Guardian).

The function of maintaining existing hierarchisation of knowledge of biological sex revealed related objectification of TGNC people:

*"... a surgically constructed vagina and hormonally grown breasts..."* (748, Mail on Sunday);

*"...we change the body to fit the patient... Dr Gallagher, 37, was always interested in the transformative effects of surgery, explaining... "I thought this stuff is like Frankenstein, taking bits of tissue off the body.... The plumbing is really difficult."* (50, The Sun).

TGNC people were understood as body parts to be manipulated or performed on. Language was employed associated with abnormality or artificiality, serving to position TGNC people as unnatural. It was noted that speakers were considered observers (748) or facilitators (50) of such practices and seemed to be 'used' in the discourse to add value to this way of understanding TGNC

people. As a consequence, TGNC people themselves were subjectified in the discourse, adopting the behaviours required by the dominant discourse:

*“Mr Jaffey [QC] suggested the court should rule against TT’s claim because of other transgender men who had given birth “happily” adopted the term mother.”* (1108, The Daily Telegraph);

*“The judge praised McConnell for “properly and bravely” bringing his case...”* (2036, The Guardian).

The terms *““happily” adopted”* (1108) were employed by a speaker in a position of power to reinforce the subjectified compliance by TGNC people to the dominant knowledges of gender. TGNC people were positioned as *“brave”* (2036) for challenging frameworks of knowledge yet were reinforced for *“properly”* (2036) complying to hegemonic practices. A power relationship was exemplified through the discourse – those in positions of power held agency over sustaining dominant practices and devaluing alternative practices. The discourse illustrated where, and which groups of, society organised dominant knowledges of gender.

### ***Key concept 2: Claiming Space – Denied Space***

*“It’s not acceptable for Labour Party spokespeople to say that they will remove rights from women in order to give rights to another group.”* (999, The Independent).

Through organised knowledges of gender, the discourse revealed subsequent subject positions. Subject positions were used to construct a space in which TGNC people were situated and to define what space was “*permitted*” (812, The Guardian) or “*refused*” (1944, The Guardian). A power relationship was exposed between those who claimed space and those who were denied it and was further posed as problematic: “...*how will we ever resolve it?*” (1532, The Guardian).

A discourse strand emerged regarding TGNC people being denied space by existing knowledges of gender and their associated practices:

*“Sam Smith, the pop singer whose gender identity is non-binary, has been excluded from the gendered categories at the 2021 Brit awards...That means there is no room for Smith...”* (1538, The Guardian);

*“[within modelling] there are also still occasions when trans women are excluded outright... we’re a super-small section of society but that doesn’t mean our rights aren’t valid or necessary.”* (1158, The Guardian).

Where TGNC people were not subjectified by the discourse, meaning they did not adopt the behaviours required by the dominant discourse such as conforming to binarised knowledges of gender, the consequence was “*exclusion*” (1538, 1158) and “*no room*” (1538), or agency, to act. An emerging discourse strand opened “*valid*” (1158) and “*necessary*” (1158) opportunities for TGNC people to claim space: “*Supporters of the plan to "normalise the inclusion" of pronouns*

say this would "foster an open culture that is supportive"... " (2219, Daily Telegraph). The quotation marks indicated a divergence of this emerging discourse from the dominant discourse and could indicate scepticism. Subsequently in the article, the dominant discourse was reinforced:

*"However, the plan has provoked opposition... a row that left some workers in tears."*  
(2219, Daily Telegraph);

*"...policies must fairly balance the conflicting rights of trans people and women".*" (2194, The Guardian);

*"In an attempt to accommodate a minority, the state is sacrificing the needs of the majority at their most vulnerable."* (1223, Telegraph.co.uk);

*"...any changes made to be more inclusive need to be just that... if a change unintentionally leads to less inclusion then it risks being counterproductive to diversity and equality."*  
(1541, The Sun);

The use of the terms "*accommodate*" (1223), "*opposition*" (2219), "*conflicting*" (2194), and "*less inclusion*" (1541) revealed a finite, or limited, construction of 'space' available to TGNC people. In order for room to be made for TGNC people in the discourse, room must subsequently be removed for others. The terms "*minority*" (1223) and "*majority*" (1223), utilitarian constructions of knowledge and societal practice justification, were employed to solidify existing

space relations. The construction of the “minority” was understood as a knowledge of how much observable space TGNC people took up in society:

*“... estimated that 28,000 students in the UK were transgender. That is around one per cent of the entire student population. But in an attempt to make a minority feel more comfortable on campus, all new students at Edinburgh are being told to make trading pronouns as routine as trading pleasantries.”* (1446, The Sun);

Allocation of ‘space’ in the discourse was facilitated through existing hegemonic practices of knowledge; data was given value and employed to justify subject positionings. Indeed, TGNC people subjectified themselves by almost apologetically explaining the small amount of ‘space’ they occupied: *“Transgender groups point out that they still make up only 0.6% of the population.”* (2325, The Guardian), thereby implying that the allocation of space to TGNC people was negligible.

The discourse thus far revealed that who and what was permitted space was understood as a “right” (1796, 2194). The dominant discourse also denied space to TGNC people related to their perceived value:

*“The £4000 cost of the op... has been questioned by Tory MP Pauline Latham. She said: “When you think about the rationing of hip and knee replacements and cancer waiting lists, I’m not sure this is a priority for the NHS.””* (846, The Sun)

*“...more pressing problems...”* (926, Daily Mail)

*“...cost the taxpayer tens of thousands of pounds... branding it “not live saving” and not “vital”.”* (1952, Telegraph.co.uk)

Terms such as *“rationing”* (846) and *“cost”* (1952) reinforced the concept of finite space and financial resources that needed to be governed according to value. A hierarchy of valued space was established depending on what was considered *“vital”* (1952) or *“pressing”* (926), with the needs of TGNC people being positioned as holding less value within the wider hierarchy of needs. Objectification of TGNC people further emerged as increased space was valued against a hierarchical, objectified medical lens (846). This objectified TGNC people further:

*“...they can obtain extra perks such as single cells and showers... convinced many are simply playing the system, which is wide open to abuse.”* (926, Daily Mail)

A possible challenge of the existing allocation of space was reconstructed as threatened by the need of TGNC people, who became objectified, with terms such as *“abuse”* (926) employed implying that TGNC people were persecutory. As a consequence, discourse strands creating room for TGNC people were condemned and dominant discourses governing allocation of space were affirmed.

### ***Key concept 3: Threatening - Threatened***

*“...both sides claim they feel unsafe.”* (1532, The Guardian)



As discourses revealed hierarchies of knowledge and subject positioning, power relationships were too constructed. A central finding in the discourse was the concept of threat. The discourse constructed two opposing strands of this power relationship – “*both sides*” – and created a binarised ‘Us vs Them’. There were two ways of being as positioned by the discourse: “*vulnerable*” (981, The Sun) or “*threatening*” (178, Telegraph.co.uk).

A discourse strand positioned TGNC people as a threat to existing discursive spaces. TGNC people became objectified in the discourse by amorphous language:

“...*trans ideology*...” (1628, Sunday Times);

“...*trans manifesto*...” (1157, The Guardian);

“...*transgender lobby*...” (1521, Sunday Times; 2031, The Daily Telegraph);

“...*trans movement*...” (1989, Sunday Times);

“...*social contagion*...” (2325, The Guardian)

Constructed as a collective and nondescript group, TGNC people were positioned as intimidating, thereby giving them uncontrolled power. TGNC people were described as “*contagion*” (2325) shortly following the first ‘peak’ of the Covid-19 pandemic, a time when such language was being used concurrently in the mainstream news press to position the threat of a lethal, powerful, and disruptive virus. The discourse objectified TGNC people as a virus and created associated emotional responses that was highly salient for readers at that time. The political language used, such as “*ideology*” (1628), “*manifesto*” (1157), “*lobby*” (1521, 2031) and “*movement*” (1989), further objectified TGNC people as a group advocating for a particular

doctrine of knowledge that exert power and influence. The political rhetoric was further radicalised:

*“...likened police to the Gestapo or the Stasi for the way they responded to Harry Miller, 55, a businessman accused of sending transphobic tweets...”* (1521, Sunday Times);

*“The trans movement has been hijacked by gender extremists.”* (1989, Sunday Times);

*“...trans taliban...”* (1053, The Guardian)

This discourse strand set a broad tone of unpredictable threat – *“hijacked”* (1989) – and attributed abuse of power – *“Gestapo or the Stasi”* (1521), *“taliban”* (1053). TGNC people were objectified using language associated with political militants that society widely viewed as ‘evil’. This discourse positioned TGNC people as threatening to safety and hegemonic ways of being. Another discourse strand emerged that also positioned TGNC people as threatening in relation to embodied and individual experience. This strand objectified TGNC people, transgender women in particular, as predatory:

*“A woman with a fear of men was locked in an NHS women's psychiatric ward with a burly 6ft transgender patient.”* (1121, Sunday Times);

*“When men claim to be women...and parasitically occupy the bodies of the oppressed, they speak for the oppressed.”* (1025, The Guardian);

*“...but what about the rights of women who were born women and still identify as women, yet are forced to share with men who identify as female, even though they are in possession of a full set of wedding tackle? ”.*” (926, Daily Mail);

*“Others express the concern that the spectrum of people who identify particularly as trans women is expanding to include male-appearing people who – rightly or wrongly – might be perceived as a threat... individual cis women will be too afraid or uncomfortable to challenge male-bodied people in their spaces.”* (2325, The Guardian);

*“...warned that this could mean women-only venues like refuges, therapeutic services, prisons and changing rooms having to open their doors to people who self-identify as female as well as those born with that gender.”* (999, The Independent)

This discourse strand revealed how dominant knowledges of gender became strengthened through objectification of transgender women. The use of the terms *“wedding tackle”* (926), *“male-bodied”* (2325) and *“burly”* (1121) constructed a sexualised understanding of transgender women relating to male features or genitalia. There are undertones of mockery or ridicule with such language. This affirmed the ‘biological sex’ concept of knowledge and positioned transgender women as divorced from womanhood. Gender in this way was understood as a *“right”* (926) that one was *“born”* (926, 999) with and this knowledge justified the discursive separation of transgender women. In this way, transgender women were objectified as both theoretically (to biological sex constructs of knowledge) and physically (to women’s bodies and spaces)

threatening. Indeed, the act of occupying space was described as “*parasitic*” (1025). The discourse objectified transgender women as non-human entities that were insidious and harmful, and reinforced the polarisation of this power relationship by positioning cisgender women as “*oppressed*” (1025) who experienced “*fear*” (1121) or were “*afraid*” (2325). It was constructed that choice was removed for cisgender women in this relationship – “*locked*” (1221), “*forced*” (926), and “*having to*” (999). Cisgender women were constructed as passive and transgender women as active in maintaining the power dynamic. This strengthened dominant discourses positioning TGNC people as threatening.

It was noted that where this discourse diverged was in relation to transgender men. There was a paucity of discourse relating to transgender men and where they were positioned in the power relationship:

*“The rights of trans men are far less controversial because they do not, while transitioning, gain access to spaces designed to protect a disadvantaged group.”* (1796, The Guardian)

Transgender men were not positioned as threatening, thereby were excluded from the discourses relating to space or access to spaces. Their inclusion in 1796 (above) reinforced another discourse that women were a disadvantaged group, who might need protecting from threatening transgender women.

A conflicting, alternative discourse emerged in which TGNC people were positioned as vulnerable and lacking power:

*“Trans people face daily discrimination and it is vital that steps are taken to tackle discrimination and provide the services and support people need.”* (2194, The Guardian);

*“It’s another example of how current legislation contradicts the fragile equality trans people currently have.”* (2036, The Guardian);

*“...trans staff and students feel vulnerable...”* (1532, The Guardian);

*“Many will have felt the need to conceal or suppress this crucial part of their identity all their lives, for fear of discrimination, ridicule or abuse...”* (1255, Daily Mail);

*“Stonewall, which campaigns for gay and trans rights, said: “Trans people are subject to appalling levels of abuse in daily life and dehumanised by the way the current debate questions their very right to exist.”* (1121, Sunday Times)

In this discourse strand, TGNC people were positioned as “vulnerable” (1532) and “fragile” (2036), who experienced “abuse” (1255, 1121) and “discrimination” (2194, 1255) by others. This discourse strand positioned TGNC as passive recipients in this power relationship.

*“Trans people are not safe – especially in the bathroom... Just last week, “socialist” British daily newspaper the Morning Star published an abhorrent cartoon portraying trans women as predatory and dangerous... Images and stories like this give people permission to hate. At the very least, they make people feel entitled to police trans people’s bathroom*

*use. At worst, they cumulatively embolden physical violence... trans people – a “persecuted minority” – were being “demonised” and portrayed as a threat.”.*” (1960, The Independent)

This discourse strand alluded to how TGNC people were “*dehumanised*” (1121) or “*demonised*” (1960) by dominant discourses. The article made a link to how certain language has consequence in people’s behaviour: for people to feel entitled to “*police*” (1960) and use “*physical violence*” (1960) as a form of surveillance against TGNC people. Reference to “*bathroom*” (1960) referred to the alternative dominant discourse that has positioned TGNC people as threatening in this physical space. In this article, it served to undermine the dominant discourse and present an alternative position. It explicitly acknowledged that this discourse strand is in direct conflict with the dominant discourse strand. It was observed that the speakers substantiating this discourse strand were not identified as TGNC people, rather, affiliated to TGNC people. Though this discourse strand alluded to the lack of power that TGNC people hold, it still did not create space for TGNC voices within the discourse.

TGNC people were subjectified into compliance, acting to “*conceal or suppress*” (1255) their identity in order to avoid punishment and to meet the behaviours required by the dominant discourse on gender identity and associated practices. Attempts to hold both positions of ‘threatening’ and ‘threatened’ were observed in emerging discourse strands:

*“She added that she agreed there was a need to protect vulnerable women, but that should also include vulnerable transwomen who suffered “disproportionate transphobic violence and misogynistic violence at the hands of men.”* (1025, The Guardian);

*“...activists complain that banning trans women from women's sport is discrimination.”*

(2065, The Times)

Constructing transgender women as separate from ‘women’ was congruent with the broader polarised dominant discursive constructions, and TGNC women especially were placed in a competing rather than co-existing space.

***Key concept 4: Monitoring-monitored***

*“It's all a bit of a minefield. Confused? You're supposed to be.”* (926, Daily Mail)

Different roles of surveillance were noted in the question of who and what was being monitored, and their associated subject positions. The multiple strands of surveillance were conceptualised as a “*minefield*” that was difficult for readers to navigate.

TGNC people were positioned as surveillants who were exerting their power in monitoring and curtailing the dominant discourse:

*“Sacked or silenced: academics say they are blocked from exploring trans issues.”* (1532, The Guardian);

*“...transactivists were silencing debate... transrights charities and campaigners were fiercely critical of comments...”* (1025, The Guardian);

*“...fallen victim to the trans tripwire.”* (748, Mail on Sunday);

*“All debate is shut down as transphobic.”* (135, The Sun);

*“...”running scared” because they feared accusations of bigotry.”* (736, The Times)

Here, the act of surveillance was constructed as “*trans tripwire*” (748) that was purposely designed. As a consequence, others became disempowered practices were inhibited – “*blocked*” (1532), “*shut down*” (135) and “*running scared*” (736). A clear power relationship was constructed in which TGNC people’s threatening position was extended into having the power of surveillance that was persecutory and where non-TGNC people had to ‘acquiesce’:

*“... because trans activists attacked critics as transphobic, few dared speak out. He said: “Critical and cautious voices are shouted down as transphobic, hateful and engaging in conversion therapy. Such a climate has created an intimidating and hostile environment where silence and acquiescence are the inevitable consequence. It is left to those of us at the end of our careers, who have nothing to lose, to voice our concerns.”* (254, The Times)

*“FORMER NHS psychologist has broken cover... Dr Kirsty Entwistle is the first whistleblower to go public ... not being investigated by medical staff who fear being labelled transphobic.”* (1213, Mail on Sunday)



*“A birth coach claims she has been driven out of her professional organisation after transgender activists took offence...”* (319, The Daily Telegraph)

This discourse strand reinforced the previous identified discourses that not only positioned TGNC people as threatening, amorphous and villainised, but also as exercising control over free speech and curtailing otherwise independent thinkers and professionals. Though this discourse strand positioned others as voiceless, there was an observable paucity of ‘voice’ given to TGNC people in this discourse strand.

A conflicting discourse strand emerged in which TGNC people required surveillance, perhaps justified by the dominant discourses that had created power: *“...society as a whole is being encouraged to accept trans people’s claims on their own terms.”* (929, Mail on Sunday). In response, this discourse strand created ways in which TGNC people were monitored:

*“The women and equalities minister, Liz Truss, said the act strikes the “correct” balance in providing “proper checks and balances” while supporting people who want to change their legal sex... providing medical evidence of a diagnosis of gender dysphoria as well as proof that they have been living in their preferred gender for at least two years.”* (2194, The Guardian).

*“...seeking approval from a panel of experts...”* (1796, The Guardian)

This discourse strand employed language that created room for monitoring of TGNC people by those in positions of legitimised knowledge and power. A “*panel of experts*” (1796) was used to facilitate a “*diagnosis*” (2194) for TGNC people, thereby objectifying them through medicalisation. TGNC people in this way became subjectified; it was the responsibility of the TGNC person to collect to provide evidence of their gender identity for such approval, including provision of a medical diagnosis given by others whilst demonstrating prolonged societal practice of their gender identity. The surveillance from the government towards TGNC individuals was upheld as legitimate by speakers representing such institutions (2194). The concept of “*proof*” (2194) alluded to knowledge of gender identity being something observable and verifiable by others in a scientific process, affirming dominant knowledges of gender observed in the discourse. The use of the word “*change*” (2194) had transactional connotations, akin to a social contract, and legitimised further surveillance and punishment:

*“Those applying for a gender recognition certificate are entering into a legal agreement to live in their preferred gender for the rest of their life – any breach of this is punishable with up to two years in prison.”* (2325, The Guardian).

This discourse strand therefore sought to undermine any conflicting discourse strand that permitted TGNC power. It affirmed dominant discourses that positioned surveillance of TGNC people and practices as necessary to maintain existing power relations. By including a strong deterrent of jail, further power positions were reinforced.

The impact of the knowledge hierarchy, power, objectification and subjectification, resulted in another discourse strand pertaining to surveillance by TGNC people towards themselves:

*“... non-binary and trans women feel pressured to look feminine, such as wearing form-fitting sports clothing or make-up to "look like they belong" and "avoid harassment"... or be "scrutinised" by others.”* (784, Sunday Times);

*“... “passing” as male...”* (207, The Guardian);

*“In pregnancy, Barker mostly passed “as a fat bloke”... he was both in plain sight and, owing to the relative rarity of pregnant men, hidden.”* (1827, The Guardian);

*“It was hard switching between my two identities.”* (1178, Daily Mail)

This discourse strand not only speaks to self-surveillance but also how TGNC people became subjectified into complying with the practices required by dominant discourses. As a consequence, TGNC people changed their practices in order to meet the binarised knowledges and practices of gender – *“passing”* (207, 1827) to *“look like they belong”* (784), remaining *“hidden”* (1827), and *“switching”* (1178). This subjectification was posited as necessary for their safety. Thus, hegemonic knowledges of gender identity and expression were reinforced. The dominant discourse strand resulted in self-surveillance in TGNC people, with self-surveillance seen as one of the most powerful mechanisms of control in power relationships.

Interestingly, the news press undertake some self-surveillance too, by commenting on how they were an active agent in the discursive world that has perpetuated a culture of surveillance:

*“Only five years ago, the word trans had barely been heard of. Now pages of newspapers are devoted to it.”* (929, Mail on Sunday);

*“...recent anti-trans media moral panic.”* (1847, The Guardian);

*“Transgender young people remain very rare, despite the current media obsession with their existence.”* (1039, The Guardian);

*“Much of the media demonises them, playing the same tunes that were sung about gay people in the 1980s: sexual predators, deviants, grooming and brainwashing children. It not only erases the hatred directed at trans people, it legitimises and fuels it.”* (1053, The Guardian)

This discourse strand created opportunity for a third party to be named in the power relationships constructed by dominant discourses – the newspapers. In this discourse strand, the act of constructing these dominant discourses was observed and named. It described the responsibility the news press held in *“legitimising”* (1053) dominant discourses surrounding power and threat concerning TGNC people. The news press was given power and space in the discourse. This strand challenged dominant discourses that created a binarisation and polarisation

between TGNC people and other groups of people. It alerted readers to the role of another agent in this power relationship.

## **Discussion**

The UK mainstream news press revealed multiple and conflicting discourses in which TGNC and non TGNC people were positioned. The use and hierarchisation of knowledge were central to the findings. Each discourse built on this knowledge, with subsequent object and subject positionings, power relationships, and surveillance practices exposed.

The analysis offered four key concepts: ‘Valued Knowledge – Unvalued Knowledge’, ‘Claiming Space – Denied Space’, ‘Threatening – Threatened’, and ‘Monitoring – Monitored’. The key concepts reflected the process of binarisation that occurred within the discourses. There were typically two ways of being for TGNC people as constructed by the discourses, which maintained division and reinforced hegemonic ideas. The key concepts were interrelated and provided a framework for relating the findings to Foucauldian ideas. Each key concept aided understanding of the ways in which discourses were constructed and how they interacted with each other.

In the ‘Valued Knowledge – Unvalued Knowledge’ key concept, the question of *whose* knowledge and *what* knowledge was valued was central to construct an understanding of TGNC identity. A dominant discourse emerged positing ‘biological sex’ as a valued knowledge. This was substantiated by various speakers considered to hold a position of power and authority. Hegemonic ideas of ‘reality’ rooted in science were upheld by these discourses. These findings echoed what was noted by Polese and Zottola (2019) in their corpus analysis of UK mainstream news press. Following introduction of the Gender Recognition Act (2004) legislation, press discourse shifted

to focus on physical sex characteristics of TGNC people. Indeed, this paper identified that following the consultation on the reform of this legislation, the 'biological sex' constructs of knowledge became reaffirmed. Alternative discourses that explored 'gender identity' as a valued construct of knowledge were subsequently challenged and positioned as a competing construct. Foucauldian analysts are interested in hierarchies of knowledge as they can offer insight into the legitimisation and reinforcement of existing social and institutional practices (Willig, 2008). A hierarchy of knowledge was established, positioning 'biological sex' as more valued than 'gender identity'. Indeed, as a consequence of this hierarchy, TGNC people were objectified by the discourse and seen as body parts that needed to be adjusted, adapted, and perhaps 'corrected'. This resulted in the subjectification of TGNC people to hegemonic ideas of gender expression. This key concept around knowledge underpinned other discourses and provided insight into which groups of society were seen as holding the knowledge on gender.

The 'Claiming Space – Denied Space' key concept explored where TGNC people were located in discourses. Space was understood as a multi-layered construct, from physical space to discursive space. The question of where TGNC people were permitted or denied space, and the consequence of this, was central. Power relationships were revealed to facilitate allocation of space within the discourse. Space seemed to be conceptualised as finite and with limited resources. Where some discourses created opportunities for TGNC people to be given more space, they were subsequently removed by objectifying TGNC people as villainous and taking space with unauthorised power (Baker, 2014). Thereby, existing space relations were justified and reinforced. Allocation of space was determined by utilising existing hegemonic knowledges of gender in which biological sex and observable data was highly valued. This showed the social and relational

position of TGNC people in society and how this shaped their way of being in the world (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Willig, 2001). The polarisation created by the dominant discourses, combined with the restricting of alternative discourses, gave TGNC people limited ways of being.

Building on these two concepts was the key concept of ‘Threatening – Threatened’. Constructions of power relationships were central in the discourse. The dominant discourse positioned TGNC people as threatening, as a powerful social group that disrupted social values, norms, and practices. Threat-salient language was used to engage emotional responsivity in readers, and TGNC people became objectified by the discourse as an amorphous entity with unjustified power, in a way that mirrored ‘moral panic’ narratives observed in the UK mainstream news press in relation to TGNC people (Faye, 2021b). Objectification of TGNC people in this discourse utilised the ‘biological sex’ concept of knowledge. Knowledge of gender identity was a crucial factor when understanding and perpetuating power relationships (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Gutting, 2005) in this discourse. Terminology relating to genitalia became salient. In particular, transgender women were positioned as sexually and physically violent, a dominant narrative observed in previous research (Baker, 2014; Capuzza, 2014; Li, 2018). Transgender men and other TGNC identities were noticeably absent from this discourse strand.

An alternative discourse positioned TGNC people as vulnerable and as a social group lacking power. This discourse allowed speakers to share knowledge of discrimination that TGNC people faced. However, there was a paucity of speakers considered to hold a TGNC identity. The construction of power relations between TGNC people and others was facilitated by non TGNC people, thereby the discursive space remained limited.

The key concept of ‘Monitoring – Monitored’ revealed discourse strands constructing multiple surveillance practices within existing power relationships. A discourse, built on the previous key concepts, positioned TGNC people as surveillants, thus reinforcing the threatening discourse that posits TGNC people as having unauthorised power. This surveillance by TGNC people was seen to remove power from others, ‘silencing’ voices that disagreed with TGNC people. This was often found in articles setting a broader context of ‘woke culture’ which ridiculed TGNC people as ‘oversensitive’ (Baker, 2014). An opposite discourse emerged, positioning TGNC people as a group that was monitored by others. Knowledge structures of ‘biological sex’ and scientific practices were used to justify such surveillance and reaffirm existing discourses positioning TGNC people as threatening to social values and norms. Indeed, TGNC people became subjectified into complying with the requirements of gender expression and evidence gathering as required by this discourse. Though, it was observed that subjectified practices served to further disempower TGNC people. Foucault described surveillance and self-surveillance as one of the most powerful mechanisms of control in power relationships (Foucault, 2007).

Another discourse strand emerged and invited room for a third subject to be involved in the power relationship: the UK mainstream news press. The news press became self-surveillant in this way, acknowledging the representations they constructed of TGNC people. In doing so, they were monitoring the contributions they made in assessing and maintaining dominant discourses and practices in order to maintain high volumes of readership (Fowler, 1991b) and to perpetuate the circuit of culture (Hall, 2013). This strand was substantiated by TGNC speakers, thus adding their voice and observations to the discourse creating an awareness that might open up alternative interpretations.



### *Observations and Implications*

The UK mainstream news press constructed a rigid binary of gender expression for TGNC people, in line with previous research (Akerlund, 2019; Glover 2016). The knowledge concept of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ dominated the discourses and was central to their formation sharing. Hegemonic understandings of cis-normative and binary gender identity was maintained by the discourse. As a consequence, trans-binary TGNC identity was conceptualised as deviant and non-binary TGNC identity was rarely mentioned. Dominant discourses in the UK mainstream news press continued to reaffirm the positioning of TGNC people as deviant or ‘wrong’ (Akerlund, 2019; Capuzza, 2016). In particular, transgender women were objectified as physically violent and sinful (Akerlund, 2019; Baker, 2014; Capuzza, 2014; Li, 2018) and thus were given excessive power in much of the discursive spaces. This also revealed the positioning of cisgender women as vulnerable and in need of protection. Indeed, many articles utilised speakers associated with feminist movements, specifically those described by authors as ‘trans-exclusionary radical feminists’ (TERFs), in order to substantiate this position. The UK news press’ tendency to position cisgender women and TGNC women against each other has been cautioned to perpetuate a patriarchal practice in which all women are left in a disempowered position (Faye, 2021d). This positioning served to maintain a ‘moral panic’ (Faye, 2021b) construction of TGNC people and to legitimise practices to oppress, exclude, and subordinate them (Billard, 2016).

Representations of TGNC people in the news press hold influence on and reflects societal attitudes and practices (Capuzza, 2014), and thus contributes to a perpetuation and justification of discriminatory practices of TGNC people (Lombardi et al., 2001; Valentine & Shipherd, 2018). Representations of TGNC people in the news press also influences TGNC people’s perceptions of their own identity. The dominant discourses upheld in the UK mainstream news press are likely to

maintain self-surveillance (Byne et al., 2012; Rood et al., 2016) and can hugely impact TGNC individuals' mental health and wellbeing (Hughto et al., 2021; Pham et al., 2020).

The political and ideological leaning of newspaper publishers was found to influence journalistic style (Fowler, 1991c) and thus influence the discursive constructions of TGNC people. Publishers that were deemed to be more politically conservative, such as *The Times* (Hodkinson, 2011b), were typically concerned with authenticating what substantiated 'knowledge' on gender identity. Examples used to illustrate opinions were those that would be salient to the typically middle-class readership, such as discussing TGNC people in the context of theatres. In doing so, TGNC people became 'othered' and objectified as a group to be curious and watchful of. Publishers that were deemed to be more politically liberal, such as *The Guardian* (Hodkinson, 2011b), were typically concerned with the pursuit of equal representation of voices. Whilst this allowed room for TGNC voices to be represented, a consequence was that they perpetuated the idea of finite space and a hierarchy of competing needs. Newspapers that were traditionally viewed as 'tabloid', such as *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* (Hodkinson, 2011b), were observed to use sensationalised and threat-salient language, particularly in headlines. This resulted in the maintenance of the polarisation of discourse in relation to TGNC people and reinforced discourses that positioned them as villainous or as objects of jokes (Baker, 2014).

It was observed that all publishers tended to focus their reporting on issues *with* TGNC people as opposed to issues *facing* TGNC people (Faye, 2021b). There was a noticeable paucity of TGNC speakers within the news press and therefore within the discourses. When they were present, the news press incorporated 'expert' voices to present alternative options (Akerlund, 2019; Capuzza, 2014; Graber, 2017).

Journalists and news press editors are expected to hold a responsibility to acknowledge and create space for more varied representations of all aspects of news, including TGNC people, and therefore to share knowledge on TGNC identity from speakers considered to hold this identity (Fink & Palmer, 2020; Parks Pieper, 2015). This paper recommends that journalists create more opportunities for TGNC people's voices to be shared, thus improving representations of TGNC people in the news press. This recommendation maps onto recommendations of journalistic practice by Trans Media Watch (2011), and could generate a greater understanding and shared knowledge, creating alternative ways of being in relation to current power relationships, hierarchies of knowledge, and associated practices for TGNC people in society.

### *Strengths and Limitations*

This study explored the UK mainstream news press' representations of TGNC people in the last decade using a FDA approach, capturing the dominant discourses beyond the mere content of the news articles. This provided insight into the function of these discourses, how they related to each other, and how existing hegemonic discourses were being maintained and reinforced. The study was successful in capturing a large sample of the discourse. High methodological rigor was strived for, such as eliminating possible bias through the random selection of articles for analysis. The findings allowed for an in- depth analysis of not just *what* was being reported, but *how* and *why*. It set a foundation of understanding of how TGNC people were positioned by dominant discourses and established the possible implications of this for sustaining hegemonic practices and conceptualisations of TGNC identity. From the findings, recommendations were made for journalistic practice which mapped onto existing research in this area. The findings from this study may inform future research in this area.

It is acknowledged that this study has a number of limitations. Using FDA as the methodology can be criticised for placing emphasis on constructed reality rather than individual experience. This study did not focus on the voiced experiences and thematic constructs on a personal level, but pursued analysis at a conceptual level. Further, Foucault's philosophical stance is considered to be influenced by his turbulent life experiences and his own social exclusion due to his sexual orientation (Gutting, 2005). His proposed conceptualisations might have been influenced by this and could be considered as not being objectively meaningful. However, the FDA approach offers analysis of materials that can offer various perspectives and insights. Furthermore, the findings were placed in a context of a cross-section of the discourse. The data was extrapolated from a specific time frame and from specific news press sources made available to the research team. It is acknowledged that the dataset was not an exhaustive list of all mainstream news press sources. Indeed, many emerging types of news sources are being utilised, such as online news reporting by both newspaper press institutions (e.g. Mail Online) and broadcasting institutions (BBC News Online). The data captured three online news sources and it was observed that the function of discourse might have been variant from the printed press equivalent. Headlines were constructed to generate traffic to the main article, and readership could be reached beyond a UK audience. Dominant discourses are also perpetuated by television news channels which was not observed in this study. This study did not examine data from local newspaper press due to the primary research question's focus on dominant and widely available discourses. The findings must be understood as a reflection of the discourses available at the time of the research.

### *Directions for Future Research*

The findings from this study have highlighted that the UK mainstream news press can be used as a rich and valued source of data when exploring dominant discourses and hegemonic understanding of TGNC people.

Analysis of the data using a different approach, such as thematic synthesis of topics, might offer further insights into the current discourses. It was noted that age played a role in the discourses of TGNC people. For older people there were articles about gratefulness to be given an opportunity to receive medical intervention, whilst others queried the benefits against financial costs. In respect of children and younger people, there was extensive reference to their mental capacity and their TGNC identity being part of a temporary trend, and parents' voices were heard repeatedly.

Future research could also explore the various sources of data contributing to dominant discourses, such as online press, local press, social media, and television news. This would help to build a picture of whose voices are contributing to the wider discourse and to understand who is given a voice and why, to consider possible motives of the speakers and those that offer the space to speak to them. Research investigating TGNC people's experiences of exposure to, and the subsequent impact of, UK mainstream news press discourse on TGNC people would be highly valuable given the evidence of the impact media discourses have on TGNC wellbeing, behaviours and practices. Further, it is recommended that research into the UK mainstream news press' representations of TGNC people is conducted regularly as the political, social and cultural landscape evolves.

## **Conclusion**

The present study has begun to explore how UK mainstream news press represents TGNC people through an FDA lens. The findings illustrated a binarisation of positions within dominant discourses, in that TGNC people were often positioned in a power relationship with limited ways of being. The findings indicated that hegemonic understanding of gender and its associated practices were reaffirmed by the discourses, positioning TGNC people as deviant or dangerous to such practices. Voice was given mostly to non TGNC people, those in perceived knowledgeable and powerful positions, and those supporting existing hegemonic practices. There were a noticeable paucity of speakers considered to hold TGNC identity. Where this was made available it was often simultaneously undermined or devalued by offering the views of non TGNC people. It was observed that TGNC people internalised dominant discourses and used self-surveillance so they behaved according to the established 'knowledge' of what gender entails, a practice that Foucault argued was the most economical and efficient way of control. If journalistic practice continues as observed, dominant discourses are likely to be reinforced and alternative discourses and ways of being for TGNC people might develop slowly.

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## **Appendices Index**

Appendix A – University ethics approval

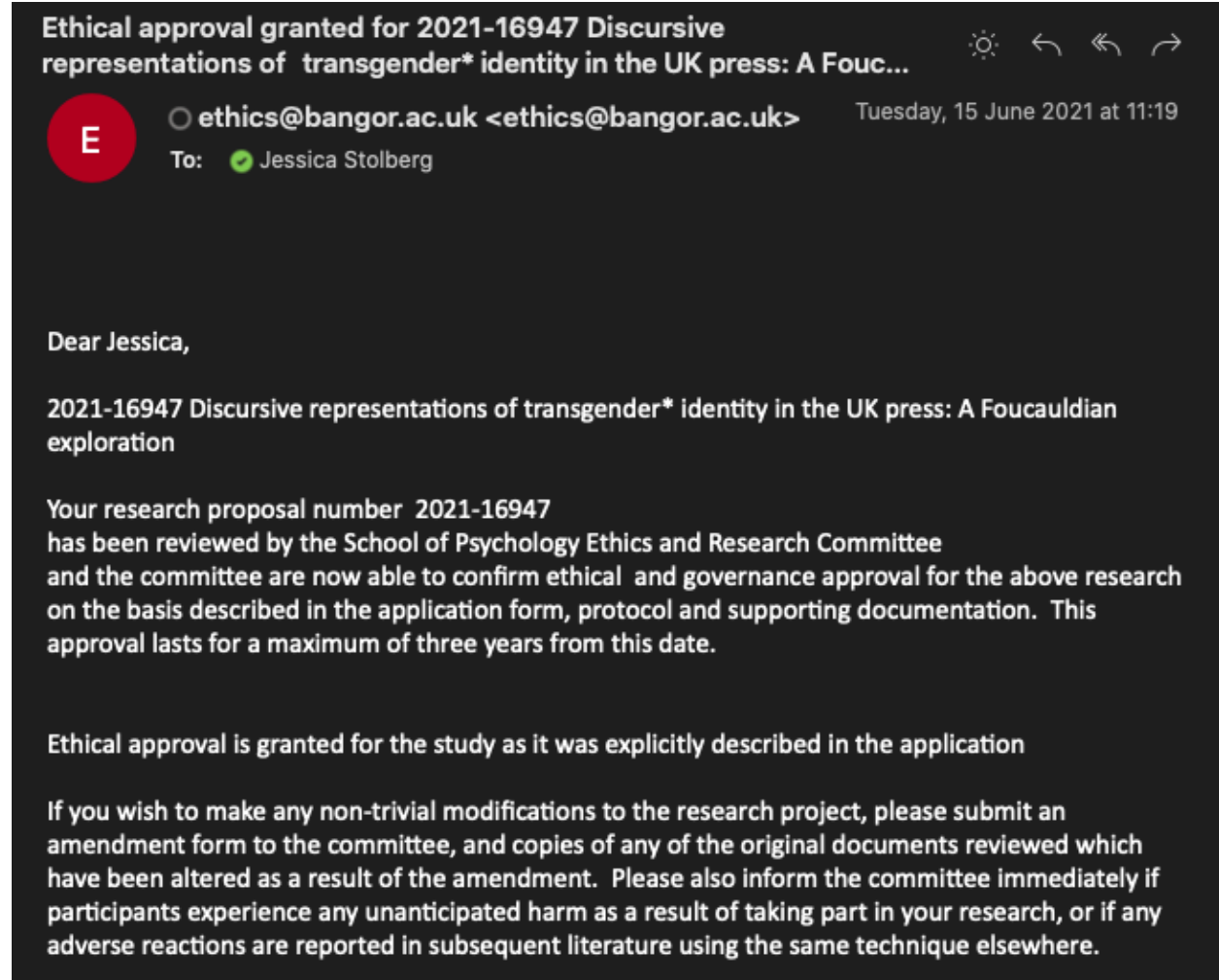
Appendix B – Final dataset considered for analysis

Appendix C – Articles analysed

Appendix D – Supporting quotes for findings

Appendix E – Example article

## Appendix A: University ethics approval



## Appendix B – Final dataset considered for analysis

<i>ID Number</i>	<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>Number of articles published</i>
1	The Times	212
2	Daily Mail	167
3	Telegraph.co.uk	163
4	Sunday Times	153
5	The Daily Telegraph	147
6	Mail on Sunday	109
7	Express (Online)	92
8	The Independent	85
9	The Sun	78
10	The Guardian	74
11	The Herald	53
12	Daily Star (Online)	52
13	Daily Express	40
14	Western Mail	37
15	The Daily Mirror	31
16	The Scotsman	35
17	i	31
18	Evening Standard	29
19	The Observer	28
20	Sunday Mirror	23
21	South Wales Echo	25
22	Daily Star	22
23	The Sunday Telegraph	22
24	Financial Times	20
25	Grimsby Telegraph / Scunthorpe	20
26	Evening Telegraph	
27	Hull Daily Mail	20
28	Belfast Telegraph	17
29	Daily Record	17
30	Nottingham Evening Post	17
31	The Belfast News Letter	17
32	South Wales Evening Post	15
33	The Plymouth Evening Herald	15
34	Daily Post	14
35	The Post	14
36	The Yorkshire Post	14



37	Manchester Evening News	13
38	The Western Morning News	13
39	Western Daily Press	12
40	Evening Chronicle	11
41	Express and Star	11
42	Journal	11
43	News Letter	11
44	Yorkshire Evening Post	11
45	Derby Evening Telegraph	10
46	Leicester Mercury	10
47	Liverpool Echo	10
48	Northern Echo	10
49	Scotland on Sunday	10
50	Sunday Mail	10
51	Weekly News	10
52	The Press and Journal	9
53	The Sentinel	9
54	Evening News	8
55	Evening Times	7
56	The Courier - Mail	7
57	The People	6
58	Birmingham Mail	6
59	Evening Gazette	6
60	Huddersfield Daily Examiner	6
61	London Evening Standard	6
62	Coventry Telegraph	5
63	Shropshire Star	5
64	The Star	5
65	Brighton { \& } Hove Independent	4
66	Daily Star Sunday	4
67	Sunday Post	4
68	The Bath Chronicle	4
69	Birmingham Post	3
70	The Chronicle	3
71	Wales on Sunday	3
72	Eastern Daily Press	2
73	Eastern Eye	2
74	Express { \& } Echo	2
75	Paisley Daily Express	2
76	Sunday Herald	2

77	Sunday Mercury	2
78	The Express on Sunday	2
79	The News	2
80	Belper News	1
81	Buxton Advertiser	1
82	Daily Times	1
83	East Anglian Daily Times	1
84	Herald Express	1
85	Hucknall Dispatch	1
86	Islington Gazette	1
87	Lancashire Evening Post	1
89	The Driffield Times	1
90	The West Briton	1
91	The West Sussex Gazette	1

## Appendix C – Articles analysed

<i>ID</i>	<i>Title/Headline</i>	<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>Publication Date</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>URL</i>
6	'Age has nothing to do with it': how it feels to transition later in life	The Guardian	17/11/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/oARV1
44	'I was kicked out of the family home during lockdown for being LGBT'	Telegraph.co.uk	17/03/2021	England/Wales	shorturl.at/yGKU8
50	'It's such bravery to come out, we change the body to fit the patient': IRISH SURGEON CHANGING THE LIVES OF TRANSGENDER PATIENTS [Ulster Region]	The Sun	23/06/2018	Northern Ireland	shorturl.at/vOQUW
87	'There is a climate of intimidation at British universities - we are afraid to speak about anything controversial'	Telegraph.co.uk	12/05/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/otQVY
135	2,300 'TRANS' KIDS GO TO DOC: EXCLUSIVE TOTS AGE 4 SEEK HELP OVER GENDER	The Sun	17/05/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/cfENW
148	63% of sex-change teenagers 'have mental problems'	Mail on Sunday	19/08/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/ilBO7
178	Academics criticise traffic light 'safe space' badges at transgender conference	Telegraph.co.uk	22/09/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/cnxFH
207	Amateur by Thomas Page McBee review ,Äi a trans boxer's life lessons	The Guardian	26/10/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/vDIOR
213	Anger as school makes boys and girls run together	Express (Online)	01/06/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/hwCGZ
254	Autistic girls 'seizing on sex change' to fix life's problems: Vulnerable teenagers are being steered towards harmful interventions, new High Court evidence shows [Ulster Region]	Sunday Times	10/01/2021	Northern Ireland	shorturl.at/bwILU
294	Beauty vlogger gridlocks Birmingham: Thousands of teenagers mob 'genderless make-up' star during visit to a shopping mall, Kaya Burgess reports	The Times	28/01/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/fqBF5
319	Birth coach who claimed 'only women have babies' resigns after transgender backlash	The Daily Telegraph	04/11/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/lrzM5
338	Brexiters REVEALS why UK citizens WON'T need Brussels for protection of key human rights	Express (Online)	24/05/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/jDTVY
341	Brit Awards join chorus for gender neutral gongs	Daily Mail	23/09/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/oxJO9
347	Britain's 1st trans parents	The Sun	18/04/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/gjDS6
348	Britain's 1st trans parents [Scot Region]	The Sun	18/04/2020	Scotland	shorturl.at/ouOW6
372	Calls for 'X' gender option in UK passports to be raised in Commons	The Guardian	13/07/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/bjvKU
393	CENTER PARCS' TRANS BATTLE: LOOROW FIRST BIG FIRM TO BAN NON-OP TOILET ACCESS	The Sun	04/11/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/oyC56
396	Change ad-dress	The Sun	14/05/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/fovJ4

397	Change ad-dress [Scot Region]	The Sun	14/05/2018	Scotland	shorturl.at/bBEO7
447	Confessions of the Fox by Jordy Rosenberg review ,À a trans hero for the 18th century	The Guardian	05/12/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/psEW5
449	Cop quiz for mum over telly trans row [Scot Region]	The Sun	20/03/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/hAQXY
468	Court hears children cannot consent to puberty blockers	The Guardian	07/10/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/hoyBZ
492	Damian Hinds: children should learn about LGBT relationships [Scot Region]	The Daily Telegraph	26/06/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/lvFOR
520	DOCUMENTARY Britain's Best Parent? Channel [ldots]: THURSDAY MAY 28 [Ulster Region]	Mail on Sunday	24/05/2020	Northern Ireland	shorturl.at/cowG1
524	Dominic West calls for next Bond to be transgender	The Independent	24/12/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/ehuCI
531	Don't Call Us Dead by Danez Smith review ,Ài hope in resistance and rebirth	The Guardian	09/02/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/nxMU1
541	DUNKIRK TRANS VET DIES AT 99	The Sun	26/12/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/mCHS8
608	Fifty years after Stonewall, it's time to set the record straight: Historians remain fiercely divided over the New York 'riots' hailed as a pivotal moment for gay rights, writes Luke Mintz	The Daily Telegraph	28/06/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/pxyNP
639	Flirt like a butterfly, fling like a she, Amir: BOXER SHOCK TEXT TO TRANS MODEL	The Sun	08/10/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/jryPY
640	Flirt like a butterfly, fling like a she, Amir: BOXER SHOCK TEXT TO TRANS MODEL [Scot Region]	The Sun	08/10/2018	Scotland	shorturl.at/glzFL
702	GENDER BATTLE	The Sun	07/01/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/ejFIW
736	Gender treatment to delay puberty is putting healthy children at risk [Edition 2]	The Times	23/04/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/lmqC3
748	Germaine Greer made a pariah - by girls she won vital rights for [Scot Region]	Mail on Sunday	15/09/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/kpwDS
752	Girl Talk! How queer pop came out	The Guardian	23/04/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/tyIZ7
767	Google under fire for 'pray away the gay' app in the Play Store	Telegraph.co.uk	14/01/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/fmzFY
768	Government adviser quits over 'hostile environment' for LGBT people	The Guardian	10/03/2021	England/Wales	shorturl.at/bovxB
774	Graph of greatness: CELEBRITY	The Sun	06/01/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/jrvxM
784	Gyms and pools urged to help trans and non-binary people [Scot Region]	Sunday Times	13/09/2020	Scotland	shorturl.at/elqGQ
786	Happy You Day! The gender-free Mother's Day cards [Scot Region]	Daily Mail	12/03/2018	Scotland	shorturl.at/cdkCT
812	High court grants leave to appeal to UK gender identity service	The Guardian	19/01/2021	England/Wales	shorturl.at/bfqJK
824	How can a man be too straight to recycle?	The Guardian	08/08/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/hkoMV

846	I became a woman aged 81: RUTH'S JOY AT SURGERY OLDEST GENDER OP \pounds4K COST TO NHS	The Sun	03/09/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/bipE0
847	I BECAME A WOMAN AT AGE 81: RUTH'S JOY AT SURGERY OLDEST TO UNDERGO GENDER OP PROCEDURE COST NHS \pounds4,000 [SCOT REGION]	The Sun	03/09/2018	Scotland	shorturl.at/lqvR5
888	If you think Rory Stewart is the grownup choice, think again	The Guardian	17/06/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/oBEQR
926	It's Gypsy Rose Fletcher to you, Mr Mackay...: LITTLEJOHN [Scot Region]	Daily Mail	12/07/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/ilzT0
929	It's now easier for a teacher to decide your little girl is a little boy than it is to give them aspirin!: The author who dares challenge the sacred cows of political correctness tackles the most divisive issue of them all: transgender rights \ldots HOW THE WORLD LOST ITS MARBLES Girls aged 12 given sex-change drugs	Mail on Sunday	15/09/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/coMV0
981	KIDS OF 3 BEING SENT TO NHS TRANS CLINIC	The Sun	09/04/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/bevCG
982	KIDS OF 3 BEING SENT TO NHS TRANS CLINIC [Ulster Region]	The Sun	09/04/2019	Northern Ireland	shorturl.at/fvEFV
983	Kim: I shone after trans op aged 16: BIG exclusives BOLD opinions I'll be back on talkRADIO on Friday, for Drivetime between 4pm and 7pm. Listen at talkradio.co.uk TALENT SHAKING UP THE POP WORLD [Edition 2]	The Sun	31/08/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/huvV8
985	Kim: I shone after trans op aged 16: TALENT SHAKING UP THE POP WORLD [Scot Region]	The Sun	31/08/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/vEIOR
999	Labour vow to extend trans rights prompts furore from women's activist groups	The Independent	24/11/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/cqHNP
1013	Lawyer of the week	The Times	23/01/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/acfnN
1015	Leaflets falsely claim pupils taught masturbation in relationship classes	The Guardian	30/08/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/auwNR
1024	Legal challenge to Labour over shortlists and trans women	The Guardian	18/03/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/hmnuP
1025	Legal challenge to Labour over shortlists and transwomen	The Guardian	17/03/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/dgiDO
1035	Let's stop kidding ourselves we're tolerant: Attitudes to gays and people of colour have transformed in a generation but we face a new bigotry on freedom of speech	The Times	26/10/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/mntBG

1039	LGBT activists criticise minister for women over trans comments	The Guardian	27/08/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/quzFO
1053	LGBTQ rights are in danger. Pride isn't a party, it's time to fight back	The Guardian	12/06/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/rAGJW
1107	Meghan Markle to have 'gender fluid' baby - Duchess to insist on being 'co-parent' NOT mum	Express (Online)	31/12/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/fyCG3
1108	Men can be mothers, says Government: Transgender man who gave birth in fight to be called father	The Daily Telegraph	15/02/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/dhxJZ
1121	Ministers put curbs on trans rights: Groups that exclude self-identifying women from female-only sites are to be protected [Ulster Region]	Sunday Times	24/06/2018	Northern Ireland	shorturl.at/hjnDT
1123	Misgendering a student is a hate crime, teacher is told	The Daily Telegraph	24/02/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/uRW49
1129	Monoculture Wars: Britain's arts and cultural sectors ought to be champions of free speech yet a new survey shows that they too have fallen victim to worrying self-censorship	The Times	21/02/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/dxEK0
1157	Munroe Bergdorf receives landmark book deal for trans manifesto	The Guardian	17/07/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/kxKSZ
1158	Munroe Bergdorf: 'The more trans models become visible, the more they become normalised'	The Guardian	18/02/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/czBJM
1163	Muslims and LGBTQ people should stand together, not fight each other	The Guardian	11/04/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/pxHP3
1178	MY husband became a woman. Here's Why I didn't leave: Many wives would have seen it as an unbearable betrayal. But when John, a university lecturer, told Barbara he wanted to live as Jane, she faced a shattering dilemma...When I found the women's clothes I was so afraid he was cheating... when I learned the truth, my overwhelming feeling was one of relief	Daily Mail	14/11/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/goCO3
1205	New education minister mocked 'hairy knuckled' trans students [Scot Region]	The Times	28/06/2018	Scotland	shorturl.at/ciGNO
1206	New gender ID row as academics issue warning over census [Scot Region]	Daily Mail	27/12/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/bsKO7
1213	NHS doctor: Poor and abused kids wrongly labelled transgender: Whistleblower says sex swap clinic misuses puberty blocking drugs	Mail on Sunday	21/07/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/eDG68
1223	NHS trans row as men get access to women's wards if they identify as female	Telegraph.co.uk	10/01/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/afxS5
1237	Non-sex uniform schools list grows	The Sun	08/09/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/goqCE

1239	Non-sex uniform schools list grows [Scot Region]	The Sun	08/09/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/sPT36
1255	Now the over-60s get help to change gender	Daily Mail	13/08/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/mqGPR
1257	Now the word TRANSPERSON will help you to win at Scrabble	Daily Mail	02/05/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/atGH5
1289	One in 50 male prisoners says they're trans [Scot Region]	Daily Mail	10/07/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/kxzEX
1290	One in 50 prisoners identifies as transgender amid concerns inmates are attempting to secure prison perks	Telegraph.co.uk	09/07/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/kvPW7
1357	PICKS OF THE DAY: THURSDAY 21 MARCH	The Sun	16/03/2019	England/Wales	<a href="https://shorturl.at/dqDHO">shorturl.at/dqDHO</a>
1359	PICKS OF THE DAY: THURSDAY 21 MARCH [SCOT REGION]	The Sun	16/03/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/fwHRZ
1383	Plan to ignore birth sex in census alarms academics [Scot Region]	The Times	11/02/2021	Scotland	shorturl.at/bvNY1
1410	Politics and powerful performances at the 2020 Brits ,Åi but no shock winners	The Guardian	19/02/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/ilwL7
1411	Politics and powerful performances at the 2020 Brits ,Åi but no shock winners	The Guardian	18/02/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/eEKQY
1446	Pronoun badges push my buttons: MILLENNIAL UNI LABEL MADNESS	The Sun	28/08/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/cfBT5
1447	Pronoun badges push my buttons: MILLENNIAL UNI LABEL MADNESS [Scot Region]	The Sun	28/08/2018	Scotland	shorturl.at/detCH
1472	Rainbowl of cereal: THEY'VE WOKEN UP FOR BREAKFAST KELLOGG'S LAUNCH LGBT SPECIAL	The Sun	19/10/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/hzST8
1474	Rainbowl of cereal: THEY'VE WOKEN UP FOR BREAKFAST KELLOGG'S LAUNCH LGBT SPECIAL [Scot Region]	The Sun	19/10/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/lsEHO
1505	RIGHT TO REMOVE PORTRAIT	The Sun	08/12/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/hHKQZ
1506	RIGHT TO REMOVE PORTRAIT [Scot Region]	The Sun	08/12/2018	Scotland	shorturl.at/bhnzA
1510	Roberta Cowell's life shows speed demons can be any shape	The Guardian	09/02/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/moyB4
1521	Rowling publisher asked trans group to 'censor' legal article on free-speech ruling: Mermaids was invited to amend a summary of a test case deemed 'offensive' to the transgender lobby	Sunday Times	09/08/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/nqAW0
1532	Sacked or silenced: academics say they are blocked from exploring trans issues	The Guardian	14/01/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/bxE19
1538	Sam Smith excluded from gendered categories at 2021 Brit awards	The Guardian	12/03/2021	England/Wales	shorturl.at/ntzE6

1540	SAM: BRITS ALL GONG WRONG: SHOWBIZ REPORTER OF THE YEAR SINGER HITS OUT AS GENDER CATEGORIES REMAIN	The Sun	13/03/2021	England/Wales	shorturl.at/mDU35
1541	SAM: BRITS ALL GONG WRONG: SHOWBIZ REPORTER OF THE YEAR SINGER HITS OUT AS GENDER CATEGORIES REMAIN [EDITION 2]	The Sun	13/03/2021	England/Wales	shorturl.at/jqLY6
1543	SAM: BRITS ALL GONG WRONG: SHOWBIZ REPORTER OF THE YEAR SINGER HITS OUT AS GENDER CATEGORIES REMAIN [SCOT REGION EDITION 2]	The Sun	13/03/2021	Scotland	shorturl.at/deuU0
1544	SAM: BRITS ALL GONG WRONG: SINGER HITS OUT AS GENDER CATEGORIES REMAIN [SCOT REGION]	The Sun	13/03/2021	Scotland	shorturl.at/antxT
1575	Scottish parliament BANS gingerbread ,Ä¸MEN' because it ,Ä¸promotes sexism'	Express (Online)	18/12/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/axAN8
1583	Sequins, sporrans, lechery and lap-dancing: why The Lady Boys of Bangkok rule the fringe	The Guardian	13/08/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/inoqO
1628	SNP faces backlash on 'trans ideology' taking over schools: Backlash on 'trans ideology' [Scot Region]	Sunday Times	25/11/2018	Scotland	shorturl.at/jJLO9
1653	Stand up to bigots: BARCLAYS WOMEN'S RAINBOW LACES SUPER LEAGUE WEEKWOMEN'S GAME LEADS WAY	The Sun	01/12/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/fzPY2
1667	Step away from the culture wars, Johnson warns his cabinet [Edition 2]	The Times	03/07/2021	England/Wales	shorturl.at/lzPW2
1738	Tax expert fired for saying trans women aren't women: A senior researcher at a think tank is taking her former boss to court after she was accused of offensive language [Edition 3]	Sunday Times	05/05/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/fmIO3
1752	Test case on child gender treatment	The Times	06/01/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/nqzTZ
1774	The dad who gave birth: ,Ä¸Being pregnant doesn't change me being a trans man'	The Guardian	20/04/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/cT258
1780	The fight for LGBT+ rights across the Commonwealth	The Independent	17/05/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/elosP
1794	The Guardian view on LGBT rights: the fight for equality is still on	The Guardian	03/07/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/txEU5
1796	The Guardian view on the Gender Recognition Act: where rights collide	The Guardian	17/10/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/jouwD
1827	The story of one man's pregnancy: ,Ä¸It felt joyous, amazing and brilliant'	The Guardian	23/03/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/bdrDF



1829	The tangled case of the brothers who became girls aged seven and three: A couple's own son transitioned ,Äi and within months they were given a baby to foster, who became a girl too [Edition 2]	Sunday Times	12/05/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/rOTZ4
1847	The truth about Stonewall ,Äi the LGBT group that won't support London Pride	The Guardian	04/07/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/krA28
1907	Trans day support [Scot Region]	The Sun	01/04/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/cwG49
1922	TRANS IN BATTLE TO BE A DAD [Scot Region Edition 2]	The Sun	13/02/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/coqC7
1923	TRANS JAIL FURY: LABOUR REPS SLATED FOR BLASTING SEX ATTACK STORY	The Sun	20/07/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/jsCK0
1924	Trans jail outrage [Edition 2]	The Sun	20/07/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/qrJRV
1944	Trans man loses UK legal battle to register as his child's father	The Guardian	16/11/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/cnvHI
1952	Trans murderer serving life will receive \pounds80k gender reassignment on the NHS	Telegraph.co.uk	19/11/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/eiEQV
1954	Trans pa law wait	The Sun	15/02/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/ghxDH
1960	Trans people are not safe ,Äi especially in the bathroom	The Independent	01/03/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/ftyGV
1989	Trans woman faces ban for transphobia: A teacher fears she will be thrown off a union committee for wearing a T-shirt proclaiming that she was still a man [Edition 3]	Sunday Times	22/12/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/tDIKV
2031	Transgender lobby use police 'to stifle critics': NEWS NEWS BRIEFING	The Daily Telegraph	22/03/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/opxLY
2036	Transgender man loses court battle to be registered as father	The Guardian	25/09/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/vHOSY
2065	Transgender player targeting place in England women's side [Scot Region]	The Times	20/08/2019	Scotland	shorturl.at/cruDQ
2092	Transgender woman wins claim to have pension backdated to female retirement age	Express (Online)	27/06/2018	England/Wales	shorturl.at/ijlpC
2192	UK court hears children cannot consent to puberty blockers	The Guardian	08/10/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/hmAM1
2194	UK government drops gender self-identification plan for trans people	The Guardian	22/09/2020	England/Wales	shorturl.at/tBFJ3
2198	UK theatres promise to only cast trans actors in trans roles	The Guardian	26/05/2021	England/Wales	shorturl.at/agkGK
2219	Uproar over plan for civil servants to use pronouns on end of emails: Scottish Government move for transgender inclusivity derided as a 'deeply stupid and authoritarian' policy	The Daily Telegraph	27/07/2021	England/Wales	shorturl.at/orPS8
2273	Wellcome prize shortlist celebrates books about masculinity and mental illness	The Guardian	19/03/2019	England/Wales	shorturl.at/kHIL2

2285	What it's really like to become parents when you're both trans	Telegraph.co.uk	02/07/2021	England/Wales	<a href="https://shorturl.at/efzIY">shorturl.at/efzIY</a>
2325	Why is JK Rowling speaking out now on sex and gender debate?	The Guardian	11/06/2020	England/Wales	<a href="https://shorturl.at/dpJNW">shorturl.at/dpJNW</a>
2356	Woman who halted gender transition sues child clinic	The Times	23/01/2020	England/Wales	<a href="https://shorturl.at/blJW1">shorturl.at/blJW1</a>

## Appendix D – Supporting quotes for findings

<i>Key Concept</i>	<i>Supporting quotes</i>	<i>Foucauldian construct</i>
<i>Valued knowledge – Unvalued knowledge</i>	“...natal females...” – 468, The Guardian	<i>Knowledge</i>
	“... stating that sex is real?” ... declaring a belief that an individual cannot change their birth sex.” – 1989, Sunday Times	<i>Knowledge, power</i>
	“being a woman is a biological fact, not a feeling” – 1738, Sunday Times	<i>Knowledge</i>
	“...women don’t have dicks.”” – 1025, The Guardian	<i>Knowledge</i>
	“They fear that sex is being argued into non-existence” – 2325, The Guardian	<i>Knowledge, surveillance</i>
	“...dozens of patients coming through her clinic every month seeking to match their bodies with their gender identities” – 50, The Sun	<i>Objectification</i>
	“...it ends up being called something like Trapped Bodies Get Sliced Up!”” – 1774, The Guardian	<i>Objectification</i>
	“...our patients are so grateful for their surgery... for the first time they’re able to take their tops off” – 50, The Sun	<i>Objectification, subjectification</i>
	“Being a ‘mother’, whilst hitherto always associated with being female, is the status afforded to a person who undergoes the physical and biological process of carrying a pregnancy and giving birth.” – 2036, The Guardian	<i>Knowledge, objectification</i>
	“Gender identity does not cancel out sex. Women’s oppression by men has a physical basis, and to deny the relevance of biology when considering sexual inequality is a mistake.” – 1796, The Guardian	<i>Knowledge, power</i>
““I am not a cervix owner, women birth all people”” – 1796, The Guardian	<i>Knowledge</i>	

*Claiming  
space –  
denied space*

“...biological sex... should be given priority in terms of law-making and policy”  
– 2325, The Guardian

*Knowledge  
,objectification*

“...organisers had decided to keep the Best Male and Best Female categories despite discussions to introduce a gender-neutral alternative, meaning Sam will miss out”  
– 1541, The Sun

*Subjectification, power*

“Relaxing dress codes in public swimming pools... would encourage more non-binary and trans people to engage in physical exercise, Scottish research suggests.”  
– 784, Sunday Times

*Positioning, power,  
surveillance*

“That's why it's so important that we have proper trans representation and people hear the authentic experiences of real trans people,”  
– 2285, Telegraph.co.uk

*Positioning, power*

“It should be possible to advance trans equality without harming the interests of women.”  
– 1796, The Guardian

*Positioning, power*

“In a significant victory for campaigners, the government has promised not to put the rights of those who identify as women ahead of those who are biologically female”  
– 1121, Sunday Times

*Knowledge, positioning*

“Fresh attempts to force the government to introduce an “X” gender option on passports for non-binary people will be made...”  
– 372, The Guardian

*Power*

*Threatening -  
threatened*

“Victoria Hodges, who started hormone therapy last year, was told transgender guests could use the changing rooms matching "their acquired gender". But the company went on: " "If they are still in the transition. period, we would ask that they use the private changing facilities.””  
– 393, The Sun

*Power, objectification*

“Men identifying as women were permitted to swim in the ladies' pond on Hampstead Heath in north London; a woman who requested a female nurse to perform her

*Knowledge, power,  
objectification*

cervical smear was called in by a person with stubble...”

– 1121, Sunday Times

“Transgender lobby use police 'to stifle critics”

– 2031, The Daily Telegraph

*Power, surveillance*

“Are women-only spaces under threat?... Rowling says that “when you throw open the doors of bathrooms and changing rooms to any man who believes or feels he’s a woman ... then you open the door to any and all men who wish to come inside”.”

– 2325, The Guardian

*Power, objectification*

“... there is no compelling evidence that reducing testosterone levels removes all the advantages of being born as a man, such as increased strength and aggression.”

– 2065, The Times

*Power, knowledge, surveillance*

“Women’s concerns about sharing dormitories or changing rooms with “male-bodied” people must be taken seriously. These are not just questions of safety but of dignity and fairness.... The public needs to be better informed and safeguarding considered.”

– 1796, The Guardian

*Power, objectification, surveillance*

“...people who had been born men and were now demanding to be regarded, and treated, as women (whether they had had any surgery or not)”

– 748, Mail on Sunday

*Power, objectification*

“A KIDS' transgender clinic has been accused of carrying out a "live experiment" on children as young as three... gives many patients powerful drugs to block puberty... at least five clinicians have quit the centre over fears that vulnerable kids are being prescribed the therapy too soon.”

– 981, The Sun

*Power, objectification*

“Many professionals are now highly concerned about the treatments for under-18 gender dysphoric children and adolescents which remain largely experimental....We cannot stand by and watch young people be part of an experimental medical treatment that exposes them to very significant risks.””

*Power, surveillance*

	– 1752, The Times	
	“Many transgender people are cut off by their families” – 1178, Daily Mail	<i>Power</i>
	“...89 per cent of people have never knowingly met anyone transgender, which means we remain these shadowy figures that people are either scared of or ridicule,” says Jake.” – 2285, Telegraph.co.uk	<i>Power, objectification</i>
	“My client believed that she was not offered a job because she was transgender” – 1013, The Times	<i>Power</i>
	“A Stonewall spokesman said... It’s important NHS trusts are working to ensure trans patients are treated equally because our research shows two in five trans people (37 per cent) avoid treatment for fear of discrimination.” – 1223, Telegraph.co.uk	<i>Power, subjectification</i>
	“Trans group Mermaids UK said: "...Being trans still brings prejudice, and young people face hostility every day.” – 135, The Sun	<i>Power</i>
<i>Monitoring - monitored</i>	"Accusations of transphobia are thrown at women so often for so little that the word has lost all meaning.” – 1989, Sunday Times	<i>Power, surveillance</i>
	“The pronoun-badge scheme is just the latest mad PC policy to come out of student life, in which the uptight policing of what people can say and do has become the norm” – 1446, The Sun	<i>Power, surveillance</i>
	“It is now so risky and frightening for people to talk critically about gender identity on campus...” – 1532, The Guardian	<i>Power, surveillance</i>
	“Transgender people have described the current medical requirements of the process as intrusive and humiliating” – 2194, The Guardian	<i>Power, surveillance, subjectification</i>

“... transgender women must prove that their testosterone levels have been below 10 nmol/L for more than 12 months before their debut. This policy reflects the stance of the International Olympic Committee. To comply, transgender women usually take testosterone-blocking drugs.”

– 2015, The Times

*Surveillance,  
objectification,  
subjectification*

“Rather than looking like a pregnant man, he says, he just looked like a fat one.”

– 1774, The Guardian

*Surveillance,  
subjectification*

“I talked about it very rarely, but quickly realised as a young child it wasn’t an OK thing to talk about.” Why? “Because people don’t like it when little kids use terms like ‘sex change’, and they tell you to shut up.”

– 1774, The Guardian

*Surveillance, power*

“Last year, British newspapers including the Sun and the Independent hailed Hayden Cross as “Britain’s first pregnant man”. Soon afterwards, they had to hail another man, Scott Parker, after he got in touch to say that he had given birth a few months earlier.”

– 1827, The Guardian

*Surveillance*

Appendix E – Example article

(2325) → surveillance piece

Document 1 of 1 → knowledge source

**Why is JK Rowling speaking out now on sex and gender debate?**

Author: Brooks, Libby *disempowered? competing constructs* → *positioning w/ women*

Publication info: The Guardian ; London (UK) [London (UK)]. 11 June 2020: 21.

<http://ezproxy.bangor.ac.uk/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/why-is-jk-rowling-speaking-out-now-on-sex-and-gender-debate/docview/2411938113/se-2?accountid=14874>

Abstract: None available.

Links:  
<https://libkey.io/libraries/1613/openurl?genre=unknown&au=Brooks%2C+Libby&aulast=Brooks&issn=02613077&isbn=&title=Why+is+JK+Rowling+speaking+out+now+on+sex+and+gender+debate%3F&jtitle=The+Guardian&pubname=The+Guardian&btittle=&atitle=Why+is+JK+Rowling+speaking+out+now+on+sex+and+gender+debate%3F&volume=&issue=&spage=21&date=2020&doi=&sid=ProQuest>  
<https://libkey.io/libraries/1613/openurl?genre=unknown&au=Brooks%2C+Libby&aulast=Brooks&issn=02613077&isbn=&title=Why+is+JK+Rowling+speaking+out+now+on+sex+and+gender+debate%3F&jtitle=The+Guardian&pubname=The+Guardian&btittle=&atitle=Why+is+JK+Rowling+speaking+out+now+on+sex+and+gender+debate%3F&volume=&issue=&spage=21&date=2020&doi=&sid=ProQuest>

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*deliberate* Full text: What are implications of Harry Potter author's detailed essay expressing views on transgender law reform? *social value*

Why has JK Rowling chosen to write about her concerns? *competing constructs position one side of one*

The Harry Potter author has published a 3,600-word essay setting out in more detail than before the development of her already well-known stance in sex and gender debates. In it, she reveals for the first time her own experience of serious sexual assault and domestic violence which, Rowling explains, she felt compelled to write about after reading of the Scottish government's latest progress towards changing gender recognition laws. *Victim - disempowered* *cis women exp. of violence relevant to trans women debate?*

"I couldn't shut out those memories [of my own assault] and I was finding it hard to contain my anger and disappointment about the way I believe my government is playing fast and loose with women's and girls' safety," she wrote. *violence group*

Rowling underlines that she also wants trans women to be safe. Many other women who share her views likewise insist transgender people have the right to equality and dignity. *violence from trans w/ cis men?*

But beyond this there is huge disagreement about how different positions - whether those of transgender activists or gender-critical feminists - express that commitment in practice, and indeed what the nuances of those different positions are. *Added against each other, only 2 positions to take.*

Gender critical/feminists disagree with the trans rights activists' view that gender identity is separate from one's biological sex, and that it should be given priority in terms of law-making and policy. They fear that sex is being argued into non-existence and that this will erode rights hard-won by women in *trans women = cis men?*

*JK Rowling as GC fem?*

knowledge based on binary bio sex → *Gender as sex.*  
 VIVE → *Crucial JK Rowling as voice.*



who? voiceless?

the face of historical biological discrimination. Others regard the focus on biological sex as transphobic. They argue that while they do not deny the reality of biological sex there must be a recognition of complexities beyond binary definition, and that people should have the right to privacy around their sex characteristics at birth (as was agreed in the European convention on human rights in 2002, which led to the current Gender Recognition Act). *Harry Wouda*

Can a person change their gender at will nowadays? *Case*  
Rowling says many people do not know that "a man who intends to have no surgery and take no hormones may now secure himself a gender recognition certificate and be a woman in the sight of the law". But this has been the case since initial gender recognition legislation was passed in 2004, under which the only legal requirement for changing a birth certificate is proof of living in one's preferred gender.

trans identity only valid through hormones

The Scottish government's proposals - which have been put on hold for the duration of the pandemic - remove the current requirement for applicants to provide medical evidence of their diagnosis of gender dysphoria, but other checks and balances remain. Those applying for a gender recognition certificate are entering into a legal agreement to live in their preferred gender for the rest of their life - any breach of this is punishable with up to two years in prison - and there remains a requirement that a person has lived in the acquired gender for three months before signing the statutory declaration, and waits for a further three-month reflection period before the certificate is granted.

surveillance + monitoring

control + power

Are women-only spaces under threat? *Ward women + women*  
Rowling says that "when you throw open the doors of bathrooms and changing rooms to any man who believes or feels he's a woman - then you open the door to any and all men who wish to come inside". *NOT TRANS WOMEN*

stigmatisation

Those supportive of transgender law reform - which has also been put on hold by the UK government - argue that anxiety around single sex-spaces relates to women's understandable lack of faith in how seriously violence against them is dealt with. Organisations such as Rape Crisis Scotland and Women's Aid Scotland have operated trans-inclusive policies with few reported problems. Transgender groups point out that they still make up only 0.6% of the population and that "the amount of obsession over where we pee is disproportionate to the likelihood of bumping into one of us" - *we don't matter - which group? C. Rowling!*

subjectification + internalisation

Others express the concern that the spectrum of people who identify particularly as trans women is expanding to include male-appearing people who - rightly or wrongly - might be perceived as a threat, and feel sceptical about whether inclusion policies have been properly tested or if individual cis women will be too afraid or uncomfortable to challenge male-bodied people in their spaces.

threat + discourse + "agency or autonomy" + justify

Is there evidence that more young people are transitioning, and then regretting it? *need on protection + serious threat*

The problem is that there has been no systematic tracking in the UK of what happens to people after transitioning, so it is hard to offer evidence other than the anecdotal. Rowling refers to a controversial US paper that questions whether transgender identification in teenagers could be a form of social contagion. She notes that "the UK has experienced a 4,400% increase in girls being referred for transitioning treatment". *Need watching*

lifestyle choice

Critics of Rowling say it is easy to exaggerate demand because the percentages involved are already so tiny. According to the Scottish Trans Alliance, it is estimated that less than 0.1% of under-18s in Scotland have been referred to a gender identity clinic, and the majority of them will receive psychological support at this stage. STA also reports that the numbers of people de-transitioning are "a handful".

subjectification, devaluing space.



faceless, amorphous  
inhabitants - meant

victim

as the debate become irreconcilable/too toxic to move forward?  
Rowling describes the online threats and abuse she has encountered since making her position clear about two years ago, something that many others who speak out on transgender rights, whether supportively or critically, have also reported. Equalities organisations insist that supporting transgender rights should not and must not excuse abusive behaviour, but also make a plea not to conflate angry and anonymous voices online with organised campaigners: it is dangerous to decide the merits of equality principles based on what is said on Twitter. There is also concern that, when a woman of such influence and popularity as Rowling sets out a critical position, then the wider public, who are largely supportive of transgender people according to most recent British Social Attitudes research, may begin to question their fundamental rights.

Subject: Activism; Domestic violence; Sex crimes;  
Transgender persons; Essays; Legislation

was rights issue on the rights of others.

**CHAPTER 3: REFLECTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY AND PRACTICE**

## Introduction

This thesis examined the phenomenon of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) identity in the cultural context of the United Kingdom (UK), with the overarching lens of ‘where voices are heard’. Two lines of enquiry were utilised: the systematic review examined *what was said* where voices were heard, and the empirical paper examined *locating* where voices were heard. The thesis aimed to capture the experiences of TGNC people whilst deepening understanding of the cultural and discursive landscape of the UK in which they are placed.

Although the systematic review and the empirical paper focused on two different ‘speakers’, the findings were inextricably linked. It is well established that social contexts, knowledges, practices and behaviours shape how people in a minority group experience the world and themselves (Meyer, 2003), and that there are specific stressors and mediators of distress identified for TGNC people (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). The systematic review highlighted the shared experiences of TGNC people in the UK, specifically how their sense of self, safety and agency were mostly governed by the responses of others. The findings indicated that TGNC people in the UK were acutely aware of stigma due to the dominant discourses around TGNC identity and the rigidity of cultural ‘norms’ such as the gender binary. The findings from the empirical paper revealed the threat-salient dominant discourses of TGNC people available to the public in the UK, and how TGNC people were often objectified, undermined or ridiculed by the press. A key finding from the empirical paper was that knowledge of the gender binary were the foundation in which discourses were built on and related to. Across both studies, a polarised power relationship was identified between TGNC people and non TGNC people in UK society. The current paper will integrate the findings across both papers to consider the theoretical and clinical implications. The author’s general positionality and reflections on the research process are included within.

### **Statement of positionality**

It was my intention to actively and continuously reflect on my own position within the research process. My epistemological position broadly aligns with that of social constructionism (Burr, 1995), particularly with the idea that ‘truths’ or ‘knowledges’ are not objective, rather they are constructed by social context and maintained by individual meaning-making (Gergen, 1985). I acknowledge that I brought my own assumptions and emotional responses which inevitably bore weight on my interpretation of the data; in itself this is a strength and a limitation. As a researcher I cannot claim to position myself freely or with expert knowledge, though I can commit to actively note and reflect on the position in which I am standing and what I bring to this process. In understanding how I came to select the topic of TGNC identity in the UK for this thesis, it is perhaps helpful to attribute factors of my position to various levels of the system I operate in.

The broadest level of the system can be defined by the society I am a part of. My life experiences to date have taken place in the UK, therefore how I understand things to be ‘knowledge’ will be shaped by contextual and cultural practices. In the UK, the topic of TGNC identity has been increasingly present in mainstream modes of knowledge: news press, social media, film and television projects, and government initiatives to name a few. There has been a marked spike in public interest following the UK governments’ appeal for public consultation on the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) (2004) with the view to make changes to best meet the needs of TGNC people. There exist many challenges for TGNC people in the UK. The GRA poses many legal obstacles for transgender persons to have a recognised right in their gender identity, such as requiring psychiatric diagnosis, having to provide evidence of living in their ‘acquired gender’ for at least two years, and having to obtain consent from medical professionals and spousal partners before successfully gaining legal gender recognition. In recent months, these processes were

amplified by a legal challenge, *Bell v. Tavistock* (2020), to TGNC healthcare in adolescents in focusing on how and when consent is given by service users. The ruling made clear that those under the age of sixteen did not have capacity to consent to treatment, even those that are temporary and reversible, leaving a concerning gap of provision. Such a ruling was widely criticised by the TGNC community as disempowering and de-valuing the inherent knowledge and experience that people hold in relation to their own gender identity (Kelley, 2020).

The next level closer to me as an individual in the system is the professional and institutional context I operate in. I am employed by the National Health Service as a Trainee Clinical Psychologist and will shortly qualify as a Clinical Psychologist. My work is with people in the mental healthcare system, whom are often the most marginalized and stigmatized in UK society (Clement et al., 2015; Corrigan et al., 2016; Dietrich et al., 2004). In my work I met TGNC people who faced significant barriers to accessing specialist Gender Identity Clinics (GICs) and were being held in mental health services where this was not where their needs were best met. Currently, GICs have waiting lists averaging four years, between 48 and 51 months, (Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, 2022), greatly breaching one's legal entitlement to receive specialist care in a public health service within 18 weeks of referral (Women and Equalities Committee, 2016). Further, I was struck by the experiences of stigma, discrimination and violence as reported by the TGNC people I have met, and I witnessed the impact this had on their psychological wellbeing. I observed professionals' individual biases and assumptions during case discussions, which made me reflect on the importance of language use as professionals. As a professional, I was frustrated by the lack of provision for appropriate support for a population who were already at risk of facing significant mental health challenges over their lifetime. I noticed how the UK mental health system locates 'problems' within individuals rather than looking at the

broader sociocultural factors that impact one's wellbeing. I am committed to advocacy and promotion of social justice in my role as a professional.

The closest level to me in the system I operate in is my own identity: experiences, assumptions, emotions and understanding of the world I live in. I have utilised personal therapy to explore what drives my passion in advocating for TGNC rights. I identified that a 'sticking point' for me is where TGNC people are de-humanised and denied permission to exist. I have worked to understand that there are parts of my own identity which mirror these experiences. I carry with me a generational trauma in relation to antisemitic persecution; I have an understanding of the historic 'moral panic' narratives that sought to eradicate, dehumanise and oppress Jewish people. In my own life I have navigated religious and cultural identity and expression growing up in a cultural context that is predominantly not-Jewish. My white skin helps me to remain 'invisible', or 'pass', as not-Jewish in situations where it feels unsafe to disclose this part of me. I identify as 'somewhere in-between' Jewish and not-Jewish, not fully belonging or fitting in to one group or the other, and as a consequence my behaviours will change depending on the social setting I am in. I have worked hard to accept and embrace that I exist somewhere in the middle of two social identities and to reclaim this as my own unique lived experience. In this way, I can relate to a small element of a TGNC person's experience and I believe that these experiences help me in empathising with other marginalised groups. At the same time, I acknowledge that my gender is one faction of my identity in which I am fortunate to have not experienced dissonance with, nor the level of scrutiny that TGNC often people face in relation to their gender expression. As I am cisgendered [my gender identity aligns with the gender I was assigned at birth based on my chromosomal and sexual characteristics] I have not experienced the marginalisation and barriers that many TGNC people face on the basis of their gender. I am 'safe' to express my gender within the binary. My default

experience is for my gender identity to be affirmed by others in society. It is my hope that I do not speak for, or make assumptions of, a TGNC person's experience in my research.

### **Implications for theory development and future research**

#### ***Gender Minority Stress***

The Gender Minority Stress Model (GMSM; Hendricks & Testa, 2012) establishes specific factors that produce and mediate psychological distress for TGNC people. The systematic review and empirical paper are both additive in placing the GMSM model within the cultural context of the UK which is fundamental for the model to be meaningful (Tan et al., 2020).

The systematic review identified both distal and proximal stressors that were experienced by TGNC people in the UK. Mediating factors to this distress were also identified. Distal (externally produced) stressors were understood as the stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion that TGNC people experienced. Others' perceptions of TGNC identity were reported to be encapsulated in the rigidity of the gender binary, which was used to position TGNC people as socially deviant or threatening. Distal stressors ranged from micro-aggressions to violence, though all these experiences were conceptualised as the phenomenon of 'transphobia'. To identify and express one's gender in a space beyond the gender binary led to social and psychological vulnerability. As a consequence, proximal (internally produced) stressors were facilitated. The salient narratives and knowledges around what it means to be TGNC, often described as threat-salient or ridicule-salient, were internalised by TGNC people themselves. This created a sense of self in which they objectified themselves and their bodies as wrong or abnormal. Another proximal stressor was a sensitivity to, or preoccupation with, negative judgements from others. This left TGNC people with a sense of psychological 'stuckness' and facing a difficult choice. When



expressing ones gender within the binary, it was usually within these contexts: to conceal TGNC identity, to access specialist services and medical interventions, or to ‘pass’ as cisgendered. The function of all of these contexts served to keep them socially safe, though the cost was often authentic gender expression and a sense of isolation. The systematic review also identified mediating factors that mitigated the impact of this distress. Affirming experiences, as facilitated by others both in and out of the TGNC community, played a large role in building a sense of social safety and encouraging authentic gender expression, helping to create a sense of acceptance. A novel finding was that for some TGNC people, a sense of self-knowledge and ‘identity pride’ were primary mediators of distress as well as secondary consequences to other mediators. Crucially, the findings illustrated an imbalanced power relationship between TGNC people and others, in which TGNC people occupied a disempowered position. Further research into what drives the distal stressors, in particular the stigmatising narratives surrounding TGNC identity that contribute to discrimination, would be fundamental for prevention and social change. The importance of others being aware of the power dynamic, as well as being committed to affirm and empower TGNC people where possible, was highlighted. Further research into others’ perceptions towards TGNC people, in particular professionals and families, would be beneficial. The systematic review identified a paucity of studies that investigated how intersecting minority identity relates to TGNC identity, and further research in this field would be valuable in broadening the theoretical frameworks surrounding minority identity.

The empirical paper provided an understanding of how the GSM is situated within dominant discursive environments in the UK. This research complimented the systematic review as it captured the *how* and *why* of the distal stressors experienced by TGNC people. The UK press was identified as a valuable and rich source of data in perpetuating distal stressors, namely,

stigmatising narratives surrounding TGNC people. As found in the literature review, the hegemonic ideas of knowledge (and hierarchies of knowledge) in relation to the gender binary was the foundation on which discourses were developed and sustained. The findings of the empirical paper highlighted the rigidity and polarisation of the binary. Speakers in positions of power were utilised to affirm this knowledge, building on the systematic review's finding that knowledge of TGNC identity was often governed by others rather than the self. As a consequence, and as observed by the systematic review findings, TGNC people became 'subjectified' by the discourse, conforming to binarised expressions of gender in order to meet the demands of the dominant knowledges held in society. From these knowledges, TGNC people were objectified by the UK news press discourses, positioned as inherently threatening (wrong) to social norms and values or as objects of ridicule (abnormal). In particular, transgender women were presented as conceptually, physically, and sexually threatening to 'women'. Specifically, where transgender women still had male genitalia, this gave them unauthorised power, which can be placed in the findings of Dyer's (2002) theories around the UK media's preoccupation with 'phallic power'. This narrative was reflected on in the systematic review and experienced as highly stigmatising. The UK news press were concerned with making sense of, or 'intellectualising', TGNC identity and monitoring TGNC people to minimise perceived threat. Speakers considered to hold a TGNC identity were often omitted from the discourse, and where included, they were often undermined. This finding echoed the experiences of TGNC people in the systematic review: that to find voice in the conversation around TGNC identity was a challenge. Existing research highlights the impact that news press discourses have on the proximal stressors (internalised and perceived stigma) experienced by TGNC people. It would be valuable for this to be investigated in the context of the UK news press and hearing more TGNC voices in their understanding of mainstream news press discourses.

Future research that replicates the empirical paper as the cultural, social, and political landscape evolves in the UK would be invaluable to broaden understanding of dominant discourses surrounding TGNC identity in the UK.

### *Discursive resource*

A key finding from both studies is that the language available, or discursive resource, to understand TGNC identity is expanding, diverse, and non-comprehensive. This affirms discursive psychology theoretical frameworks, in particular, that there are no consensual objects of thought (Willig, 2015). The concept of ‘TGNC identity’ was not consensual across speakers meaning that when people spoke about TGNC identity, they were not talking about the same objective ‘thing’ – they were using language to construct its meaning in a variety of ways. This was encapsulated in both the findings and the process of both studies. In relation to the findings, the systematic review highlighted that the gender binary was restrictive in terms of the language that was available for TGNC people to make sense of their experiences and communicate this to others. Often, the only way of being was to ‘negate’ one’s experience, in describing what they are not rather than what they are. The findings revealed that self-knowledge of TGNC varied depending on individual sense of identity: there is no one way of being TGNC. The findings of the empirical paper also highlighted that the language used to make sense of TGNC people’s experiences was restrictive and contested. In many ways, TGNC identity was attempted to be understood in the existing binarised frameworks of gender and this caused tension: what does it mean to be a ‘woman’ or a ‘mother’, for example? The difference between the findings across papers was that language was experienced as restrictive for either TGNC people (systematic review) or for non TGNC people (empirical paper), highlighting the incongruence in how language is experienced in the UK context

in relation to TGNC people. In relation to the process, the systematic review captured a range of TGNC identities from within the participant sample. The summary of included studies (Chapter 1, Table 3) highlighted the scope of the language used by participants to describe their gender identity. The process of collecting data for the empirical paper also illuminated the scope of language used by others to describe TGNC people. The search strategy (Chapter 2, Figure 1) highlighted the need for a search term review in light of the range of terms available in the discourse. Indeed, it was observed that the secondary search terms in the empirical paper (e.g. ‘sex swap’, ‘gender switch’) were not used by TGNC people in the systematic review to describe their experiences. This thesis has highlighted the evolving discursive landscape in relation to TGNC people in the UK. This is important in developing two crucial understandings of TGNC identity: that it is multi-faceted, and that there is a dissonance between TGNC people and non TGNC people in how language is understood and applied. Further research into other contributors to the discourse, such as social media and online media, would be beneficial to enrich this understanding.

### **Implications for clinical practice**

This thesis has developed theoretical understandings of the experiences of TGNC people in the UK cultural context. For this to have meaning, the findings must be utilised by clinicians that work with TGNC people in the UK across all settings in pursuit of promoting psychological wellbeing and meeting the appropriate needs of the individuals.

### ***Understanding the world that TGNC people inhabit***

The findings across both papers have contributed to developing understanding the world (cultural, social, psychological, discursive) that TGNC people inhabit in the UK. This is crucial

for clinicians to integrate into their idiosyncratic formulations when working with TGNC clients. There are a number of ways that the findings can be applied, though this paper will present two clinical formulation frameworks as a guide.

Firstly, the findings could be understood using the critical community psychology approach (Kagan et al., 2011; Fryer, 2008). Formulation in this approach identifies that psychological distress is not solely located within a person, i.e. a problem to be diagnosed and ‘fixed’, rather it is understood as part of the social world that people inhabit and associated hegemonic practices. This approach seeks to integrate embodied experience and social phenomena. The findings of this thesis strongly emphasise the social drivers of psychological distress for TGNC people.

Secondly, the findings could be understood using the Cognitive Analytic Therapy (Ryle, 1995) approach. This approach identifies that psychological distress is maintained by difficulties and power imbalances in relationships. Specifically, ‘reciprocal roles’ are used to understand templates for ways of being with other people, for example where someone occupies a ‘attacking’ position, the other is placed in the ‘attacked’ position, with both positions leading to various behavioural, cognitive and emotional sequelae. The findings across both papers highlighted the inherent power relationships between TGNC people and others in their social world. In particular, that TGNC people are often given the role of ‘attacker’ by others in society yet in reality are the ones who are ‘attacked’. Clinicians are urged to consider both formulation frameworks, and any others that are clinically relevant, as they develop their idiosyncratic formulations when working with TGNC clients.

### *Understanding our own biases, assumptions and power*

The findings across both papers have illustrated the role of actual and perceived stigma from professionals in maintaining psychological distress for TGNC people (Benson, 2013; Brown, Kucharska & Marczak, 2018). In particular, it was highlighted that professionals are a part of the power relationships. For individuals, professionals can further perpetuate prejudice and discrimination. For society, professionals contribute hegemonic ‘knowledges’ on TGNC identity. These are two key areas to consider for further personal and professional development. In the former area, the findings across both studies illustrated that TGNC people became ‘subjectified’ into complying with dominant norms or practices such as the gender binary in an effort to retain a sense of social safety. As the systematic review highlighted, the impact of such subjectification could result in non-disclosure, dysphoria and a sense of isolation. Clinicians should consider that many clients we work with might not be in a place where they feel safe to disclose their TGNC identity for fear of judgement and discrimination and might be experiencing the associated psychological distress that comes with non-disclosure. In the latter area, professionals hold a responsibility to be reflective and reflexive practitioners in order to work ethically and to reduce discrimination (Health & Care Professions Council, 2016). Clinicians are urged to consider sources of personal influences and biases, such as cognitive biases, personal experience, and motivations (British Psychological Society, 2017). Clinicians are encouraged to use supervision, reflective practice and relevant frameworks – for example, the Social Graces framework (Burnham, 1992; Roper-Hall, 1998) – to consider their personal position within the relationship to the TGNC client.

### *Developing holistic, gender-informed services*

The findings of this thesis have revealed areas for development in the healthcare system across generalist and specialist services. It was revealed that TGNC people were often objectified by professionals, understood as bodies or as diagnoses rather than as whole human beings. This paper sets out recommendations for clinical intervention across both general and specialist healthcare settings. In general healthcare settings, it is important for professionals to move towards a ‘gender-informed’ model of care, akin to the ‘trauma-informed’ model of care that is developing in the UK (Sweeney, 2016). A ‘gender-informed’ model of care is evolving in the literature and involves recommendations for healthcare providers to become more aware of the experiences of TGNC people in order to work towards reducing systematic discrimination (Jones & Willis, 2015). This paper recommends that healthcare organisations implement continued professional development around TGNC issues in particular, separate to LGBT+ issues, as the GSM posits that there are gender-specific factors in relation to minority stress that are contextually different to other minoritised groups such as LGB+ people (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). It is important that for the implementation of training to be meaningful, it is delivered regularly and from TGNC organisations that specialise in such training so that TGNC voices are amplified. Part of the ‘gender-informed’ model of care would also involve the aforementioned recommendations of ‘Understanding our own biases, assumptions and power’. In specialist TGNC healthcare settings, it is imperative that the findings of this thesis are used in the development of an ‘informed consent’ model of care (Schulz, 2018). In particular, the findings of this thesis support the elements of this model that challenge the ‘distress narrative’ and seek to instead locate the problem faced by TGNC people as the rigidity of the gender binary in UK culture and services. A key recommendation from this research, mapping onto the recommendations outlined by Schulz (2018), is that decision

making around physical interventions needs to be collaborative and TGNC voices given inherent knowledge value. This thesis highlights that whilst physical interventions are an important part of a TGNC person's experience, the social context of transition (in all of its forms) has huge implications. Therefore, specialist healthcare services for TGNC people should expand beyond the medical model of provision and include holistic, person-centred services to meet the psychosocial needs of TGNC people. Additionally, it is important that these services include experts by experience in their professional teams in order to place value on inherent knowledges within the TGNC community and promote social safety and connection to mediate distress for service users. It is the intention of this author to disseminate the findings of this thesis to commissioning groups that are piloting such holistic models of care (NHS England, 2019) to support the funding and development of this type of specialist provision.

### **Reflections on the research process**

As I sit down to try and put my experience of the research process of this thesis into words, I find myself not knowing where to begin. Perhaps the beginning is a good place to start. The chronological journey of the research process did not follow the logical journey established in the structure of this thesis. As explored in the statement of positionality, I began this research project with a drive to amplify TGNC voices in the UK to further theoretical understandings of their experiences as well as establish relevant recommendations for clinical settings. I held onto a fantasy of being the researcher to 'define' the problem, perhaps myself looking to find an objective truth or knowledge, in order to 'solve' it. As I began the research process, I soon discovered that this fantasy did not align with my epistemological position and psychological frameworks for understanding the world. I had to learn to let go of the need to find a solution to a question and sit



comfortably with the research process creating (what felt like a million) more questions. My tolerance for ‘not knowing’ in the academic sense has evolved alongside my tolerance for ‘not knowing’ in the clinical sense as I have trained as Clinical Psychologist. I came into training with an eagerness to understand or fix the world, and I am leaving training with an eagerness to just ‘be’ in the world and stay curious about processes around me. I place value in the experiences of others and feel privileged to be a part of the collaborative process of understanding with the people I work with.

My initial question for the empirical paper was to capture the narrative ‘journey’ of TGNC people’s experiences. Having secured two clinical supervisors (LS & CL) for the project, my next step was to consult with a local support group for TGNC people. I was kindly welcomed into their meeting space on two occasions as a witness to the life experiences they were sharing in order to gain an understanding of their journeys so far. I was invited to hold a ‘consultation space’ on the third occasion in order to help co-produce a meaningful research question. In this space, in which I was positioned as a professional in the room, I observed a very striking dynamic play out. I witnessed the anger and sadness that many TGNC people felt towards professionals given their experiences of stigma and discrimination within the healthcare system. I was told by a few people that any research attempting to voice the experiences of TGNC people would be meaningless and hopeless: “Nobody wants to listen”. The consultation moved to a point in which the dominant discourses, particularly in the UK news press, were being discussed and held as fundamental for understanding where the stigma and discrimination comes from in UK culture: “If that doesn’t change, nothing will”. I left the consultation feeling ashamed of my own naivety or ignorance. The consultation highlighted to me that the voices that matter, TGNC people’s own voices, had little space to be heard and that the TGNC voices that are given space were held within society. How

do I tackle this? I used supervision to name my urge to pull away and avoid this research topic as it felt too ‘big’ to investigate, to ‘define’, to ‘solve’. My supervisors named with me that perhaps that is exactly the reason we need to explore this topic. Perhaps turning towards and being curious about understanding dominant discourses is exactly what is needed to unravel what is maintaining the problem before we can turn research efforts to ‘solving’ the problem. Following a review into the literature, we identified that there was clear rationale to investigate discourses of TGNC people in the UK news press over the last few years. I secured a third supervisor (GF) to develop my expertise in the UK news press and placing the findings within relevant theoretical contexts. Our initial idea was to combine FDA with linguistic corpus analysis (McEnery & Hardy, 2012), though we soon discovered that this would be problematic due to conflicting epistemologies and resource availability. This project was the first time I had used FDA and at times I found it difficult to hold all of the conceptual frameworks in mind to meaningfully apply them. I utilised CL’s expertise of FDA in supervision, alongside completing a course provided by Maastricht University in applying discourse analysis to media data (Appendix A). During the analysis process, I found myself drawn to conceptualising the findings in a thematic framework in order to capture the scope of topics discussed. In this way, I too was like a reader, making sense of the language used to form conceptualisations of concrete topics. I used supervision to reformulate my thinking and bring the lens of analysis back to FDA, to focus on the *why* and *how* rather than the *what*. Perhaps this was a part of my fantasy to ‘capture everything’ and solve the ‘problem’ of the UK media. I felt a sense of responsibility to demonstrate all of the richness that the data had to offer. I had to learn to sit with the idea that any contribution to knowledge was enough, and that I or other researchers can use the same dataset to offer alternative lenses of analyses in the future.

As I moved to complete the systematic review, I recognised that this was the part of the thesis specifically exploring actual TGNC voice. Leaning into my fantasy as advocate-researcher, I felt an increased responsibility to meaningfully capture the TGNC voices in the UK. Having conducted preliminary literature searches, I was struck by how varied the research was in terms of research settings and methodologies. The epistemological, theoretical and methodological approaches across papers was variant, including studies that utilised Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytic theory to guide qualitative interpretation. I felt overwhelmed at the task of refining my search criteria to balance the need to capture available research against the need to ensure the findings were conceptually synthesisable in order for the review to be meaningful. As a research team I decided to keep the scope of enquiry (e.g. various research settings) broad in order to synthesise common experiences of TGNC identity in the UK, whilst placing limits on included methodological approaches (e.g. Thematic Analysis or Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) in order to ensure some level of epistemological similarity. I enjoyed the process of analysing the studies included for review. I found myself interested once again in the ‘journey’ of what it means to be TGNC and was struck by the resemblance to developmental trajectories of identity formation. Perhaps in the future, myself or other researchers could investigate the narrative element of TGNC identity. Completing the review after completing the empirical paper was both affirmative, in relation to complimenting the findings of the empirical paper, and difficult, in relation to ‘switching’ my analytical lens from FDA to thematic synthesis.

A final point of reflection in this paper focuses on how I navigated ‘life’ amongst the thesis. During the final six months of this thesis, I became pregnant with my first baby. I have considered my pregnancy experience in relation to both the content and the process of this thesis. In terms of the content of this thesis, I found myself reflecting on how my pregnancy is an affirming part of

my gender identity - I am recognised in society as a 'mother'. The decision to exercise my bodily autonomy and to choose (as much as one can choose) to become pregnant has not been questioned, and in my experience was always encouraged ("When are you going to start trying for a baby?"), by others in society. This awareness made it all the more difficult to read news articles in the press (Chapter 2) that ridiculed transgender men, transmasculine or non-binary people for expressing their right to bodily autonomy and choosing to become pregnant, and that their identity as 'father' was not permitted by legal frameworks in the UK. It made me reflect on my privilege that I hold that I do not have to prove my gender identity, or my identity as a mother, to those in positions of power – it is assumed. Combined with my clinical experience working in a specialist perinatal mental health team, I have spent considerable time reflecting on the assumptions we make of gender in gendered services such as maternity services. Indeed, in multi-disciplinary team meetings, our patients are often referred to as "ladies". I have used my pregnancy experience to examine my own biases and assumptions when it comes to gender identity and parenthood. In terms of the process of this thesis, my pregnancy has meant I have had to re-evaluate the ways in which I worked. I used to be fixed in the belief that 'good' work meant sacrificing basic needs of sleep, rest, and time with loved ones. I had fantasies of working all hours to demonstrate my passion and commitment to this thesis. The fatigue and sickness I experienced in early pregnancy compelled me to slow down and re-evaluate what was important to me. I have found it difficult at times, not least in these final few weeks before completion, to balance the demands of the thesis amongst the demands of the pregnancy. In many ways, this thesis has been my 'baby' for the last three years – I have given it nurture, sacrifice, and energy to help it grow into its fullest potential. I now find myself in a position where my actual baby needs me, and for him, I am so grateful for shifting my perspective. It is my hope that I have done this thesis justice in contributing what it

aimed to. I am looking forward to publishing the findings and moving onto the next chapter of its implementation. I am looking forward to the next chapter of my career, but most importantly, the next chapter of my life.

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## Appendix A – Qualification from Maastricht University



### Center for European Studies

### Transcript / *Resultatenoverzicht*

Student number / *Studentnummer*: 6300268

Name / *Naam*: Jessica Stolberg

Date of birth / *Geboortedatum*: 02 October 1995 / *02 oktober 1995*

Place of birth / *Geboorteplaats*: Manchester

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Maastricht Summer School

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	Grade	Date	Attempted ECTS	Earned ECTS	Resits
<b>MSS</b>					
MSS0044 Media Representations and Research Methods	7,2	20.08.2021	2,00	2,00	
<b>Earned credits / <i>Behaalde studiepunten (ECTS)</i></b>				<b>2,00</b>	
<b>Minimum credits programme / <i>Minimum studiepunten opleiding (ECTS)</i></b>				<b>0,00</b>	

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Print date / *Print datum*: 20 August 2021 / *20 augustus 2021*

## **Word Count**

### **Chapter One – Systematic Review**

Abstract: 259

Main text (excluding abstract, tables, figures and references): 8802

Tables, figures and references: 4738

Appendices: 90

### **Chapter Two – Empirical Study**

Abstract: 256

Main text (excluding abstract, tables, figures and references): 10,350

Tables, figures and references: 2629

Appendices: 4195

### **Chapter Three – Contributions to Theory and Clinical Practice**

Main text (excluding references): 5572

References and Appendices: 596

### **Overall Thesis**

Total word count of abstracts and main texts: 25,239

Total word count of tables, figures, references and appendices: 12,248

Total thesis word count (including table of contents, declaration, acknowledgements, thesis abstract, title pages, tables, figures, references, appendices and word count page): 39,250