HOW DO STEREOTYPES OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER INFLUENCE LGBT CAREER CONSTRUCTION?

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Ashley Williams

Alliance Manchester Business School

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Abstract

Stereotypes contribute to workplace inequality by creating biased negative evaluations of individuals' performance, resulting in discriminatory action. However, the impact of such stereotypes is not limited to externally imposed limitations on one's capability, but also extends to vocational decisions based upon perceived career barriers. By impacting assessment of suitable roles, stereotypes discourage pursual of certain occupations due to perceived role incongruity. Implicit Inversion Theory suggests that stereotypes of lesbians and gay men are typically the opposite of those held about their heterosexual equivalents, as lesbian women are stereotyped as masculine and gay men are stereotyped as feminine. Such stereotypes have been shown to lead to discrimination in the hiring process, however little is known about how the internalisation of such stereotypes impacts perceptions of careers, and how this translates into their career experiences. Further, very little is currently known about stereotypes of bisexual and transgender individuals.

This thesis describes the exploration of the impact of internalised stereotypes on the career experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals, with a focus on perceptions of career barriers throughout their vocational trajectories. Forty narrative career interviews with LGBT professionals across both public and private sector organisations were conducted to collect the data. These interviews were informed by the drawing of timelines depicting identity and career development, which were constructed by the participant during the interview and developed throughout the discussion.

Thematic analysis of the narrative data identified that perception of dissimilarity between personal and occupational stereotypes led to different career perceptions for individuals within the sample. However, career impact was dependent upon the types of stereotypes internalised, which differed based upon sexual and/or gender identity. For lesbians, stereotypes based upon reduced femininity led to pressure to conform to heterosexual presentation and appearance, and feeling that this was essential to be successful in a professional work environment. Gay men who internalised stereotypes of reduced masculinity perceived many different forms of career barriers within masculine work environments, such as not fitting in, risk of bullying and discrimination, and barriers to progression. Bisexual participants felt they needed to craft their careers toward liberal work environments where colleagues are less likely to hold negative stereotypes regarding the legitimacy of their sexuality. For transgender individuals, stereotypes related to gender non-conformity translated into abandonment of career aspirations and decisions to pursue careers in occupations without a prominent stereotype. Further, the extent to which actual career experiences reflect such perceptions was dependent upon the experience of identity development, as well as generational and locational differences. This research contributes to the progression of LGBT career equality by extending existing theories of careers to include LGBT individuals, and also by demonstrating the importance of inclusive career narratives and work environments for the successful simultaneous development of LGBT identity and careers.

Declaration

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For Martin

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Chapter 1   Introduction

1.1   Research Context

Minority sexual and gender identity communities face many forms of persecution, inequality and disadvantage throughout their lives as a result of their marginalised identity. Historically, these communities have suffered from extreme forms of persecution and negative perceptions from society, owing in part to the criminalisation of non-heterosexuality and non-cisgender identity, and the categorisation of same-sex attraction as a mental illness by the World Health Organisation until 1992.

Though such experiences may have declined in frequency and severity over time and with changes in attitudes, this community continues to experience marginalisation in many forms. One such example is inequality and disadvantage in the context of careers and work environments. Overcoming such challenges involves identifying their causes and contributing factors, including the role of stereotypes and perceptions of minority groups. This thesis aims to explore the role of stereotypes in the career experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals, in order to contribute to the movement of progressing towards equality for this community.

This chapter begins by identifying the people at the heart of this thesis, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, in section 1.2. This is followed by an overview of the background to the research detailed in this thesis in section 1.3. Section 1.4 then outlines the proposed research and its key contributions, before the chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis structure in section 1.5.

1.2   Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Minority sexual orientation and gender identity communities are commonly referred to using the acronym LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender). This acronym is often used as an umbrella term for non-heterosexual and non-cisgender individuals, therefore incorporating many other identities, such as queer, pansexual and asexual, to name but a few. In addition to the abbreviation itself, the identities

it references, such as transgender, are themselves also umbrella terms. A transgender individual is someone whose gender identity does not correspond to the sex that they were assigned at birth (Thanem, 2011). The term transgender—and therefore by association the umbrella acronym 'LGBT'—is often used to reference others such as intersexual, third genderist, agenderist and gender non-binary people (Beauregard, Arevshatian, Booth, & Whittle, 2016). Though not intended to provide an exhaustive list of identities included within this acronym, this demonstrates the complexities in simply referencing the LGBT community.

Whilst it can therefore be concluded that the LGBT acronym represents only a subset of statuses used by members of such minority groups, it is commonly used in research, education and wider society to represent the wider non-heterosexual and non-cisgender community. The remainder of this thesis therefore uses the term LGBT to refer to all minority sexual orientation and gender identity individuals, and other versions of the acronym are used to specify when only a subset of identities are being referred to (e.g., LG in reference to lesbian and gay individuals).

1.3 Research Background

Since 1980, there has been an increasing interest in LG careers and career inequalities (McFadden, 2015), and more recently this has extended to include the career experiences of bisexual and transgender communities. Research has identified that LGBT individuals face significantly higher rates of bullying (Hoel, Lewis, & Einarsdóttir, 2014; ILO, 2013), discrimination (Catalyst, 2014; Ng & Rumens, 2017), and unemployment (Beauregard et al., 2016; Laurent & Mihoubi, 2017) than their non-LGBT counterparts. Despite these findings, LGBT employees are one of the least studied minority groups in organisations (Fielden & Jepson, 2016; Tebele & Odeku, 2014). Research examining the career experiences of this community is vital to progress understanding of the causes and consequences of such experiences, and how organisations can minimise them.

Research investigating career inequality experienced by other minorities—particularly women and ethnic minorities—has identified the important role of stereotypes in such career experiences. Stereotypes of minorities contribute to

workplace inequality by creating biased negative evaluations of performance, resulting in discriminatory action (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The perception of incongruence between occupational stereotypes and stereotypes of people within a minority group can lead to prejudice towards them based upon assumptions regarding (in)capabilities (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Rule, Bjornsdottir, Tskhay, & Ambady, 2016). For example, research highlights the prevalence of discrimination towards women in leadership roles due to a perceived incongruence between stereotypes of women and occupational stereotypes of leaders (Duehr & Bono, 2006; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011; Schein, 1973).

Lesbians and gay men are subject to specific and unique stereotypes of negativity and of inverse gender assumptions (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Morrison & Morrison, 2002), and such beliefs are also internalised by many lesbians and gay men. Implicit inversion theory (IIT; Kite & Deaux, 1987) suggests that gender stereotypes about gay men and lesbian women tend to be the opposite of those held about their heterosexual equivalents, as lesbian women are often stereotyped as masculine, and gay men are stereotyped as effeminate (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Comparatively, little is known about the content of stereotypes of bisexual and transgender individuals, however existing literature indicates that such assumptions are negative in nature (Gazzola & Morrison, 2014; Mize & Manago, 2018).

Although attitudes toward the LGBT community have become more positive since the introduction of protective legislation (The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations, 2003; The Equality Act, 2010), stereotypes present a significant barrier for this minority group (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009), and have been demonstrated to contribute to the major career barriers experienced by LGBT individuals by, for example, leading to discrimination in the hiring process (Drydakis, 2014). Further, occupational stereotypes of LGBT employees are believed to be a factor contributing to occupational segregation observed within this community. In accordance with the IIT (Kite & Deaux, 1987), gay men are frequently associated with female-dominated occupations such as nursing, hairdressing, dancing and acting, and lesbians are frequently associated with male-dominated

occupations such as athletics, mechanics and truck driving (Pope et al., 2004; Rule et al., 2016).

However, research indicates that the impact of stereotypes is not limited to externally imposed limitations on one's capability, but also extends to perceptions of their own abilities (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005), and vocational decisions based upon the perception of career barriers (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). Research concerning the impact of stereotypes for other minority groups has highlighted that stereotypes based upon core demographics, such as gender, play a significant role in assessment of suitable roles (Henderson, Hesketh, & Tuffin, 1988), which suggests some people discard certain occupations as a result of perceived role incongruity.

Careers theories such as the Circumscription and Compromise Theory (Gottfredson, 1981) indicate that by influencing decisions regarding careers, gendered stereotypes often present a perceived career barrier, which in turn can cause career indecision, less career planning, and lower aspirations. Those who perceive their characteristics to be similar to those of the occupational stereotype are more likely to identify with that vocation, and are likely to be more motivated to enter it and remain within it (Peters, Ryan, & Haslam, 2015).

Research has begun to identify the impact of internalised stereotypes on the career experiences of lesbian and gay individuals, demonstrating that lesbians and gay men show a preference for gender-atypical careers (Schneider & Dimito, 2010). Whilst such research suggests that perceived congruence of stereotypes indicate advantage within—or a *pull* toward—such professions, research has yet to explore the role of incongruent stereotypes on perceptions of career barriers or a *push* away from such professions. Additionally, existing research exploring the impact of internalised stereotypes is often positivist and quantitative in nature, and therefore examines static career preferences, and most commonly uses college student samples. Further, the role of stereotypes on career experiences of bisexual and transgender individuals has not yet been explored. The way in which LGBT stereotypes relate to lived career experiences of this community, and the dynamic nature of this interaction, has recently been described as *"ripe"* for future research

(Hancock, Clarke, & Arnold, 2020), yet represents an *"empirical void"* (Leonardi, 2017; Nielsen, Walden, & Kunkel, 2000).

1.4   Proposed Research

1.4.1   Research Overview

Responding to limitations of existing literature, the present research aims to explore the impact of internalised stereotypes on the career experiences of LGBT individuals, with a focus on perceptions of career barriers throughout career trajectories.

To satisfy this aim, three research questions have been identified:

1.   In what ways do LGBT individuals perceive stereotypes that are based upon gender and sexual orientation?

2.   To what extent do stereotypes based upon gender and sexual orientation present a perceived career barrier for LGBT individuals?

3.   How do perceived career barriers, based upon stereotypes, interact with actual career barriers experienced by LGBT individuals?

To answer these questions, a sample of 40 professionals were recruited via LGBT networks within three large organisations. In terms of the sexual and gender identities of the participants, the sample self-identified as 8 cisgender lesbian females, 26 cisgender gay males, 1 cisgender bisexual female, 1 cisgender bisexual male, 2 transgender lesbian females, 1 transgender bisexual female and 1 non-binary pansexual participant.

The exploratory aim of the research was met by using narrative interview design, allowing participants to use storytelling to uncover their vocational experiences and the interaction of identity and careers. Interviews were further informed by the drawing of a timeline, constructed by the participant during the interview and developed throughout the discussion. This allowed participants to map their career development alongside the development of their self-concept and sexual or gender identity. Narrative interviews provided opportunity for exploration of the interaction of such events and the impact of stereotypes throughout participants' career development.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected as it allows for continuous comparison of sets of narrative based upon recurrent themes, and remains flexible enough to allow for intersectional sensitivity in approaching the data.

1.4.2 Research Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to existing theories of careers (e.g., Circumscription and Compromise Theory; Gottfredson, 1981) by extending them to include the LGBT community. The research also responds to calls to utilise a qualitative design to understand LGBT individuals' perceptions of their own career experiences (Croteau, Anderson, Distefano, & Kampa-Kokesch, 2000). The narrative interview design helps gain insight into the career decision making process (Schneider & Dimito, 2010), and its dynamic interaction with LGBT identity.

Further, the current research responds to calls to move away from focussing on the impact of negative assumptions (Salter & Liberman, 2016) and explore the impact of general internalised stereotypes, including gendered assumptions. The research contributes to theoretical discussions of bisexual and transgender careers by widening the participation opportunity to the LGBT community, and not limiting the sample to lesbian and gay participants as many others have done.

There are three key practical contributions from this research project. First, by identifying the ways in which internalised stereotypes create a perceived career barrier for LGBT individuals, the findings can assist careers counsellors in helping members of this community overcome some of the challenges that they anticipate throughout their career. Specifically, vocational counsellors may be better placed to help members of the LGBT community determine career barriers that are perhaps self-imposed based upon internalised stereotypes, and develop strategies for enhancing their perceived abilities.

Secondly, the findings can contribute to the creation of LGBT-inclusive school curricula, by demonstrating the value of increasing representation of gender-atypical role models in career narratives. Challenging gender and sexuality stereotypes in this way could negate the stereotypic inferences that children make during their education, which may be imposing limits on their perceived abilities.

Finally, by drawing on the experiences of those outside of the heteronormative binary, the findings can be used to improve the effectiveness of organisational interventions that aim to improve the state of diversity and inclusion of minorities. Organisations could use the findings from the present research to gain insight into the ways in which LGBT employees may be uniquely affected by the implementation of heteronormative interventions and the use of associated heteronormative discourse. Further, findings from this research can support organisations in considering how restrictive occupational stereotypes may be impacting their recruitment efforts, particularly with reference to those who do not conform to gender norms.

1.5   Thesis Structure

Chapter 2, the literature review, brings together the main bodies of research that are fundamental in responding to the research questions. The chapter provides an overview of LGBT identities, stereotypes and careers, before examining what is known about the relationship between stereotypes and career development. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research that specifically explores the relationship between LGBT stereotypes and career experiences, where limitations of existing research are identified. Chapter 3, the methodology chapter, outlines and justifies the methodology and method employed within the current research project, as well as the sampling and data analysis methods. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 report the empirical findings of the research project. Chapter 4 focusses on the content of internalised stereotypes and how they are learned, providing a response to the first research question. Chapter 5 then summarises the themes relating to the impact of stereotypes on career experiences, thereby responding to the second research question. In response to the third and final research question, Chapter 6 examines the extent to which perceived stereotypes interact with actual career barriers, and the importance of nuances in experience. Due to the integrative nature of the data, discussion of the findings with reference to key theories is reserved for the discussion chapter in Chapter 7, where the implications and

limitations of the research are also identified. Finally, the thesis is drawn to conclusion in Chapter 8.

Chapter 2   Literature Review

2.1   Chapter Introduction

Chapter 1 identified the problem with which this thesis is primarily concerned; the lack of understanding of how stereotypes impact LGBT individuals' perceptions of their career experiences. This chapter outlines the existing literature in the relevant research domains, and further acknowledges the limitations of such research.

This chapter begins with an outline of LGBT identity development theories, and the stereotypes commonly associated with LGBT identities in section 2.2. Section 2.3 then provides a discussion of the unique career challenges that are faced by this community. This includes experiences of inequalities and discrimination, theories that explore career development challenges of sexual and gender identity minorities, and finally a review of the literature regarding identity management in the workplace.

The chapter continues by exploring the role of stereotypes on career development experiences in section 2.4. This section is separated into two bodies of literature: external stereotypes, and their contribution to actual career barriers, and internal stereotypes, and their contribution to perceived career barriers. This allows for clear exploration of the two ways in which stereotypes manifest themselves in career experiences. Section 2.5 examines the existing literature that demonstrates the ways in which theories of stereotypes and career development can be applied to the LGBT community. The chapter concludes by summarising the limitations of existing literature, and outlining the research questions with which the current study is primarily concerned in section 2.6.

2.2   LGBT Identity

Identity is broadly understood to be a personally and socially meaningful sense of one's goals, beliefs, values and life roles (Morgan, 2012). More developed models of identity define it at both an intra- and inter-personal level, incorporating individual, relational and collective identities, and include multiple and intersecting

identities (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). This section provides an overview of two key areas of LGBT identity research: identity development models and stereotypes based upon LGBT identities.

2.2.1 Identity Development

Developing a meaningful sense of one's sexual or gender identity is an important undertaking during adolescence and early adulthood (Morgan, 2012). Researchers have long understood that the development of non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identity does not occur similarly to the development of heterosexual or cisgender identity. Early models of identity development focussed on the emergence and adoption of a sexual minority identity, and the stages through which lesbian and gay individuals move through, in order to resolve the internal conflict associated with identification as lesbian or gay (e.g., Cass, 1979). Later models incorporated consideration of both individual and group membership components of sexual identity (e.g., Fassinger & Miller, 1997). Contemporary conceptualisations of sexual identity further try to understand such development by including sexual attraction and behaviours, as well as romantic, emotional and social preferences (Dillon, Worthington, & Moradi, 2011).

This sub-section outlines three of the key theories upon which contemporary understanding of sexual identity development has been developed. This is followed by a discussion of more recent conceptualisations of sexual and gender identity.

2.2.1.1 Cass's Sexual Orientation Identity Formation Model

Most prominent and developed of the stage models is that of Cass (1979). This model describes the identity development process as one which occurs over six stages. This model further acknowledges that the period of identity development varies from person to person, as some experience same-sex attraction at a later age than others (Elliot, 1993). Though developed over 30 years ago, this model continues to be one of the most cited regarding lesbian and gay identity development (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014; Savin-Williams, 2011).

Cass's model was validated in a study which included 103 men and 69 women (Cass, 1984). In this study, Cass was able to match participants' identifications from stage descriptors with their assigned stages, based upon a 210 item questionnaire. Stages that were identified include identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. Early stages of this model of development are characterised by experiencing a sense of confusion, denial and difference from others, and associated feelings of fear, shame, guilt and depression (Nam Cam Trau & Härtel, 2004). Part of the developmental process therefore involves coping with such emotions. Later stages involve gradually moving from a feeling of tolerance of one's identity, to self-acceptance, providing that individuals are able to deal with emotional dissonance experiences and not avoid them. Progression to the final stage of this development model involves a sense of identity stability, which is considered to be crucially important to the social and emotional well-being of the individual (Nam Cam Trau & Härtel, 2004).

This model has been further validated through multiple studies. For example, Brady & Busse (1994) surveyed 225 gay men, and found significant relationships between participants' identity development stages and assessments of psychological well-being and adjustment to their sexual identity. However, the authors found support for a two-stage process of identity development, instead of the six-stage process proposed by Cass. Support for the six-stage process has since been provided in similar experiments by Marszalek, Cashwell, Dunn, & Heard Jones (2004) who surveyed 78 gay men, and Levine (1997) who surveyed 111 lesbians.

However, all three studies reported very low numbers of participants who identified in the first three stages of Cass's homosexuality identity development model. This is due to the nature of these early stages, during which time individuals may not identify themselves as gay or lesbian, and would therefore be unlikely to participate in research on such matters. Small sample sizes within these stages led researchers to omit them from analyses, and therefore they are only able to validate the distinction between later stages of identity development, and not the linear progression through the stages proposed. Finally, the model itself was based

upon research conducted in Australia, and whilst the country in which validation studies has taken place is not often noted, it is reported that these studies are over representative of Caucasian participants, and therefore the model itself may be limited in its applicability outside of the specific samples (Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000).

Subsequent research has focussed on the extent to which the stages proposed by Cass are fixed. Early qualitative research led to the conclusion that whilst the general stage theory can be supported, the assumption that the stages occur in a linear fashion and that all individuals move through the same six stages has been criticised (Kaufman & Johnson, 2004; Rust, 2003).

2.2.1.2 Fassinger's Homosexuality Development Model

Fassinger & Miller (1997) proposed an alternative stage model to that of Cass (1979), and incorporated a consideration of cultural and contextual factors. Fassinger's (1998) model of homosexuality development argues that parallel processes of development occur: individual sexual identity, and group membership identity. Thus, the model considers sexual identity development from both a personal and group perspective.

Each of these two processes consists of a four-stage sequence of development: awareness, exploration, commitment and internalisation (Fassinger, 1998). The author further stressed that gay and lesbian individuals may be in different phases with regards to individual and group identity, and therefore people could be in different levels of identity commitment internally and externally.

The model was validated in its application to lesbians (McCarn, 1991) and gay men (Fassinger & Miller, 1997). These studies were based upon sorting tasks, whereby participants were asked to separate items into the two key branches of the model (individual identity and group membership) and then into chronological order. Results typically demonstrated clear phases at the early and late stages of the model, however the middle phases were less clear. Samples within the studies were described as diverse, however the vast majority of participants were Caucasian and were aged between 20 and 40. Finally, the sample sizes were

relatively small, entailing 38 lesbians and 34 gay men. Validation of this model has received little empirical attention since this time.

Linear stage models of identity development, such as that of Cass (1979) and Fassinger (1998) do not account for the fluidity of non-heterosexual development, and are considered to be too restrictive to explore identities that exist outside of the traditional binary constructions of sexuality and gender (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005).

2.2.1.3 D'Augelli's Life Span Model

A life span model proposed by D'Augelli (1994) is now considered to be one of the most widely accepted within LGB identity development. D'Augelli's model argues that sexual identity development is a social construction which is informed by environment and experiences. In contrast to developmental models, the life span model views the process of sexual identity development as interactive, whereby individuals are free to move fluidly through one of all of the stages at any time, and are able to shape their own identity by doing so (D'Augelli, 1994).

The inclusion of bisexual individuals in the model further increases its utility, which has since also been applied to increase understanding of the transgender identity development process. Renn & Bilodeau (2005) found that transgender participants described their gender identity development in ways that reflect D'Augelli's model, however this case study was based upon a sample of only two US college students.

The model itself emerged from D'Augelli's (1994) research on gay men's identity in college, and subsequent research that utilises this framework has applied it within a similar participant demographic. This model has been viewed positively by many researchers, due to the acknowledgement that each person's developmental path is different, and is shaped by many environmental factors (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010; Savin-Williams, 2015). Further, the model allows for changes to the fluidity of identity at different stages of life (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). However, the life-span model does not allow for the complexity and multiplicity of identity (Clark & Caffarella, 1999).

2.2.1.4 Contemporary Models

Contemporary models and attitudes towards identity development are based upon acknowledgement of limitations of previous models and an understanding of the context in which they were developed. The models outlined above, which were based upon research in the 1970s and 1980s, are reflective of the social and political forces of the time. For example, the assumption that LGB identity formation involves progression through a period of anger towards heterosexuals is no longer considered to be applicable (Evans et al., 2010). Further, Cass revised the name of the original model from *"homosexual identity formation"* to *"sexual orientation identity formation",* representing a decline in the use of the term *"homosexual".*

Whilst there is great historical significance of traditional models, contemporary understanding of sexual and gender identity development involves greater consideration of multiplicity and fluidity, which have previously been poorly described (Morgan, 2012). Dichotomous and essentialist models of sexuality have previously argued that individuals possess one identity (e.g., heterosexual, gay or lesbian), however it is now understood that patterns of sexual behaviour and sexual orientation labels are subject to change over time (Diamond, 2008) and that sexual attractions, behaviours and identities may not be consistent (Hoburg, Konik, Williams, & Crawford, 2004; Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2010). For example, a person may identify with a sexual orientation label that is closely aligned with behavioural experiences and not necessarily attraction or desire.

Modern approaches to identity development therefore reflect the ongoing and reflexive nature of sexual identity development, and consider the multifaceted nature of sexuality (e.g., Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001). Further, recent models have attempted to distance themselves from the essentialist conceptualisations of sexual identity by using narrative and life course perspectives, which offers contextualisation of sexual identity within one's life history (Hammack & Cohler, 2009). The use of such methods has created a shift towards recognising the importance of self-identification, and the way in which people make sense of their own experiences through the process of narrative engagement (Morgan, 2012).

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Contemporary empirical research also acknowledges that sexual identity diversity is becoming increasingly normalised among Western youth, rendering previous models of 'coming out' less applicable (Savin-Williams, 2005, 2008). Finally, modern approaches to—and models of—identity are developed within a framework of intersectionality (e.g., Narui, 2011). Intersectionality refers to the mutually constitutive relations among social identities (Glenn, 1999; West & Fenstermaker, 1997; Zinn & Dill, 1996). That is to say that identity cannot be reduced to a summary of the social groups to which a person belongs, but must be considered as an interaction of social groups which create specific manifestations that cannot be explained by each grouping alone (Warner, 2008). For example, Collins (2000) demonstrated the ways in which intersections between different identity groups (i.e., gender, race and class), created different types of experiences which were transformed by mutual interactions, and not reducible to the individual strands of identity that are intertwined to create overall identity (Diamond & Butterworth, 2008). Contemporary understanding of this concept views multiple categories of identity as interrelated and mutually shaping one another (Collins & Bilge, 2020).

The following section outlines a distinct yet overlapping body of literature regarding LGBT identity. Stereotypes impact the ways in which others interpret and perceive LGBT identities, and as they are often internalised, they further impact the way LGBT individuals see themselves.

2.2.2 Stereotypes

Stereotypes describe widely held, oversimplified, fixed perceptions of a particular demographic (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). Whilst they have been demonstrated to be useful in some situations, such as facilitating social interaction with somebody we have limited information about (Fiske, 2000), fixed stereotypes often lead to assumption-based decision making, and can be harmful in an occupational setting (Blasi, 2002). Research has demonstrated that once a schema or representation is formed, they are very resistant to change, even when confronted with opposing evidence (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004).

Gender stereotypes attribute components such as physical appearance, behaviours, mannerisms, personality traits, interests, values and occupations to people based upon their gender (Ashmore, 1990; Deaux & Kite, 1993; Spence, 1993). Whilst women are typically stereotyped as communal, compassionate, kind and helpful, men are stereotyped as being agentic, strong, ambitious and independent (Eagly, 1987; Heilman, 1983). Such stereotypes are both descriptive and prescriptive, which means that they generate expectations about how men and women should be, as well as how they are (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001). Those who violate prescriptive norms are subject to the *backlash effect* (Rudman, 1998), defined as social and economic reprisals for behaving counter-stereotypically. One of the ways in which this manifests is through employment discrimination towards agentic women who are perceived to violate the prescriptive norm of communality (Rudman & Glick, 1999).

Gender stereotype components comprise an umbrella (Biernat, 1991; Deaux & Lewis, 1984), meaning that information about one component (e.g., physical appearance), leads to assumptions that other components (e.g., interests) are congruent with this stereotype (Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Sczesny, Spreemann, & Stahlberg, 2006). Research has supported this notion, demonstrating that masculine physical appearance invokes an assumption regarding leadership competence, which is a stereotypically masculine trait (Sczesny et al., 2006).

The Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002) defines two fundamental dimensions of stereotype content: warmth and competence, and suggests that such perceptions underlie and differentiate group stereotypes (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). Warmth scales include descriptors such as *"trustworthy", "tolerant", "sincere"* and *"friendly",* whilst the competence scales often include *"capable", "skilful"* and *"intelligent"*. Combinations of stereotypic warmth and competence result in specific reactions and prejudice towards groups. For example, the authors argue that groups considered to be warm but not competent generate feelings of pity, whilst groups stereotyped as competent and not warm are met with a feeling of envy (Fiske et al., 2002).

Ambivalent stereotypes emerge towards groups that are deemed to be proficient in one dimension, and inferior in the other. For example, women are traditionally rated as high in warmth, but low in competence, which reflects feelings of liking but disrespecting this group. Men, on the other hand, are traditionally rated as significantly more competent than warm (Cuddy et al., 2008). This model has been validated consistently, and has also been successfully applied across multiple cultures and nations (Cuddy et al., 2008).

The recognition that stereotypes are often processed automatically or unconsciously led to the development of measures of implicit associations of minority groups. One example of such measure, the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, Mcghee, & Schwartz, 1998), is a computerised measure of reaction time that assesses the relative strength of associations between two pairs of concepts. Participants use keys on a keyboard to categorise target stimuli that appears on the screen into one of two categories (e.g., *"men"* or *"women"*) or one of two attributes (e.g., *"good"* or *"bad"*). When an individual makes an association more easily, they respond quicker, and therefore analysis of this task can demonstrate the strength of associations that person holds. Faster accurate categorisations of one identity, such as *"men"*, with a negative attribute, such as *"bad"*, compared to other pairings, such as *"women"* and *"bad"*, indicates that participants have stronger negative associations with men than with women.

The IAT has generated a substantial amount of research exploring the existence and strength of stereotypes. For example, the test has been used to demonstrate that men, compared to women, are more strongly associated with mathematics, relative to liberal arts (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002b), careers, relative to family (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002a), and strength, relative to weakness (Rudman, Greenwald, & McGhee, 2001). In the first large study of the internet-administered IAT, the implicit measure demonstrated significantly more polarisation than did self-reported measures of attitudes, highlighting the importance of examining both implicit (or internal) and explicit (or external) stereotypes (Nosek et al., 2007).

However, a challenge that emerges when employing the IAT to investigate the role of stereotypes is that it typically restricts the conceptualisation of such assumptions as positive or negative, or favourable and unfavourable. Research has demonstrated that the content of stereotypes is in fact often mixed, and made up of both positive and negative beliefs (Fiske et al., 2002).

Research investigating stereotypes spans four decades, yet the key models and hypotheses have stood the test of time, and continue to be investigated and validated. For example, recent research has demonstrated the endurance of the content of stereotypes of minorities (Fiske, 2018), the backlash effect (Wen et al., 2020), and the impact of gender stereotypes and bias on modern forms of employment (Johnson, Stevenson, & Letwin, 2018).

The majority of research investigating the content and impact of stereotypes has focussed on gender and gendered assumptions. The following sub-sections introduce what is known regarding the content of stereotypes for LGBT individuals. In order to convey the complexity of stereotypes and how they differ depending on identity (Vaughn, Teeters, Sadler, & Cronan, 2017; Worthen, 2013), LG stereotypes are discussed in tandem, followed by bisexual stereotypes and then those of transgender individuals.

2.2.2.1 Lesbian and Gay Stereotypes

Scholars have long been aware of the role of stereotypes in the negative attitudes and prejudice displayed toward lesbian and gay individuals. Early research focussed on the negative attitudes and beliefs regarding lesbians and gay men, such as the perception that gay men are *"mentally ill"* (Levitt & Klassen, 1974; Simmons, 1965), or that their behaviour and personality is abnormal (Madon, 1997). During this time, many measures of attitudes towards gay men and lesbian women were developed which demonstrated that such beliefs were indeed pervasive. Examples include the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale, (Herek, 1988); the Homosexuality Attitudes Scale (Kite, 1992); and the Modern Homonegativity Scale (Morrison & Morrison, 2002). Research typically highlighted the role of negative stereotypes in homophobia, discrimination and prejudice.

The extension of the IAT to include sexuality attitudes generated research regarding the implicit stereotypes of non-heterosexual individuals. For example, analysis of data from its development in 2002 to 2006 indicated that 68% of participants held an implicit preference for heterosexual people relative to gay people (Nosek et al., 2007). Similar research conducted between 2006 and 2012 indicated that this preference remained consistent (Sabin, Riskind, & Nosek, 2015). However, similar to the above scales and measures, this research focuses on perceptions of positivity or negativity towards lesbians and gay men, and not on the specific content of such attitudes and stereotypes. This preference is representative of Social Identity Theory's assertion that intergroup comparisons are typically favourable towards the ingroup—or the identity group to which the individual belongs—relative to the outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The development of the SCM (Fiske et al., 2002) led to research which explored the content of stereotypes of lesbian and gay individuals along the two dimensions of warmth and competence. Investigating heterosexual participants' stereotypes of sexual minorities, Vaughn et al. (2017) found that gay men were rated as higher in warmth than lesbians, and lesbians were rated as more competent than gay men, which represents an inverse relationship to that of heterosexuals.

The majority of research in this domain over the last three decades has focussed on this inverse relationship, following the emergence of Implicit Inversion Theory (IIT; Kite & Deaux, 1987). This theory suggests that gender stereotypes about lesbian women and gay men tend to be the opposite of those held about their heterosexual equivalents. Where heterosexual women are stereotyped as feminine, lesbians are believed to be more masculine, and whilst heterosexual men are assumed to be masculine, gay men are assumed to be highly feminine (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Jackson & Sullivan, 1990; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Madon, 1997; Page & Yee, 1985; Wong, McCreary, Carpenter, Engel, & Korchynsky, 1999).

Research shows that these beliefs are also held by non-heterosexuals (Clarke & Arnold, 2017; Einarsdottir, Hoel, & Lewis, 2015) and also that lesbians and gay men expect to be stereotyped by others (Gates & Mitchell, 2013). Gendered

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stereotypes of lesbians and gay men are also represented in the media, which often type-cast gay men with an effeminate or *"girly"* archetype, and lesbians with a masculine or *"butch"* archetype (Capsuto, 2000; Hart, 2000; Raley & Lucas, 2006). It therefore follows that once perceivers believe somebody to be gay or lesbian, their expectations of the individual's preferences, abilities and personality will be gender-atypical (Barrantes & Eaton, 2018).

This theory has received a great amount of empirical support. Research framed by this theory often involves trait assignment tasks, whereby participants are asked to assign a list of masculine and feminine traits to heterosexual men and women, gay men, and lesbian women. When asked to rate just one of these identities, results indicate that participants are more likely to assign traits considered to be feminine to gay men (e.g., sensitivity and high-pitched voice), and masculine traits to lesbians (e.g., tough), compared to heterosexual counterparts (Kite & Deaux, 1987). Blashill & Powlishta (2009) expanded on this study by including masculine and feminine activities and occupations, as well as traits. The research found that feminine items were more likely to be assigned to gay men than heterosexual men, and masculine items were more likely to be assigned to lesbian women than heterosexual women.

However, this research methodology does not account for the concept of *androgyny*, the ability to possess both masculine and feminine traits (Bem, 1974), and the possibility that gay men and lesbians may be stereotyped as more androgynous (Clarke & Arnold, 2017). Subsequent research that has incorporated free listing of traits and stereotypes into the methodology have indeed found that perceptions of gay men and lesbians are multifaceted (Brambilla, Carnaghi, & Ravenna, 2011; Clausell & Fiske, 2005; Geiger, Harwood, & Hummert, 2006). This is in part due to ratings of androgyny, but also the perception that there are different types of homosexual identities, such as *"hyper-masculine"* gay men (Clausell & Fiske, 2005), and *"lipstick lesbians"* (Brambilla et al., 2011; Geiger et al., 2006). Whilst this research concludes that stereotypes of lesbians and gay men are indeed multifaceted, they also lend to support to the general categorisation of lesbians as typically masculine, and gay men as typically effeminate.

One explanation for this inversion of stereotypes is that people tend to exaggerate similarities amongst outgroups (Wilder, 1981). As lesbians have the same sexual attraction to women that heterosexual men do, it is commonly assumed that lesbians and heterosexual men must be more alike than lesbian and heterosexual women (Barrantes & Eaton, 2018), and therefore lesbians are stereotyped as gender-atypical (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Another reason for this inversion of stereotypes is that gender and sexuality are mutually constitutive (Parent, DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2013), insofar as part of what it means to be a woman/feminine is to have heterosexual relationships and desire (Eaton & Matamala, 2014; Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012). Society therefore expects lesbians and gay men to be gender-atypical, and for gender-atypical people to identify as lesbian or gay (Barrantes & Eaton, 2018).

2.2.2.2 Bisexual Stereotypes

Whilst research has begun to uncover the content of stereotypes for lesbians and gay men, comparatively little is known about stereotypes of bisexual individuals. Recent research suggests that stereotypes of bisexuals are extremely negative (Mize & Manago, 2018). In the research, bisexual individuals were stereotyped as *"dishonest", "indecisive", "disingenuous", "confused"* and *"selfish"*, which led to aggregate judgements of low warmth and low competence when the SCM was applied. The research further found evidence of sexual double standards, where bisexual women are viewed more negatively for perceived promiscuity than bisexual men. Research demonstrates that these negative stereotypes are held by heterosexual, lesbian and gay communities (Hemmings, 2002; Israel & Mohr, 2004; McLean, 2008; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Monro, 2015).

Research exploring gendered stereotypes of bisexual people is extremely limited. One study that has identified gendered stereotypes of bisexual men noted that they are viewed as being less masculine than heterosexual men, but not more feminine (Mohr, Chopp, & Wong, 2013). Though this research was based upon psychotherapists' stereotypes of patients, the finding provides rationale to explore the gendered assumptions of bisexual individuals further. Later research found that

bisexual men are viewed as less masculine and more feminine than heterosexual men, and that bisexual women are stereotyped as more masculine and less feminine than heterosexual women (Mize & Manago, 2018). Further research is required to further validate these findings and to explore the extent to which such stereotypes are held by bisexual individuals themselves.

One explanation for the relative absence of gender stereotypes of bisexual individuals is that sexuality is conceptualised in binary terms (Daly, King, & Yeadon-lee, 2018). Assumptions about sexuality are therefore often made on the basis of the gender of that person's current partner (Diamond, 2007; Hartman, 2013). Thus the bisexual identity is often overshadowed by a binary assumption that the person is either heterosexual or homosexual (Hartman-Linck, 2014; Taub, 1999).

2.2.2.3 Transgender Stereotypes

Research investigating transgender stereotypes is scarce, however some empirical studies have begun to uncover the content of stereotypes of this population. For example, Gazzola & Morrison (2014) conducted an investigation of the content of stereotypes for transgender individuals, where participants ascribed attributes such as abnormality and mental illness, leading to social distancing and outcasting. Further, the results showed that the stereotype of transgender men is generally more negative than the stereotype of transgender women, and that the strength of such stereotypes was linked to participants' levels of prejudice towards the transgender community.

The recent addition of gender identity to the Implicit Association Test has indicated that respondents typically hold a preference for cisgender relative to transgender targets (Wang-Jones, Alhassoon, Hattrup, Ferdman, & Lowman, 2017; Wang-Jones, Hauson, Ferdman, Hattrup, & Lowman, 2018), suggesting that implicit stereotypes of transgender individuals are pervasive, but not indicating what the content of such attitudes are. Others have investigated the media portrayals of transgender and gender non-conforming people, which are often characterised with consistent narratives of fear (e.g., murderers), comedic relief, and an inability to conform to feminine beauty standards (Wellborn, 2015). However, further work

is required in this domain to advance knowledge regarding the content of transgender stereotypes, in order to examine their impact.

2.2.3 Summary

The process of LGBT identity development is widely understood to be different to the process of heterosexual or cisgender identity development. LGBT people are also subject to unique stereotypes based upon their identity, which are largely divided into negative beliefs and gendered assumptions. Further research is still required to understand the extent to which stereotypes are internalised by this community, and how this interacts with experiences related to identity development. Advancing this research domain requires exploration of the content of stereotypes that LG individuals feel subject to, and the impact that they may have on their lived experiences. Further, such research could also explore the stereotypes that bisexual and transgender individuals feel subject to, thereby extending what is currently known about LGBT stereotypes and their impact.

2.3 LGBT Careers

Since 1980, there has been an increasing interest in LG careers (McFadden, 2015), and more recently this has extended to include the career experiences of bisexual and transgender communities. Trends in LGBT careers have been documented in the literature, for example career-choice uncertainty (Etringer, Hillerbrand, & Hetherington, 1990), and the frequency at which transgender individuals seek a change of career throughout the process of transitioning (Dickey, Walinsky, Rofkahr, Richardson-cline, & Juntunen, 2016). Further, research has identified that LGBT employees utilise strategies to control the disclosure of information about their identity. Such strategies are conceived as a form of identity management, and provide the opportunity to minimise the negative impact of career inequalities (Chung, 2001).

This section reviews the literature that examines experiences of LGBT career inequalities, theories that aim to explain the unique career development experiences of members within this community, and finally the research that explores identity management strategies of LGBT employees in the workplace.

2.3.1 Career Inequalities

LGBT employees make up one of the largest, yet least studied, minority groups in organisations (Fielden & Jepson, 2016; Tebele & Odeku, 2014). This is significant to note, as research indicates high rates of workplace discrimination and unemployment within this population. Hoel et al. (2014) conducted a UK-based national study of LGB workplace experiences, capturing the experiences of 500 LGB employees from a range of backgrounds and occupational sectors, and found that LGB employees are more than twice as likely to experience bullying and discrimination in the workplace than heterosexual employees. Further, international research demonstrates that transgender individuals suffer the highest rate of discrimination in employment (ILO, 2013). Whilst gay workers are more likely to be unemployed than their heterosexual counterparts (Laurent & Mihoubi, 2017), transgender individuals are more likely to be unemployed compared to any other minority group, and those who are employed work in lower paid jobs (Beauregard et al., 2016). Despite employees in Europe benefitting from relatively advanced employment protection, 20% of LGBT employees report that they experience discrimination during recruitment processes and at work (Catalyst, 2014; Ng & Rumens, 2017).

Sexual orientation discrimination has a negative impact on both the victim and the organisation, as it results in increased burnout and less engagement, which leads to physical withdrawal such as absenteeism, lateness, and increased likelihood to quit (Volpone & Avery, 2013). Hoel et al. (2014) further found that bullying and exposure to negative acts correlates with negative health outcomes for LGB employees.

The majority of research investigating LGBT inequality in employment has focussed on four negative outcomes commonly experienced by the community: discrimination in recruitment and selection, wage discrimination, occupational segregation and promotion segregation (Ozturk & Tatli, 2018), which are each reviewed in turn. Common research methods used to investigate discrimination in the recruitment process involve sending résumés to organisations in response to job adverts, manipulating indications of sexual orientation whilst holding other

characteristics constant (Buser, Geijtenbeek, & Plug, 2015). Findings demonstrate that gay men and lesbians are less likely to receive an invitation for interview than their heterosexual counterparts, and when they are selected for interview, they are done so by firms offering lower salaries (Drydakis, 2014; Tilcsik, 2011). These findings have been replicated cross-culturally, e.g., in Sweden (Ahmed, Andersson, & Hammarstedt, 2013), the United States (Tilcsik, 2011), and the United Kingdom (Drydakis, 2014). However, this research method does incur limitations, particularly due to the way in which the sexual orientation of the applicant is manipulated. This is often done by indicating membership or affiliation to an LGBT group, however this research method has been critiqued by Barrantes & Eaton (2018) as such affiliation may instead imply an ally status or assumptions regarding liberal attitudes and outness. Furthermore, the majority of this research uses false résumés and student populations, and therefore is limited in its application to real organisational scenarios.

The second major area of study in this research domain is that of wage inequality between LGBT and non-LGBT individuals. The literature predominantly indicates that heterosexual men earn more than gay men (10-32%; Badgett, Lau, Sears, & Ho, 2007), and bisexual men (12%; Uhrig, 2015). However, there is often no difference in the earnings of bisexual women and heterosexual women (Uhrig, 2015), and lesbians often earn significantly more than heterosexual women (12%; Brewster, 2017; Uhrig, 2015). Additionally, research has shown gendered differences in earnings for transgender individuals. Schilt & Wiswall (2008) demonstrated that women who have transitioned from male lose approximately one third of their salary post-transition, whereas men who have transitioned from female earn more post-transition.

However, the findings in this domain are inconsistent and dependent on many factors. Aksoy, Carpenter, & Frank (2016) obtained data regarding earnings from the UK Integrated Household Survey and demonstrated that the positive earnings differential for women was only observable when comparing partnered lesbians with partnered heterosexual women, and the negative earnings penalty for gay men was only observable for partnered gay men compared to partnered

heterosexual men, however there was no earnings differential for non-partnered lesbians or gay men. The authors further found that the earnings difference associated with a gay sexual orientation for men is near zero, however the lesbian earnings premium remains statistically significant. This research highlights the importance of societal context and economic factors, by demonstrating that there was no significant lesbian advance or gay male penalty observed in certain geographical locations, such as London.

Furthermore, studies show longstanding overrepresentation of gay men and lesbians in gender atypical work (Baumle, Compton, & Poston, 2009; Lippa, 2008; Tilcsik, Anteby, & Knight, 2015). Gay men are more likely to be in female majority-occupations than heterosexual men, and lesbians are more likely to hold positions in male-majority occupations than heterosexual women (Badgett & King, 1997; Baumle et al., 2009; Ueno, Roach, & Peña-Talamantes, 2013). However, existing explanations for such segregation remain speculative and limited to a small set of specific occupations (Pichler & Ruggs, 2015), which means that a large portion of occupational segregation remains unexplained. Further discussion of this segregation is provided in section 2.5.

Segregation has also been demonstrated in terms of promotion. Frank (2006) found that gay and bisexual men face vertical segregation similar to that experienced by women, and therefore termed this phenomenon the *"gay glass ceiling"*. This finding was replicated by Aksoy, Carpenter, Frank, & Huffman (2018) in the first large-scale study on this phenomenon using the UK Integrated Household Survey. The authors demonstrated that gay men were significantly less likely than heterosexual men to be in the highest-level managerial positions, and that the *"gay glass ceiling"* effect was stronger for racial minorities. However, both occupational segregation and vertical segregation literature have largely overlooked bisexual and transgender participants from studies, and therefore further research is required to understand whether such segregation exists.

Modern forms of discrimination towards LGBT individuals are not always explicit, as research demonstrates more implicit anti-homosexual behaviours in the workplace, such as jokes, stereotypes and intrusive behaviours (Di Marco, Hoel,

Arenas, & Munduate, 2015; Einarsdottir et al., 2015). These behaviours are often difficult to identify because their intent to harm is ambiguous (Di Marco et al., 2015). Implicit forms of discrimination have also been demonstrated in the hiring process. In an experiment by Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio (2002), no formal discrimination against gay men or lesbians was found. However, discrimination occurred in more subtle ways, including fewer conversational exchanges and shorter interactions compared to heterosexual applicants. McFadden (2015) noted that subtle forms of discrimination can have a similarly significant impact on employees. For example, LGB employees who have witnessed—but have not been subject to—homophobic incidents are more likely to focus on identity management techniques such as concealment (Willis, 2010).

Heteronormativity refers to the cultural, legal and institutional practices that maintain the assumptions that there are only two genders, that gender reflects biological sex, and that sexual attraction between these two *"opposite"* genders is the only acceptable or natural form of attraction (Kitzinger, 2005; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). According to Schilt & Westbrook (2009), patterns of power relations between men and women shape normative assumptions regarding femininity and masculinity, by typifying gender-appropriate behaviours, preferences, interests and familial roles. Non-conformity to gender norms, which is deemed to be indicative of non-heterosexuality (Human Rights Watch, 2001; Pascoe, 2007), has many negative side effects such as harassment (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009; O'Shaughnessy, Russell, Heck, Calhoun, & Laub, 2004), as well as workplace implications both in terms of informal social interactions, and formal policy development. This phenomenon has been identified as an additional form of discrimination towards LGBT employees that is often difficult to identify due to its subtlety and embeddedness into organisational culture.

Finally, though not often included in discussions regarding careers, it is also important to acknowledge school experiences of LGBT youths, and the ways in which they can contribute to the inequalities previously outlined. Research demonstrates that LGBT students experience many challenges, such as bullying and victimisation, which leads to truancy, lower academic performance, and lower

career aspirations (Kosciw, Gretak, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). Others have demonstrated that even when experiences of victimisation are controlled for, LGBT students experience more suicide attempts and truancy than non-LGBT students, suggesting that stigmatising and negative macro-level messages persist even in the absence of individual victimisation (Robinson & Espelage, 2011). Research that explores career inequalities would benefit from understanding how experiences at a young age contribute to and contextualise later experiences of career inequalities.

2.3.1.1 Research Limitations

Whilst research investigating LGBT workplace experiences has advanced significantly in recent years, there remains significant limitations within the field. A vast majority of research focuses on the experiences of lesbian and gay individuals, and not on bisexual and non-cisgender individuals (Köllen, 2013; Pichler & Ruggs, 2015; Pollitt, Brimhall, Brewster, & Ross, 2018). This discrepancy is observed both in academic and organisational research, despite evidence that bisexual and transgender communities have different concerns to that of lesbian and gay people (Knous, 2005; Matteson, 1995; Parnell, Lease, & Green, 2012; Wada, Mcgroarty, Tomaro, & Amundsen-dainow, 2019). Whilst many scholarly works include the term LGBT in their titles and throughout their articles, the content typically focuses on lesbian and gay participants' careers and experiences and generalises findings to that of bisexual and transgender communities. To advance research in this area, studies are required which expand the traditional focus on LG experiences to also include bisexual and transgender participants, where there is an even greater need for this research.

Non-cisgender individuals have long been underrepresented in academic study (Chung, 2003; McFadden & Crowley-Henry, 2016; O'Neil, McWhirter, & Cerezo, 2008; Wada et al., 2019), and business and management research (Beauregard et al., 2016). A recent study identified that of 960 publications regarding transgender scholarship, only 15 were focussed on career development (Moradi et al., 2016). A possible reason for this is that the challenges transgender

people face are often distinct, due to conceptual differences between sexual orientation and gender identity. This means that, whilst many of the issues identified within LGB vocational scholarship may be applicable and pertinent to the transgender community, the unique manifestations of such challenges may not be captured in the LGB literature (Chung, 2003; O'Neil et al., 2008).

However, other scholars such as Fassinger & Arseneau (2007) argue that the inclusion of transgender in the LGBT umbrella reflects the shared concerns of invisibility, isolation and discrimination, and whilst nuances in experiences should be acknowledged, there are notable parallels between the experiences of LGB and transgender individuals. For example, the authors argue that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people all challenge the prevailing social conventions regarding the expression of gender and sexuality, and therefore note that gender transgression is the commonality amongst this population. This further supports the argument that transgender participants should be included in traditional LGB research, in order to advance this underdeveloped research area.

Further, the inclusion of transgender individuals in LGB scholarship would reflect the movement towards extending the remit of LGB equality campaigns to include transgender individuals from 2015 onwards (Hunt & Manji, 2015). Until this time, the UK-based charity Stonewall had deemed the differences between LGB and transgender identities to be significant enough to justify their omission from campaigns, research, and other work that aimed to enhance equality of LGB individuals. However, their decision to include the transgender community in such work from 2015 was based on the knowledge that there is power in the collective voice, and that sharing the platform for such campaigns could progress the movement towards transgender equality significantly.

The transgender community makes up a relatively small proportion of the LGBT community, and due to the geographically dispersed and often concealed nature of transgender identity (Schilt & Wiswall, 2008), difficulty in accessing a sufficiently sized and random sample is often cited as the reason for exclusion of transgender individuals in research (Schneider & Dimito, 2010). Additionally, many cease to identify as transgender once they have affirmed their gender identity. In

these situations, large-scale quantitative surveys would fail to detect these individuals, as they would no longer self-identify as transgender (Beauregard et al., 2016).

An additional limitation of LGBT workplace research is that there remains assumptions regarding the homogeneity of the experiences within the community. The generalisation of research findings across this diverse community is still apparent within studies, despite the knowledge that there is vast heterogeneity within the LGBT population (Hoel et al., 2014; Prieto, 2006).

An example of differences in the experiences of LGBT individuals is the prominence of biphobia, and the beliefs that contribute to it. Animosity towards bisexual people stems from a belief that bisexuality is an unstable and temporary phase, which leads to an intolerance towards this community and a lack of trust (Köllen, 2013). Further, differences in experiences of bisexual individuals in same-gender relationships and those in different-gender relationships have recently been documented in the literature. For example, Daly et al. (2018) qualitatively explored the lived experiences of 19 bisexual women, using a diary method and telephone interviews. The authors found that women in different-gender relationships are often wrongly assumed to be heterosexual, and those in same-gender relationships are often wrongly assumed to be lesbians. This led participants to make different decisions regarding their appearance to signal their bisexual identity to others.

One may argue that research should acknowledge that the LGBT community does not represent a homogenous group, and methods should therefore be designed to accommodate differences in experience. Intersectionally-sensitive approaches would further understanding of the relationship between sexuality and gender (Mcbride, Hebson, & Holgate, 2015), and would reduce the common conflation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender experiences. Furthermore, such approaches would demonstrate the complex intersection of sexual and gender identity with other aspects of identity such as class, age and ethnicity.

The existence of significant career inequalities experienced by LGBT individuals warrants empirical investigation and theoretical understanding of such

experiences. The following section outlines theories of LGBT career development that have advanced this research domain.

2.3.2   Career Development Theories

Models of identity development can assist in understanding how sexual and gender identity can impact career development (Prince, 1995). Career decisions are often formulated in late adolescence or young adulthood, following a similar timeline to the development of sexual and gender identity (Gedro, 2009). Two key theories that explore LGBT career development experiences are discussed in the following sub-sections.

2.3.2.1 The Bottleneck Hypothesis

The bottleneck hypothesis (Hetherington, 1991) acknowledges the additional stress that LGB people experience during the development of their sexuality, and the impact that this has on their careers. Challenges during this time, particularly in the context of stigma and prejudice, lead to a conflict between the psychological resources that can be devoted to helping navigate this period, and those that can be dedicated to career development behaviours (Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006).

Variables that are used to measure such conflict include internalised homonegativity, identity confusion and perceptions of sexual identity development as a difficult process. These variables have been associated with increased shame (Allen & Oleson, 1999), lower levels of self-esteem, lower levels of perceived social support and increased reports of depression and loneliness (Szymanski, Chung, & Balsam, 2001). It therefore follows that the psychological resources dedicated to these experiences and the negotiation of a marginalised sexual identity will affect career development.

During the first empirical study of this hypothesis, Schmidt & Nilsson (2006) surveyed 102 LGB youth and found that sexual identity conflict and social support predicted crucial career variables such as reduced career maturity and increased vocational indecision. The authors also found that the reverse was true for those who reported low levels of inner sexual identity conflict, which demonstrates that

more psychological resources can be assigned to career development when individuals do not experience such conflict.

Providing further evidence for this theory, Lyons, Brenner, & Lipman (2010) explored the role of sexual identity conflict on career development, and found that awareness of the conflict between sexual identity and career development correlates with reduced career decision-making self-efficacy in college students. It is therefore understood that LGB adolescents' vocational behaviours are closely intertwined with the development of their sexual identity (Lyons et al., 2010).

Research supporting the bottleneck hypothesis typically measures levels of career indecision and career aspirations of LGB youths, however little is known about how this translates into development and construction of careers over a longer time period. Further, the concept of competing cognitive resources has recently been hypothesised to impact the career development of transgender individuals (Scott, Belke, & Barfield, 2011; Wada et al., 2019), however this application has received less research support than that of LGB individuals.

Closely related to the bottleneck hypothesis, the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003) suggests other processes by which identity development may disrupt the learning and academic performance of LGBT youth. The model was originally focussed on the impact of minority stress on health outcomes, and postulated that members of the LGBT community face unique and hostile stressors (e.g., homophobic bullying or victimisation), which in turn leads to worse health outcomes (Meyer, 2003). Others have theorised that such stressors can also lead to heightened vigilance to ensure physical safety. This vigilance often requires the expense of time and energy, which cannot be directed towards studying and academic pursuits (Poteat, Scheer, & Mereish, 2014). Others have hypothesised that minority stressors are often managed by concealment of the stigmatised aspects of identity. This can lead to reduced self-esteem (Herek, 2007) as well as increased vigilance over identity disclosure. Again, this is likely to reduce the time and energy that can be spent on the pursuit of academic goals.

2.3.2.2 The Safe Haven Hypothesis

Ragins' (2004) Safe Haven hypothesis posits that the career decisions of LGB individuals are driven by desire to identify occupations, workplaces and careers in which they are protected from workplace discrimination. Further, the theory notes that individuals are unlikely to leave this situation once they have found a *"safe haven"*. Many have since supported the notion that workplace discrimination is a consideration in LGBT career choice (Chung, 2001; Chung, Williams, & Dispenza, 2009) through the selection of work environments that are *"LGBT friendly"*. In fact, a vast majority of LGBT careers research has focussed on experiences or perceptions of discrimination, and a need for safety (Chung & Harmon, 1994; Fassinger, 1996; Parnell et al., 2012; Prati & Pietrantoni, 2014; Schneider & Dimito, 2010).

Building upon this theory, others have identified specific work environments that are considered to be *"safe havens"* for LGBT, including the public sector (Fielden & Jepson, 2018), work environments which have *"LGBT-friendly"* policies (Colgan, 2018), self-employment (Marlow, Greene, & Coad, 2018), and occupations that attenuate task independence, align with their social perspectives (Marlow et al., 2018; Tilcsik et al., 2015) and signal altruism (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2012).

In addition to theories of career development, researchers have explored the strategies that LGBT employees utilise within work environments in part to protect themselves against negative experiences of career inequalities. Such strategies are outlined in the following sub-section.

2.3.3   Identity Management

Unlike discrimination based upon other demographics (e.g. age, ethnicity, gender), discrimination based upon sexual orientation or gender identity poses additional, unique challenges, such as choice of disclosure, and also the extent to which individuals have choice over such disclosure (Colgan, Creegan, Mckearney, & Wright, 2008). Studies conducted in the UK have demonstrated that, of the surveyed employees, 20% of LGB, 50% of non-binary, and 51% of transgender employees have concealed their sexual or gender identity at work due to concerns

regarding discrimination (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018; Hoel et al., 2014). Concealment of identity causes many negative effects such as reduced self-confidence and performance, increased isolation and ego depletion (Köllen, 2013; Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow, 2013). Additionally, employees who conceal their identity often forfeit employment benefits (e.g., partner benefits) by doing so (Mennicke, Gromer, Oehme, & MacConnie, 2016). Research consistently indicates that employees are less likely to conceal their identity in a supportive work environment (Colgan et al., 2008; Ragins, 2004, 2008).

Disclosure of identity in the workplace is not considered to be a singular event, but instead involves (re)negotiating identities in different instances and contexts throughout an individual's career. The process itself involves a cost/benefit analysis (Clair, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005), with reference to contextual and personal factors (Chrobot-Mason, Button, & DiClementi, 2001; Clair et al., 2005; Colgan et al., 2008; Ragins, 2004; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001).

Identity management is therefore conceptualised on a continuum, which ranges from full disclosure to all colleagues, to non-disclosure to all colleagues. Along this continuum, specific strategies may be employed to aid the (partial) concealment of their identity, such as disclosing their identity to some, but maintaining a false heterosexual identity with others (Button, 2004). For example, when interacting with new colleagues, LGB employees may deliberately provide false information about their partner's gender, or avoid questions about their personal lives (Clair et al., 2005). More recently, scholars have begun to question the extent to which LGBT individuals are fully in control of the disclosure process, by identifying the dynamic process through which LGBT identities become known and disclosed by colleagues (Einarsdottir et al., 2015).

Bisexual individuals face additional unique challenges with regards to identity management, as research demonstrates that significantly more bisexual employees conceal their sexuality at work (Popova, 2018; See & Hunt, 2011). Further, those in a same-gender relationship may choose to self-identify as lesbian or gay, as this identity is perceived to have greater legitimacy than the bisexual identity (Popova, 2018; See & Hunt, 2011).

Sexual identity management at work has garnered significant research attention within the domain of LGB workplace experiences (McFadden, 2015). Much of this research is concerned with the timing, method, process and consequences of self-disclosing one's sexual orientation (Clair et al., 2005; Gedro, 2007; Kaplan, 2014; Ragins, 2004; Rumens & Broomfield, 2012). However recently scholars have called for research that moves away from the restrictive conceptualisation of identity management to the disclosure decision, and instead considers the ways in which identity management strategies are created throughout careers by exploring interactions and lived aspects of identity (Ozeren & Aslan, 2016). Research that considers the ongoing (re)negotiation of identity management at work throughout careers could employ a lifespan approach to consider the dynamic nature of such behaviours.

2.3.4   Summary

LGBT individuals experience many forms of inequality throughout their careers, including selection and wage discrimination, and both horizontal and vertical segregation. Many have theorised that LGBT career challenges result either directly or indirectly from identity development, and the stressors that come with this process. Further, research has identified the various strategies used by members of the LGBT community to manage their sexual or gender identity at work with colleagues, and further highlights the challenges faced when doing so. This section highlights the importance of advancing research within the domain of LGBT careers, and particularly experiences of the challenges described above.

2.4   Stereotypes and Career Development

Underpinning the impact of stereotypes on career development is the concept of occupational stereotypes. Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) postulates that the content of stereotypes is generated following intergroup relations, and experience with out-groups (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Every day activities contribute to the categorisation of individuals into appropriate roles and groups, following inference from behaviours and traits. Gendered occupational stereotypes follow from observation of those in sex-typical roles, such as men's occupancy of high

status roles and women's occupancy of homemaker and low status roles (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000). The beliefs that men are agentic and women are communal are derived from the perceived difference in actions and roles of men and women (Eagly, 1987).

Occupational stereotypes therefore arise from the assumption that roles traditionally held almost exclusively by one gender are viewed as better suited for that gender (Clarke & Arnold, 2013). It then follows that success in that role relies on the possession of traits attributed to the gender-type. For example, agentic characteristics are often associated with male-typed work such as managerial roles and leadership (Duehr & Bono, 2006; Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Schein, 1973). Occupations such as nursing and teaching are considered to be female-typed, and are believed to require communal traits (Heilman, 1983). Observing dichotomous sex-typical roles at home and in education encourages children to associate the characteristics of the role with those who occupy it (Kite, Deaux, & Haines, 2008).

Awareness of occupational gender stereotypes emerges between ages 2 and 5 (Blakemore, 2003; Franken, 1983; Gettys & Cann, 1981; Hilliard & Liben, 2010; Kuhn, Nash, & Brucken, 1978; Signorella, Bigler, & Liben, 1993) and becomes more pronounced with age (Liben, Bigler, & Krogh, 2001). Knowledge of the stereotype that mathematics is a masculine subject, and therefore boys are expected to perform better at it than girls, is observed as early as five years old (del Río & Strasser, 2013), and is evident throughout school ages (Cvencek, Meltzoff, & Greenwald, 2011; Liben & Bigler, 2002) as well as in university students (Liben & Bigler, 2002). Masculine stereotypes for science (Finson, 2002; Liben & Bigler, 2002), and feminine stereotypes for the arts (Kurtz-Costes, Copping, Rowley, & Kinlaw, 2014; Liben & Bigler, 2002), are also prevalent amongst children and university students.

Broadly speaking, the impact of stereotypes on careers is twofold; through external and internal stereotypes (Herek, 2007; Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 2009; Salter & Liberman, 2016). External stereotypes are the beliefs and assumptions held by others about an individual and their identity group, and incongruence between

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such assumptions and occupational stereotypes often result in actual career barriers such as prejudice and discrimination. Internal stereotypes refer to the internalised assumptions one has about their identity group, and incongruence between such beliefs and occupational stereotypes often leads to the perception of career barriers, and behaviours that are intended to minimise the negative impact of such stereotypes from others. This section explores each of these two mechanisms in turn.

2.4.1 External Stereotypes and Career Development

Research investigating the impact of external stereotypes—stereotypes held by others—on career development has predominantly focussed on beliefs regarding employee gender (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). In applying the SCM to explore the impact of stereotypes on careers, recent research has indicated that occupations are reliably stereotyped along the dimensions of warmth and competence (He, Kang, Tse, & Toh, 2019). The authors further found that jobs more commonly held by women were stereotyped as warmer than jobs more commonly held by men. Occupational warmth ratings were also positively correlated with the percentage of female workers within an occupation. This conflict has been demonstrated to result in both descriptive and prescriptive prejudice (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008).

Evidence shows that barriers faced by minorities in organisations are linked to the gendered organisational culture, structure and practices which favour masculine working (Kossek, Su, & Wu, 2017). This includes both organisational policies (Epstein, Saute, Olgensky, & Gever, 1995; Jonnergård, Stafsudd, & Elg, 2010) and practices (Crompton & Lyonette, 2011; Gorman & Kmec, 2009; Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2008) that are discriminatory insofar as they are based upon expectations and stereotypes (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 1995, 2002). Biased evaluations of women as leaders have been shown to lead to stricter standards and requirements for promotion for women (Lyness & Heilman, 2006), a process which has generally been shown to favour males (Anderson-Gough, Grey, & Robson, 2005).

In addition to formal policies, bias against minorities is also demonstrated in informal practices such as networking. Partners and senior managers tend to promote those who they deem to have stereotypically similar backgrounds and preferences as themselves (Anderson-Gough et al., 2005). Whilst formal processes can encourage discriminatory behaviours which prevent minorities from reaching these senior positions, informal practices further exacerbate this issue. Kumra & Vinnicombe (2008) found further evidence that suggests that within accounting, the norms regarding social life and temporal commitment are male-orientated, which means that those who do not conform to these norms find it more difficult to be accepted and successful in such environments (Anderson-Gough et al., 2005).

Role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) extends social role theory by suggesting that prejudice arises when a person's behaviour or role is incongruent with the stereotypes held about the identity group to which they belong (Rule et al., 2016). This theory is well supported by empirical research, and has been demonstrated for both women in male-typed occupations and men in female-typed occupations (Clarke & Arnold, 2013). For example, Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins (2004) provided subjects with a job description summary for a gender-typed job, and the background information for both male and female candidates, and then asked participants in the study to complete an evaluation of each candidate on various measures. Results demonstrated that both male and female participants rated women less competent than men for male gender-typed tasks. This effect was mitigated once unequivocal evidence was provided to support the female candidate's success in the role, however now that she was perceived to possess the masculine traits necessary to perform the job, such violation of prescriptive gender norms led participants to judge the candidate as unlikeable.

Fernando, Cohen, & Duberley (2019) identified that the masculine culture within engineering and its associated social rituals led to perceptions of women as lacking in technical competence. In order to negate such stereotypes, female engineers employed various strategies. One such strategy that was identified by the authors was *assimilation*, which involved making gender invisible through masculine presentations of dress and behaviours, such as being more assertive,

authoritative and combative. However, such behaviours were often interpreted as aggression and nicknames such as *"Cruella"* or *"Ice Queen"*, and such unpopularity was deemed to be a hindrance for career development. Further, displaying masculine behaviours in order to demonstrate competence served to reinforce the perception that competent engineers are typically male.

Researchers have further demonstrated the impact of role congruity by showing a congruence between stereotypes of how leaders should behave and stereotypes of men (e.g. assertive and competitive), and incongruence between stereotypes of leaders and stereotypes of women (e.g. nice and compassionate). To do this, Schein (1973) developed a Descriptive Index of 92 attributes, which has been replicated many times (Duehr & Bono, 2006; Ryan et al., 2011), and consistently demonstrates the association of characteristics of successful managers and those commonly associated with men.

The similarity in such stereotypes is known as the *Think Manager, Think Male* paradigm, and is a global phenomenon that is evident in both men and women (Schein, Mueller, Lituchy, & Liu, 1996). This common perception results in women being deemed to be less effective leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007), and restricts their access to higher level employment opportunities. This implicit exclusion of women is considered to be an invisible barrier for women seeking leadership roles, otherwise known as *"the glass ceiling"*.

Extending this paradigm, Braun, Stegmann, Hernandez Bark, Junker, & van Dick (2017) found that women are more closely associated with follower-behaviours than men are, suggesting that when people think follower, they think female. Recent research employing the IAT has also found that stereotypically male professions, such as software development and technical leadership, are more easily associated with men than with women, who were associated with home and family (Wang & Redmiles, 2019).

This means that women who conform to the traditional gender role are disadvantaged as they are not seen to possess the necessary traits for leadership roles, however women who do possess the desired traits associated with leadership are evaluated negatively for behaving stereotypically incongruently (Barrantes &

Eaton, 2018; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Research also demonstrates that men who assume traditionally feminine roles are similarly stigmatised or even more so (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005; Martin, 1995; Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999; Zawisza, Luyt, Zawadzka, & Buczny, 2018). Specifically, researchers have demonstrated that men are also penalised and judged to be ineffectual and less respected than women in female-typed jobs (Heilman & Wallen, 2010).

Though limited in comparison to research that identifies career barriers as a result of incongruent stereotypes, some scholars have identified the contextual factors that can support individuals in such a work environment. Fernando, Cohen, & Duberley (2018) identified that personalised help from others in the organisation, opportunities to assume additional responsibilities, feedback about performance and the presence of role models led to increased feelings of confidence for female Engineers. Such perceptions of confidence in their competence ultimately enabled them to remain in their roles when others may have felt that incongruent stereotypes created career barriers. This research highlights the importance of identifying when external stereotypes may lead to career barriers, and the steps that organisations can take to reduce their impact.

2.4.2 Internal Stereotypes and Career Development

In addition to creating actual career barriers in career development, stereotypes have also been demonstrated to influence career interests and choice through self-perception of abilities (Correll, 2004; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Perceived difficulty within career development is believed to be a strong factor within career decision making (Lent et al., 1994; Swanson & Woitke, 1997). For example, research has demonstrated that once exposed to gender stereotypes, women were less likely to express an interest in a leadership role on subsequent tasks (Davies et al., 2005). By influencing career decisions, internalised stereotypes often present a perceived career barrier (Koenig et al., 2011).

Perceived career barriers describe difficulties anticipated by individuals in achieving career aspirations (Urbanaviciute, Pociute, Kairys, & Liniauskaite, 2016). The perception of career barriers can cause career indecision (Creed, Patton, &

Bartrum, 2004), less career planning (Cardoso & Moreira, 2009), and lower aspirations (Creed, Wong, & Hood, 2009). The impact of career barriers perceived by a particular demographic has been demonstrated extensively, and is considered a contributing factor in underrepresentation within a particular occupation (Watts, Frame, Moffett, Van Hein, & Hein, 2015), for example women in senior surgeon roles (Cochran et al., 2013).

Awareness of gendered occupational stereotypes is demonstrated very early in childhood. Studies of young children demonstrate that they are not only aware of these societal stereotypes, but this also impacts job aspiration, as boys demonstrated greater interest in traditionally masculine jobs, whilst girls favoured roles that are traditionally feminine (Franken, 1983; McGee & Stockard, 1991; Sellers, Satcher, & Comas, 1999). A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies demonstrates that vocational interests remain stable from ages 12 to 40 (Hayes, Bigler, & Weisgram, 2018; Low, Yoon, Roberts, & Rounds, 2005) demonstrating the potentially pervasive impact of such stereotypes.

However, research also demonstrates that vocational aspirations, based upon gender stereotypes, ascribed to during childhood are not fixed. Metaphors such as the *"leaky pipeline"* describe the phenomenon of individuals who initially express interest in a specific field, but change their mind during the career development process (Lawson, Lee, Crouter, & Mchale, 2018). This phenomenon has been demonstrated within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, where women who initially express an interest in these fields later change their mind, such as when choosing University courses, when finding a job after completing a STEM degree, or even by switching to a non-STEM occupation after working in the field for some time (Blickenstaff, 2005).

Due to the significant overlap in the two research domains, theories of career development often reference the role of stereotypes. Three key theories that can assist in understanding the impact of internalised stereotypes are reviewed below.

2.4.2.1 Career Construction Theory

Career Construction Theory (CCT; Savickas, 2005) provides a framework for examining the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals construct themselves, impose direction on their career behaviours, and make meaning of their vocational trajectories. In relation to the role of stereotypes in career development and perception, the theory notes how exclusion from certain experiences, such as gender atypical experiences in childhood, can reduce confidence in approaching those activities and could reduce interest in occupations that are associated with them (Savickas, 2005).

This theory is rooted in Super's Life Span, Life Space Theory, which emerged from 50 years of career and vocational counselling work, and a 20 year longitudinal study examining the career patterns of adolescent boys through to the age of 36 (Super, 1990). Super's theory was extremely influential when it was first published, as it demonstrated how career development outcomes are the result of inner psychological energy as well as contextual influences and external support (Super, 1957). However the lack of diversity in the original research sample, and the decline of traditional and stable career paths, emerged as significant weaknesses of this theory (Hartung & Subich, 2011).

CCT built upon such criticism by giving consideration to the need for preparation of multiple possibilities, as career progression does not involve moving through a predictable pattern of sequential stages (Savickas, 2013). CCT therefore aims to develop methods which allow an individual to understand how they have constructed their career, as opposed to following a pre-determined process (Savickas, 2011).

CCT was originally designed for—and is most often applied to—career counselling interviews and vocational guidance. Career construction counselling involves the interpersonal process of helping individuals to author and construct career stories that connect their self-concept to their career history, fit work into the context of their life, and make meaning through work (Savickas, 2011). However, this theory could also be used in a research context, as a framework for understanding the way in which people construct their careers through adaptation

to the social context and according to potential threats (Inkson, Dries, & Arnold, 2015).

2.4.2.2 Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent & Brown, 1996; Lent et al., 1994) focuses on the development of career interests, the making of career decisions, and the individual and contextual factors that influence these processes. The theory explains how personal attributes—such as predispositions and gender—as well as contextual factors—such as environmental conditions and social support—influence learning experiences. Such learning experiences influence self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which in turn influence career interests (Lent et al., 1994; Poteat et al., 2014). Career interests are then believed to impact career choice goals, such as aspirations, which in turn influence career choices and career-related behaviours. Self-efficacy and outcome expectations are also postulated to exert a direct effect on career goals and choices (Swanson, Daniels, & Tokar, 1996). Therefore, the more self-efficacy a person possesses in regard to their career, the more likely they are to pursue that trajectory (Russon & Schmidt, 2014).

SCCT proposes that gender socialisation and gender stereotypes influence perceptions of ability and self-efficacy (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) which, rather than actual competence (e.g., grades), is a better predictor of academic and occupational outcome (Bandura et al., 2001; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Lent et al., 1994). Early research in this domain predominantly focussed on the career development experiences of women, indicating that women face greater perceived career barriers than men due to fears of discrimination based upon gender and work-life role conflicts (Swanson et al., 1996; Swanson & Woitke, 1997). Further, women tend to underestimate their mathematical and scientific abilities and report lower self-efficacy than men, even when objective measures of performance and abilities indicate otherwise (Bandura et al., 2001; Cordero, Porter, Israel, & Brown, 2010; Joshi, Jooyeon, & Hyuntak, 2015; Kurtz-Costes, Rowley, Harris-Britt, & Woods, 2008). Subsequent research has demonstrated that perceived discrimination and a lack of social support can

contribute to vocational indecision amongst students (Schmidt, Miles, & Welsh, 2011).

The theory considers occupational stereotypes to be an important contextual factor in career related decision making (Fouad, 2007; Lent et al., 1994; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000), as they can begin to restrict or expand vocational interest as early as adolescence, when gender-typical aspirations begin to develop (Fouad & Santana, 2017; Lent & Brown, 2019). Perceived incongruence between identity and the stereotype of a successful person within an occupation can indeed present a perceived career barrier, as this perception correlates with lower levels of career decision self-efficacy (Luzzo, Funk, & Strang, 1996).

Recent studies demonstrate gender differences in perceptions of those who work in stereotypically masculine or feminine roles. For example, Ehrlinger et al. (2018) found that women reported feeling less similar to computing scientists and engineers than did men, which in turn predicted lower interest in future computing science and engineering courses and careers compared to men. However, this particular study focussed on similarities and differences in perceptions and interest at a single point in time. Further research in this domain could focus on career related behaviours to determine how this translates into lived experiences, which would provide insight into the impact of such stereotypes.

2.4.2.3 Circumscription and Compromise Theory

Circumscription and Compromise Theory (Gottfredson, 2002) describes how career aspirations are formed during childhood, and develop with the evolving self-concept. The circumscription phase refers to the process of determining the suitability of roles based upon self-concept, defined as *"one's view of one-self, one's view of who one is and who one is not"* (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 547). Implementation of the self-concept in an individuals' career refers to the selection of occupations that are congruent with their self-image. The compromise phase outlines the way career choices may be sacrificed following consideration of both contextual obstacles and available opportunities (Gottfredson, 1981; Lawson et al., 2018).

The circumscription phase is itself made up of four stages through which individuals progress: orientation to size and power, orientation to sex roles, orientation to social valuation, and orientation to the internal, unique self. From stage 2—which occurs between ages six to eight—the authors of the theory note that children's thoughts regarding gender roles become more solidified, and they begin to perceive same-sex occupations as preferable. At this point, gender stereotypes play a significant role in assessment of suitable roles (Henderson et al., 1988), which suggests certain occupations may be discarded as a result of perceived career barriers. Perceived incongruence between gender and the traits required to perform a particular job will impact decisions to pursue a career not in line with a person's gender identity, creating a perceived career barrier.

The theory of Circumscription and Compromise is supported by empirical research. For example, studies have found support for gender based selection of adolescent occupational aspiration (Hannah & Kahn, 1989) and large scale support for the longitudinal progression through the stages outlined above (e.g., Helwig, 2001). Cochran, Wang, Stevenson, Johnson, & Crews (2011) further provided longitudinal support for the theory by studying American adolescents' career aspirations and their relationship with success in midlife. However, due to a lack of available data regarding stereotypes, the authors focussed solely on the prestige level of vocational aspirations, and not on occupational stereotypes in aspirations.

The role of gender stereotypes in occupational aspirations has been demonstrated by research that examines the aspirations of children. A recent UK report, documenting the findings of the largest study of its kind, showed that gender stereotyping of occupations was evident from the age of 7 (Chambers, Kashefpakdel, Rehill, & Percy, 2018). The findings show that boys overwhelmingly aspired to take on traditionally masculine roles such as engineering, and girls aspired to take on traditionally feminine roles such as teaching.

2.4.3   Summary

This section has demonstrated that the impact of stereotypes on careers is not limited to externally imposed limitations on one's capability (or *actual career barriers*), but also extends to vocational decisions based upon the perception of

career barriers (or *perceived career barriers*). Internalising gender stereotypes based upon identity can reduce self-efficacy and perceived ability to perform within particular careers or occupations, and therefore lead to career-limiting decisions, such as not seeking promotions. Theories of career development have assisted in furthering understanding of how gender stereotypes influence career construction decisions (Career Construction Theory), aspirations (Circumscription and Compromise theory), and perceptions of competence (Social Cognitive Career Theory). The following section reviews the literature that extends these theories to include LGBT stereotypes and career development.

2.5   LGBT Stereotypes and Career Development

Stereotypes present a significant barrier for the LGBT community (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009), and have been demonstrated to contribute to the major career barriers noted previously. Though relatively limited in comparison to other minorities, this section explores the empirical research that has begun to explore the impact of such stereotypes on LGBT career development.

2.5.1   External Stereotypes and Career Development

Though often focussed on gender, role incongruity has also been demonstrated in research investigating discrimination against lesbian and gay candidates in hiring scenarios. Empirical studies have found that employers who emphasised stereotypically masculine traits were even less likely to invite gay males to interview, and those who emphasised stereotypically feminine traits were similarly less likely to invite lesbians to interview (Drydakis, 2014; Tilcsik, 2011). Research has also demonstrated discrimination against gay men for masculine typed jobs, and discrimination against lesbians for feminine-typed jobs (Ahmed et al., 2013).

This research is limited in its application to an occupational setting due to its laboratory context and resulting lack of realism. Previous research investigating racially biased preferences in hiring decisions demonstrated that such assumptions are particularly prominent when candidates' qualifications are ambiguous, and therefore there is an opportunity for subjectivity (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000),

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indicating that the impact of prejudice attitudes towards LGBT individuals may not be so severe in a real organisational setting. Conversely, these experiments do provide an opportunity to conduct a manipulation check to find out whether participants noticed the subjects sexual orientation before rating (Nadler & Kufahl, 2014; Niedlich, Steffens, Krause, Settke, & Ebert, 2015), whereas field experiments do not.

Role incongruity has also been demonstrated in research investigating occupational segregation and the overrepresentation of gay men and lesbians in gender atypical work (Hancock et al., 2020). Gay men are frequently associated with female-dominated occupations such as nursing, hairdressing, dancing and acting (Pope et al., 2004; Rule et al., 2016), and lesbians are frequently associated with male-dominated occupations such as athletics, mechanics and truck driving (Pope et al., 2004).

Further, as gay men are stereotyped to have more feminine gender role traits and characteristics (e.g., being higher in communion and lower in agency), they may also experience similar barriers to women with regards to success in traditional leadership roles (Barrantes & Eaton, 2018). Liberman & Golom (2015) recently attempted to demonstrate the role of stereotypes in promotional or vertical segregation, by applying Schein's Descriptive Index Survey (Schein, 1973) to examine the relationship between sexual orientation stereotypes and leadership behaviours. Their findings demonstrated greater congruence between the stereotypes of heterosexual male and female managers and the successful manager prototype, than between the stereotypes of gay male managers and the successful manager prototype. It has therefore been proposed that the *Think Manager, Think Male* paradigm should in fact be called *Think Manager, Think Heterosexual Male* (Morton, 2017). The belief that gay males stereotypically lack the necessary qualities to perform successfully in a management role can limit their access to managerial and leadership positions, thereby presenting an actual career barrier.

Further to this, Barrantes & Eaton (2018) examined perceptions of both heterosexual and gay male leaders, and found that gay leaders were perceived to possess more feminine traits and were deemed better suited to feminine-typed

leadership positions. This research further suggests that stereotypes of gay men negatively impact occupational opportunities and present actual career barriers.

Very recently, Hancock et al. (2020) applied the concept of sexual orientation stereotypes to occupations to examine the extent to which jobs are perceived to be *"gay jobs"* or *"lesbian jobs"* by hiring and recruitment professionals. The authors found that occupations that were rated as stereotypically *"gay jobs"* were also rated as female gendered, and were rated lower on prestige compared to *"heterosexual male jobs"*. However, many female-typed jobs were not stereotyped as *"gay jobs"*, and no occupations were assigned the *"lesbian job"* stereotype. This may suggest that external occupational stereotypes for lesbian and gay communities may be diminishing over time (March, van Dick, & Hernandez Bark, 2016; White, Kruczek, Brown, & White, 1989) and with age (Koenig, 2018), however it is important to acknowledge that stereotypical *"gay jobs"* still associate gay men with female-typed jobs. Exploring this relationship in greater depth is important to understand the impact this may have on lesbian and gay individuals' career experiences.

Research suggests that attitudes toward the LGBT community have become more positive over the last decade (Westgate, Riskind, & Nosek, 2015). Studies that employ the IAT and measure implicit attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals have demonstrated a reduction in implicit preference for straight targets over gay and lesbian targets (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019). These findings suggest that stereotypes and resulting bias towards this community may be declining over time, which means that studies exploring the impact of stereotypes should utilise a dynamic approach to capture such changes. For example, longitudinal research, and methods that are able to examine experiences across a lifespan, may provide a better indication of the longer term impact of stereotypes on LGBT careers.

As previously noted, research is beginning to examine the content of bisexual and transgender stereotypes, however this work is very much in its infancy. Therefore, whilst assumptions have been made that external stereotypes of bisexual and transgender individuals may lead to the increased prejudice they face, this is yet to be empirically tested.

2.5.2   Internal Stereotypes and Career Development

Researchers have identified that LGBT individuals perceive similar career barriers to those perceived by heterosexual people, whilst also anticipating barriers unique to their LGBT identity. Parnell et al. (2012) examined the career-related barriers that 241 LGB participants anticipated in the future, and the degree of hindrance associated with these barriers. The authors found that perceived sexual orientation career barriers were the third most highly anticipated future barriers, and second most hindering barriers to development for the participants. Whilst this research highlights the significant role of perceived career barriers for this population, it did not include examination of the impact of stereotypes on the perception of career barriers. However, internalisation of LGBT stereotypes can assist in further understanding career trends for this population, which are currently only partially explained by external stereotypes.

2.5.2.1 Career Construction Theory

CCT provides a useful framework for considering how LGBT careers may be impacted by internalised stereotypes. Savickas (2013) termed careers that comprise a series of job-related choices and transitions influenced by identity and values *"protean careers".* This career pattern is considered to be more applicable for LGBT individuals than traditional paths, due to the chance of experiencing hostility in the workplace, leading to a lack of trust in traditional career trajectories (Kaplan, 2014). This theory therefore demonstrates the role of the developing self-concept in the seeking of safer work environments. Further, the theory allows for the examination of how sexual identity, and social responses to it, will influence the implementation of the self-concept in LGBT career development (Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006).

This theory has not yet been validated in its application to the LGBT community. However, drawing on the concept of career construction, the generation of career accounts would further understanding of the interaction of career experiences and their social context—including societal influences such as stereotyping—as a continuous narrative. Dynamic approaches to this field of study are important to enable greater understanding of the ways in which identity

development and implementation of the self-concept impacts career experiences, including perceptions of career barriers and disadvantage for this community.

2.5.2.2 Social Cognitive Career Theory

In acknowledging the importance of occupational and gender stereotypes, and also the other personal, social and cultural context factors that surround career development, SCCT has also been deemed particularly relevant to studying LGB experiences (Hoffshire, 2017). Morrow, Gore, & Campbell (1996) were amongst the first to apply the theory in this way, by suggesting that stereotypes, discouragement of emerging gender atypical interests, and peer pressure can shape the range of academic and career interests of lesbian and gay individuals by influencing their self-efficacy and outcome expectations. They further suggested that academic interests and goals may not be translated into career choices due to the perception of prejudice and discrimination in various industries.

Internalised prejudice is a phenomenon observed amongst marginalised identity groups, whereby negative societal attitudes about one's identity group are internalised (Staples, Neilson, Bryan, & George, 2018). Internalised homonegativity—also commonly referred to as internalised heterosexism or internalised homophobia—and internalised transnegativity specifically refer to the ways in which LGBT people have internalised negative beliefs and stereotypes about their sexual and gender identity respectively (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Staples et al., 2018; Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, & Meyer, 2008). The adoption of such beliefs has many negative side effects for mental health and wellbeing (Berg, Munthe-Kaas, & Ross, 2016; Staples et al., 2018; Szymanski et al., 2008).

Recently, the concept of internalised homonegativity has also been linked to the career decision-making process (Winderman, Martin, & Smith, 2018). For example, perception of workplace attitudes toward sexual minorities has been demonstrated to influence the career exploration process for lesbians (Lehtonen, 2008). Prior research indicated that internalised homonegativity led to decreased self-esteem and confidence for lesbians, which in turn was reflected in

apprehension when seeking promotions (Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest, & Ketzenberger, 1996), indicating the impact it has on career self-efficacy.

Research in this domain typically explores the impact of previous experiences of discrimination, and anticipated discrimination on the decision making of LGBT students and job seekers. Anticipated discrimination has been demonstrated to reduce confidence and self-esteem, leading to the loss of career development opportunities (Ng et al., 2012; Parnell et al., 2012). This demonstrates the impact that perceived challenges could have on LGBT career development.

Research that applies SCCT to LGB communities typically uses university students as participants, and uses quantitative methods to correlate specific factors (e.g., previous experiences of discrimination) with specific outcomes (e.g., career decisions based upon perceived safety) at a static point in time. Berg et al. (2016) conducted a systematic mapping review of research in this domain and found only one study that had used qualitative methodology to explore this construct and its impact. However, this theory could also be used to consider the ways in which internalised stereotypes—and especially gendered stereotypes—impact career behaviours and perceptions of career experiences, such as career barriers.

The longer term effect of these experiences on LGB career development experiences is also yet to be explored, despite calls for such longitudinal research (Poteat et al., 2014). Such research would assist in understanding the way that stereotypes impact the career related behaviours that one experiences before reaching such feelings of career (in)decision, as well as the impact of these feelings on actual vocational behaviours after this point in time. Such methods would also allow for further understanding of the many psychological ramifications empirically associated with career transitions (Ferrie, Shipley, Stansfeld, & Marmot, 2002; Vaitenas & Wiener, 1977). Examining career decision making processes in this way would allow for consideration of the complexities of this process.

Research applying SCCT to transgender populations has been scarce. Dickey et al. (2016) found that those who self-identified as post-transition reported a higher level of career decision self-efficacy than those who identified as pre-transition. This suggests that the decreased psychological distress and social

discrimination that is often reported post-transition may also result in increased self-efficacy, which can be translated to careers. However, not all members of the transgender community experience clear phases of pre- and post-transition, nor experience or desire transition in the same way (APA, 2015; Wada et al., 2019). Applying this theory to the career experiences of transgender individuals could assist in identifying how anticipated discrimination and incongruent stereotypes influence their career self-efficacy.

2.5.2.3 Circumscription and Compromise Theory

Gottfredson's Circumscription and Compromise Theory could also be applied to understanding how LGBT career aspirations could be shaped by the perception of career barriers due to the internalisation of stereotypes. Theorists note that gender role socialisation influences the career development and aspirations of gay and lesbian children differently to heterosexual children, as they may internalise occupational stereotypes about gay men and lesbian women that constrict their perceptions about appropriate career options (Croteau et al., 2000).

Literature typically supports the assertion that inverse gender stereotypes are reflected in LG career aspirations. Research has identified that there is a link between the Implicit Inversion Theory (Kite & Deaux, 1987) and the career trends of lesbian and gay individuals. For example, gay men typically indicate a greater interest for female-typed occupations than heterosexual men, and lesbian women often indicate a greater interest for male-typed occupations than heterosexual women (Chung & Harmon, 1994; Ellis, Ratnasingam, & Wheeler, 2012; Lippa, 2002, 2010). Further, it has been identified that gay men tend to express less interest in stereotypically masculine careers, and lesbians tend to express less interest in stereotypically feminine careers compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Carpenter, 2008; Chung & Harmon, 1994; Ellis et al., 2012; Lewis & Seaman, 2004; Lippa, 2002, 2008).

Some research has identified that the preference for gender atypical work is stronger for gay men than it is for lesbians (Lippa, 2002, 2008), which may be indicative of the finding that gender inversion stereotyping may be less prevalent

for lesbians than it is for gay men (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Further, studies indicate that lesbians are more likely to report that their sexual orientation has opened up career opportunities—or created advantage—for them (Schneider & Dimito, 2010). It is theorised that sexual identity negates the strict gendered social expectations of women, and therefore provides some freedom to consider and pursue non-traditional career paths (Schneider & Dimito, 2010).

Studies that seek to examine the impact of internalised gendered stereotypes on LG careers typically measure scores of occupational preference for various occupations of heterosexual men and women, lesbians, and gay men. Similarly to the internalised prejudice research, these studies typically seek to measure occupational interests at a static point in time, and do not consider the longer term behavioural impacts of such interests. Positivistic methods in careers research typically limit the scope of insight into the dynamic and evolving nature of careers by isolating individuals from their social context and circumstances (Cohen, Duberley, & Mallon, 2004). Further, the majority of this research focusses on aspirations, interests, and a sense of *pull* towards certain career trajectories, and rarely considers the perceptions of barriers for, or a *push* from gender typical occupations or careers.

Though not yet applied to the career experiences of transgender individuals, it could be argued that career choices are made to be stereotypically consistent with their assigned sex in order to avoid discrimination, or are based upon the desire to express their gender identity. However, it must be noted that the Circumscription and Compromise theory is based upon a binary conceptualisation of sex, and does not distinguish between sex, gender, gender identity and gender expression (Wada et al., 2019). It is therefore limited in its applicability to gender identities or expressions that do not fit into a binary categorisation.

2.5.3   Summary

Stereotypes contribute to LGBT career development experiences in various ways. Negative and gendered stereotypes of this community that are held by others generate perceptions of role incongruity, and lead to discriminatory experiences in the work environment. However, such stereotypes are also

internalised by people within the LGBT community, which leads to a reduction in self-esteem and confidence, as well as a restriction in career aspirations and interests. However, research in this domain remains limited and is not without challenges, including a strong focus on the internalisation of negative stereotypes, and the impact this has on other psychological constructs such as self-esteem and self-efficacy. The limited research that considers the internalisation of gender stereotypes seems to focus heavily on aspirations and career interests (or pull factors), and not on the career barriers that this can create (or push factors), or the lived experiences of those trying to navigate these barriers. Also, as with much of the research investigating LGBT identity and experiences, bisexual and transgender communities remain overlooked in many of these studies.

2.6   Chapter Summary

This review of the literature has highlighted that the impact of stereotypes on careers is not limited to externally imposed limitations on one's capability (or *actual career barriers*), but also extends to vocational decisions based upon the perception of career barriers (or *perceived career barriers*). Theories detailed throughout the review demonstrate that gendered stereotypes play a significant role in assessment of suitable roles, and that some people discard certain occupations due to perceived role incongruity.

Further, the review demonstrates that lesbian and gay individuals are subject to unique stereotypes, based upon gender and sexuality. Such stereotypes have been shown to lead to discrimination in the hiring process, and the internalisation of stereotypes generates career interests that are considered to be stereotypically congruent with their identity. However, it is not yet known how these aspirations and interests translate into lived experiences, and therefore it is not yet understood whether internalised stereotypes do contribute to unique career experiences of LG people. Further, very little is currently known about the content of stereotypes of bisexual and transgender individuals, and the impact of such stereotypes on their career experiences.

To respond to these limitations within existing literature, the current research aims to explore the impact of internalised stereotypes on the career experiences of LGBT individuals, with a focus on perceptions of career barriers throughout career trajectories.

To satisfy this aim, three research questions have been identified:

1.   In what ways do LGBT individuals perceive stereotypes that are based upon gender and sexual orientation?

2.   To what extent do stereotypes based upon gender and sexual orientation present a perceived career barrier for LGBT individuals?

3.   How do perceived career barriers, based upon stereotypes, interact with actual career barriers experienced by LGBT individuals?

This domain has recently been described as *"ripe"* for future research (Hancock et al., 2020). The current research responds to calls to move away from focussing on the impact of negative assumptions (Salter & Liberman, 2016) and explore the impact of general internalised stereotypes, including gendered assumptions. The research further aims to contribute to theoretical discussions of bisexual and transgender careers by widening the participation opportunity to the LGBT community, and not limiting the sample to lesbian and gay participants as many others have done.

Finally, the current research responds to calls to utilise a qualitative design to understand LGBT participants' perceptions of their own career experiences (Croteau et al., 2000), which will help gain insight into career decision making processes and career development behaviours (Schneider & Dimito, 2010). The following chapter will provide an overview of the methodology and method employed to achieve these research aims and respond to the identified research questions.

Chapter 3   Methodology

3.1   Chapter Introduction

Thus far, the thesis has detailed the background research upon which the current study is based. Chapter 2 outlined the specific challenges within existing literature that this research aims to overcome. Building upon that discussion, this chapter provides an overview and discussion of the methodology and method utilised in the present research in order to satisfy the research aim and respond to the three identified research questions:

1.   In what ways do LGBT individuals perceive stereotypes that are based upon gender and sexual orientation?

2.   To what extent do stereotypes based upon gender and sexual orientation present a perceived career barrier for LGBT individuals?

3.   How do perceived career barriers, based upon stereotypes, interact with actual career barriers experienced by LGBT individuals?

Section 3.2 provides an overview of the two main research paradigms—positivism and interpretivism—and the way in which the current study was designed with alignment to a specific epistemology and ontology. Section 3.3 further includes an overview of the research method and its application to the present study. Section 3.4 outlines the sampling method that was employed for the research, and the demographic information of the recruited participants. Finally, section 3.5 outlines the approach to data analysis that was utilised to attain the research findings.

3.2   Research Design

Understanding the appropriateness of the research design requires exploration of the underlying research paradigm, which consists of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. This section begins by providing an overview of contrasting research paradigms and their associated assumptions. This is followed by a discussion of the assumptions of the present research and how

this has informed methodological decisions. The section concludes with a discussion of reflexivity in relation to the identity of the researcher.

3.2.1   Research Paradigms

The two main research paradigms, *positivism* and *interpretivism*, are often referred to as being situated on opposing ends of a spectrum, and inherently consist of differing ontological and epistemological views. Differing assumptions about reality and knowledge underpin the research approach which is taken by positivist and interpretivist research, and this is further reflected in the choice of methodology and method. Therefore, identifying the research paradigm—and its associated assumptions—with which to locate the study is critical in leading the researcher to identify the most appropriate research method for responding to the research aims and questions (Duberley, Johnson, & Cassell, 2012; Scotland, 2012).

Ontology refers to the study of being, and associated assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality (Crotty, 1989), or *what is*. It is important that researchers assume a position regarding their perception of how things are, in order to inform the questions they are seeking to respond to.

The *realist* ontological assumption that underpins positivism states that reality is objective and a discoverable identity exists independently from the researcher (Pring, 2000a). Therefore discussions and debates about concepts within this paradigm focus on definition through measurements and data, meaning that researchers can search for truth through scientific modes of inquiry. The *relativist* assumption that underpins interpretivism states that reality is subjective, and is mediated by consciousness and interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore discussions and debates regarding concepts within such paradigm often involve exploration of meanings of concepts and their defining attributes. As such, researchers can search for truth in lived experiences through interpretation.

Epistemology refers to the nature and form of knowledge (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), by questioning what does and does not constitute warranted or scientific knowledge (Duberley et al., 2012). Within the positivist research paradigm stands the *objectivist* epistemological assumption that knowledge about an objective reality can be discovered impartially, and the researcher is independent

of the researched. Researchers who identify with this objectivist application believe that meaning resides in objects and not in the conscience of the researcher, and therefore the researcher is able to obtain such meaning (Scotland, 2012). The *subjectivist* epistemological assumption of the interpretivist paradigm states that the world does not exist independently of our knowledge of it (Grix, 2004). Further, researchers who identify within a subjectivist epistemology believe that meaning is constructed through the interaction between consciousness and the world, and truth is a consensus that is formed by co-constructors (Pring, 2000b).

Methodology refers to the strategy which determines the choice and use of particular methods (Crotty, 1989), and therefore is concerned with the way in which data is collected and analysed. Positivist methodologies aim to explain relationships using a deductive approach, and to formulate laws that can form the basis for prediction and generalisation (Scotland, 2012). Methodologies such as empirical testing and random samples are used by positivist researchers to seek verifiable evidence through direct experience and observation. In contrast to this, interpretivist methodology aims to understand the phenomenon under study from an individual's perspective using an inductive approach. Interpretivist research aims to investigate interaction among participants, as well as the cultural and historical contexts which people inhabit (Creswell, 2009; Scotland, 2012) using methodologies such as symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and hermeneutics (Duberley et al., 2012).

Methods are the specific procedures that are used to collect and analyse data (Crotty, 1989). The appropriate research method must be chosen based upon its ability to satisfy the assumptions of the research, and also to respond to the research questions. As positivist researchers seek to understand causal relationships to make predictions and generalisations, methods tend to generate quantitative data through standardised tests, observation tools, and closed ended questionnaires (Pring, 2000a). Positivist research is deemed to be of a high standard if it reports both internal and external validity, as well as replicability and reliability. On the other hand, interpretivist methods seek to gain understanding of behaviour and explain actions from the participant's perspective using methods such as open-

ended interviews, observations and focus groups, which tend to generate qualitative data. Interpretivist research is deemed to be of a high standard if it provides rich evidence that is credible and can be transferred (Cohen et al., 2007; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The following section details the research paradigm that underpins the current research, and how this influenced methodological decisions.

3.2.2   The Present Research

The concept of career construction is based upon exploration of individuals' perception of their career experiences, and the assumption that the reality of such experiences is subjective and is individually constructed. Therefore, the research strongly identifies with the interpretivist research paradigm and the relativist ontology. The research aims to explore the ways in which participants believe their careers have been influenced by social constructs such as stereotypes, and not to identify factual representations of concrete experiences, therefore lending itself to the epistemological assumption of subjectivism.

Interpretivism in turn lends itself to the study of careers. Cohen et al. (2004) argue that such an approach allows for an examination of careers within historical and cultural context, thereby moving away from the common depiction of careers as distinct and isolated from social context. Within the context of the current research, the impact of socially constructed stereotypes on career construction was of prime focus, and therefore career experiences must be positioned within the social context of the participants. In contrast, a positivist paradigm would restrict exploration of the evolving and dynamic processes of identity and career development, isolating career experiences from the social context and providing a static representation of careers. Further, research has demonstrated that positivistic approaches to studying social phenomena are not always applicable to marginalised and under-represented groups (Dispenza, Murphy, & Zeligman, 2018; Hays & Wood, 2011).

Satisfying interpretivist and subjectivist assumptions required the use of qualitative methodology to allow for exploration of participant's perspectives on the interaction of their career and identity development. Utilising qualitative methodology in the current study allowed for exploration of unique perceptions

considering individuals' cultural and historical contexts. Such methodology is further deemed more suited to investigation of the career development experiences of marginalised populations (Dispenza et al., 2018; Dispenza, Watson, Chung, & Brack, 2012).

Based upon the researcher's assumption that knowledge is jointly constructed in collaboration with participants in the research context (Patterson, Markey, & Somers, 2012), the interview method was chosen. This allowed participants the opportunity to guide the researcher's understanding of how identity influenced career development, based upon the subjective knowledge gained by participants through lived experiences (Lewis & Simpson, 2010; Sheerin & Linehan, 2018). This method generates qualitative data which can be analysed using a double hermeneutic approach, whereby data can be analysed with the proviso that the researcher's perspectives, reflections and depictions are also examined in relation to the co-creation of meaning (Charmaz, 2008; Dispenza et al., 2018).

Alternative interview methods such as focus groups were deemed to be inappropriate for the current research. Though they are advantageous in understanding shared experiences within a group, they may have created challenges within the context of the present study. For example, the content of the interviews included extremely sensitive and personal experiences, which participants may have deemed too private and emotional to share in front of a group. Participants may have also been concerned about participating if their LGBT identity was not widely known by others, and therefore the sample may have been further limited to those who were more open about their sexual or gender identity. Finally, group interview methods may not have allowed for exploration of nuances in experiences within the LGBT community.

In order to explore both identity and career development, the present study utilised a life approach (Rosenberg, 2018). Within the context of sexual and gender identity, this was deemed important as contemporary understanding of identity development indicates that it is not a singular or linear process. For this reason, it was not anticipated that participants would describe a journey that they feel is

complete, and so the research design allowed for acknowledgement that the researcher is exploring a continuously developing phenomena.

A narrative interview design was used to collect the data, whereby participants use storytelling to uncover their experiences of the phenomenon being studied. Individuals construct representations of reality in narrative interviews (Nazar & Van der Heijden, 2014), which are based upon their perception and interpretation of reality situated within the context of their personal history and relationships (Pitre, Kushner, Raine, & Hegadoren, 2013), and not necessarily factual information (Bryant & Lasky, 2007; Spence, 1982). This method helped gain insight into the influence of social constructs such as stereotypes—based upon the developing self-concept and identity—on occupational and career decisions. Further, this method allowed for acknowledgement that whilst career stories are presented through stages and episodes, the context of their present reality provides the lens through which participants interpret careers as a *"seamless whole"* (Cohen et al., 2004).

In addition to the narrative interviews, timelines were constructed by the participant during the interview and developed throughout the discussion. Visual timelines have been used in organisational research to investigate a particular phenomenon alongside key career transitions and significant milestones (e.g., stress and coping strategies; Mazzetti & Blenkinsopp, 2012). In the context of the current research, career milestones and transitions were mapped alongside key events during the development of the self-concept and identity, such as the disclosure of sexuality or gender identity to family and friends. Narrative interviews allowed for exploration of the interaction of such events and the impact of stereotypes throughout the timeline of careers.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge an alternative research paradigm that may be considered to be applicable for the present study. Queer theory represents a critical discourse that emerged in the 1990s (de Lauretis, 1991) with the aim to deconstruct (or queer) sexuality and gender by problematising rigid identity categories, norms of sexuality and gender, and the oppression that results from heteronormative structures (Warner, 1993). Though the current study was derived

from a body of research that was not created within a queer theory paradigm, the research does utilise some common practices of queer theory to advance the relatively essentialist approaches to stereotypes and careers. For example, the use of a narrative interview approach allows the participant to use their own language and interpretation, and therefore there is less reliance on the researcher's language which may be reflective of heteronormative structures (e.g., masculinity and femininity). Further, participants were given the opportunity to self-identify their gender and sexuality, without the researcher imposing categories of identity.

3.2.3   Reflexivity: Researcher Identity

Within LGBT research, the identity of the researcher is often discussed, and is believed to be an important aspect of the research process. It is claimed by many LGBT researchers that shared identity with participants—in terms of sexual orientation and/or gender identity—is an asset, particularly regarding issues of access, recruitment, rapport building, and data interpretation (Almack, 2008). For example, Browne (2005), Dunne (1997) and Haimes & Weiner (2000) note that, in their studies, the sexual identity of members of the research team helped gain access to participants, and that many participants would not have agreed to participate had they not disclosed an LGBT identity. In addition, Dunne (1997) argues that their lesbian identity helped to gain high levels of trust from the participants, which is necessary for conducting sensitive research. Such insider status is commonly documented within LGBT research reports, and is situated as crucial to the research process (Gabb, 2004). Such accounts create the implicit assumption that LGBT researchers are best suited to conduct interviews with LGBT populations (Almack, 2008).

However, it has also been argued that the perceived benefits of such insider status are limited to the shared experiences relating to sexual and/or gender identity, and this does not take into consideration the complex social positioning of researchers and participants (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998; Sherif, 2001), or other potential commonalities in identity such as class, race, ethnicity and disability. The interviewer deemed to be an insider may therefore not necessarily be capable of fully empathising with every experience the participant discusses (Rosenberg,

2018). Ultimately, this suggests that there will always remain a sense of otherness in the interview setting (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996).

Further, it has been argued that whilst an insider status may provide the advantage of empathy and essential knowledge necessary to understand specific experiences, researchers who do share a common identity with participants may assume a common understanding and may therefore fail to fully explore a participant's unique narrative (LaSala, 2003; Wright, 2011). Therefore, it can be concluded that the notion of an insider-outsider binary is problematic (Kelly, 2014), and is not necessary to include in order to document thorough and effective LGBT research. As few others in the field have done (e.g., Almack, 2008), a reflexive account of the impact of identity on the research process is given without specifically disclosing the researcher's sexual identity.

Within debates about the subjective and interpretative nature of qualitative research, it is commonly argued that high standards of reflexivity and openness about choices made, and their implications, should be thoroughly documented (Edwards & Ribbens, 1998). Researchers are therefore often advised to identify and state explicitly their biases, beliefs and social locations (Harding, 1992). However, such an activity requires a profound level of self-awareness which few possess (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998), and therefore whilst it is agreed within the context of this research that reflexivity is important, it is also acknowledged that documenting all potential biases and influences over the research is not a task that can legitimately be completed in full. Throughout the remainder of this chapter, reflexive accounts are provided regarding aspects of researcher identity, and how it has impacted specific experiences within the research process, as and when it is relevant and appropriate.

3.3   Research Procedure

This section further elaborates on the research procedure used in the present study. The narrative interview and timeline methods are outlined and discussed in turn, and the section concludes with a reflexive comment on the

experience of developing the interviewer-interviewee relationship within the confines of this approach.

3.3.1   Narrative Interview

Narratives allow participants to use storytelling to uncover their experiences of a particular phenomenon, and are often described as the central means through which individuals construct, describe and understand their experiences (McAdams, 1993). Narrative provides a method for socially constructing reality (Gergen, 1999) within the constraint of social structures and cultures, as well as the material resources and skills that individuals possess (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Narratives are also deemed to be an important part of research output, as researchers construct meaning through the narratives that are told about their data (Maitlis, 2012).

Within the narrative method, there are two commonly used interview styles: the episodic interview method and the narrative interview method. The application of the episodic interview method is limited to the analysis of everyday knowledge of specific objects and topics, and the participants' history with them (Flick, 2014). Such interviews typically explore experiences with a social phenomenon within the context of a bounded episode or situation, and therefore would not allow for examination of the ongoing interaction between identity and career development, and the impact of stereotypes on this interaction.

The narrative interview method introduced by Schütze (Riemann & Schütze, 1987) is most commonly used in the context of biographical research (Flick, 2014). The idea of narrative interviewing was motivated by criticism of the standard question-response schema of most interviews. Within this standard format, the interviewer imposes structure by selecting the topics, ordering the questions, and wording the questions in their own language (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). The narrative interview replaces this standard question-response schema with a narration schema, allowing the participant to use their own spontaneous language in the narration of events. The interviewer is therefore advised to avoid using language that the participant has not used in subsequent discussions or follow up questions (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

The narrative interview is conducted over a series of three distinct phases. The first phase involves asking a generative narrative question (Riemann & Schütze, 1987, p.353) which is intended to stimulate the participant's main narrative. The interest of this question may be general, asking for the participant to detail their life history, or may aim at a specific, temporal aspect of the participant's biography (Flick, 2014). In order to elicit a less imposed rendering of the individual's perspective, the narration should not be interrupted or obstructed by the interviewer. The end of the narration is indicated by a coda (Riemann & Schütze, 1987, p.353), e.g., *"I think that's everything".*

However, some events may have been briefly noted and given little significance, and so often further questioning is required to help participants recall details, turning points and changes in thoughts, emotions and actions (Riessman, 2008). Therefore, the next phase consists of narrative probing, whereby further information about specific narrative fragments can be discussed (Flick, 2014). The interview concludes with a balancing phase (Riemann & Schütze, 1987, p.353), in which the participant may be asked questions that aim to utilise their expertise and knowledge of their narrative to provide a theoretical account of what happened (Hermanns, 1991). This phase involves using a series of *"how"* and *"why"* questions to obtain explanations from the participant's perspective.

3.3.1.1 Application of Method

A face-to-face narrative interview approach was used for the present research, whereby participants were encouraged to tell the story of their career and include any information about the impact of their identity development along the way. The narrative interview method is particularly effective in this context, as the production of narratives is enhanced as the participant is closer to the centre of action (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). In the context of the current study, the action relates to the participant's career, and therefore they are indeed at the centre of the phenomenon being studied.

Narrative interviews may be more challenging in certain scenarios than standard semi-structured interviews due to the different role expectations of both

the interviewer and the participant (Flick, 2014). For example, the question style deviates from that of a standard interview, and it is rare that a participant has experienced such a broad generative interview question. The difficulty of narrating one's life story must not be underestimated, and it must not be assumed that all participants are equally capable of giving such presentations. With these challenges in mind, the researcher took time at the start of the interview to explain the process, and how it deviates from standard interviews. This was done before the recording commenced to provide participants with the opportunity to ask questions and raise their concerns beforehand.

Furthermore, the lack of structure during the narration could lead to narratives which remain general, disjointed and topically irrelevant (Flick, 2014). For this reason, the interviewer utilised the specific period of structuring intervention (the beginning of the interview) to provide the following clear and unambiguous generative narrative question:

"I want you to tell me the story of your career to date. I'd like you to think back as far as you can remember, and include information about any specific career aspirations, education and training. As you do this, I would also like you to include information about how you believe your sexual and/or gender identity has influenced your career along the way. Please take your time doing this. I will not interrupt you, but I will make some notes for follow up questions afterwards."

The generative interview question was tested during two pilot interviews, where feedback was obtained about the process. Participants in these pilot interviews advised the researcher that the process was clear and that they enjoyed the narration phase. Further, the elicited narratives contained rich data which responded to the research aim.

In the main study, participants were encouraged to explain their career experiences in light of their identity development, including information about aspirations, training and qualifications. The narration was uninterrupted by the researcher, following suggestion from Flick (2014) and Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2000), in order to allow the participant to talk in their own words and maximise the quality of the data obtained.

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The end of the narration was typically indicated by a coda, such as *"that's it"*. Following this signal, questions were asked based upon the narrative that aimed to seek clarification and gain more in depth insight into the experiences mentioned. For example, *"You mentioned that you had a period of unemployment, please can you tell me more about what led to that experience?"*. Finally, questions were asked with the aim of balancing the narrative, such as *"How do you think organisations can overcome some of the challenges we have discussed?"*. Once all follow up questions were asked, and participants were given the opportunity to add any comments that they thought would be appropriate, participants were thanked for their time and interviews were concluded. All interviews were audio recorded, and typically lasted for around 60 minutes.

Following each interview, reflections and thoughts on the conversation were documented by the researcher, in the form of a reflective log. This provided the opportunity for the interviewer to record important aspects of the conversation that may not necessarily be captured by the data analysis process, such as the emotional state of the participant. This process further assisted the collection of narrative data, as it provided an opportunity to reflect upon the structure of individual's narratives, including patterns or relationships that emerge during the conversation, that participants had not previously been aware of.

This phase of reflection further provided the opportunity to acknowledge the emotional toll of interviewing participants who are discussing particularly emotional or negative experiences. Further, regular supervision provided an effective debriefing mechanism for the researcher to reflect on such emotional interview experiences, and maintain emotional stability (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2008).

3.3.2   Visual Timeline

Although visual methods have been used extensively in sociological and anthropological research (Emmison & Smith, 2000; Kearney & Hyle, 2004; Pink, 2007; Warren, 2009), they are seldom used in organisational research (Stiles, 2004; Warren, 2009). Research designs that incorporate visual methods involve images either as the data source (e.g., interpretation of a photograph) or as part of the

production of data for subsequent analysis (e.g., drawing activities) (Warren, 2009). Using drawing to produce data has been demonstrated to be particularly effective for researching complex, emotive and multifaceted issues, by providing a method to express beliefs and assumptions which may not surface in traditional research methods (Barner, 2008; Broussine, 2008; Stiles, 2004; Warren, 2009), or may be restricted by concerns about emotional expression (Barner, 2008). Visual methods may therefore reduce the restrictions and bias that is often encountered during interview methods that aim to elicit honesty in expressing beliefs, assumptions and emotions (Nossiter & Biberman, 1990; Vince, 1995).

The timeline method is an example of a drawing activity that can be used in isolation or in combination with other methods to aid the elicitation of rich data. Visual timelines have been used in organisational research to investigate a particular phenomenon alongside key career transitions and significant milestones (e.g., stress and coping strategies; Mazzetti & Blenkinsopp, 2012). Timelines are generally constructed by highlighting significant events of interest in the participant's life in chronological order. This method supports recollection and sequencing of the events, and can be used alongside interview methods to aid the remembering of experiences and their temporal positioning (Patterson et al., 2012).

3.3.2.1 Application of Method

In the context of the current research, career milestones and transitions were mapped alongside key events during the development of the self-concept and identity by the participant. When combined with the interview method, the timeline provided a useful tool for recollection and a mechanism through which further data were produced.

Participants were provided with an A3 size sheet of paper and a variety of pens, and were asked to complete two timelines; one timeline depicting the development of identity, and the other depicting the development of their career. Horizontal lines were drawn on the paper to represent the lifespan of the participant, and encourage them to plot milestones along this axis. However, the researcher had no other involvement in the drawing of the timeline, and therefore

the aim of this method was not to co-construct a visual representation of the data, as has been the case in other research (e.g., Sheridan, Chamberlain, & Dupuis, 2011). The drawing provided a collective memory for the participant and interviewer, however additional notes were kept by the interviewer for follow up questions, which were hidden from the participant so as not to distract them from the narration.

It has been argued that timelines risk oversimplification of the data and narration (Boyd, Hill, Holmes, & Purnell, 1998). Therefore, the present research design included the visual timelines as a method for enhancing the narrative interview and assisting the participant, and not for the generation of data to be analysed. Integrating the timeline method in this way has many benefits. For example, it provides a catalyst for reflection upon experiences over an extended period of time, which is of particular importance when including older participants in the sample (Carmichael, Duberley, & Porcellato, 2019). Such reflection can enhance self-esteem, heighten the participant's sense of identity (Yen-Chun, Yu-Tzu, & Shiow-Li, 2003), and increase satisfaction with the research process, which ultimately improves both accuracy and reliability (Glasner & van der Vaart, 2009).

When planning the research, the intention had been for participants to complete the timelines before the narrative interview commenced, similarly to Mazzetti & Blenkinsopp (2012). During the pilot interviews, the task was completed independently by the participant, and was notably distinct from the interview phase of the research design. Subsequent reflections on the interview design highlighted that this time seemed to hinder the development of rapport between the interviewer and participant, due to the independent nature of the task, and the silence during this time. Additionally, participants interpreted the term *"timeline"* in different ways, with one participant showing a chronology of events, and the other participant writing prose. This meant that participants were not equally able to benefit from the method in the subsequent discussion. Based upon this reflection, it was decided that future interviews would integrate this task into the interview process, allowing the participant to use the timeline as an aid to tell their story.

Drawing activities—and in particular the timeline method—present a seldom used tool in Psychology and Organisational research, which meant that participants had little to no experience of completing a task of this nature. Given this, additional steps were necessary to encourage the participant to engage with the process. Encouraging dialogue between the researcher and participant during the production of the timeline allowed the participant to ask questions, and further, allowed the interviewer to normalise the individual's performance on the task. The researcher gave positive comments and feedback about the timeline production, and also stated their awareness of the difficulty involved in remembering experiences that may have been particularly sensitive. For example, the researcher explained that *"most participants struggle to recall such precise details"* and *"it's ok if some parts of your story remain unclear"*. Normalising participants' inability to recall details has been demonstrated to increase the validity of the data collected, as interviewees feel less pressure to falsify their recollection of events (Baxter, Boon, & Marley, 2006; Rimkeviciene, O'Gorman, Hawgood, & De Leo, 2016).

This integration also allowed the researcher to make suggestions about the design of the timeline, by discussing the ways it could be used in the narrative interview. It was suggested that participants construct the two timelines adjacent to each other on the same page, allowing the interview to explore the parallel process within the narrative (Langley, 1999). Designing the timelines in this way also provided the option for participants to use temporal bracketing to explore how one period of events may have led to, or informed another (Langley, 1999). However, as the construction of process data was not the aim of the research, this was not a mandatory aspect of the timeline development. Rather, this was simply an option for the participant to utilise, should it have helped the development of their narrative. Integrating the timeline method into the interview also provided the opportunity for both the researcher and the participant to return to certain aspects of the narrative for clarity or development of the career milestones during the narrative probing phase (Adriansen, 2012).

3.3.3 Reflexivity: Interviewer-Interviewee Relationship

As previously noted, the concept of insider status in the research scenario is often considered to be a positive aspect of LGBT research, and therefore many researchers within this domain do adopt the convention of disclosing their sexual and/or gender identity to participants. In the context of the present study, the researcher made the decision not to disclose their sexual or gender identity to participants unless specifically asked. Expecting that this topic would surface at some point, the researcher was prepared to discuss this freely with participants. However, much to the researcher's surprise, this topic did not surface during conversations with participants or gatekeepers within the participating organisations, and therefore this aspect of the researcher's identity was never disclosed.

Upon first meeting participants, the researcher did provide a summary of their motivation for conducting the research, as well as a short biography of their education, research and the geographical locations associated with this prior work. Additionally, many aspects of the researcher's identity were apparent based upon presentation. For example, as a white woman, some participants may have felt that the researcher could identify with minority experiences as a member of a marginalised group, however others may have felt that a minority status could not be qualified due to privilege associated with ethnicity. Additionally, the regional accent of the researcher may have been more familiar for some participants than others.

It can therefore be argued that there were many opportunities to establish commonalities and differences between the narratives and identity of the interviewer and the participant which helped to build a sense of rapport. That participants did not ask about the researcher's sexual identity perhaps indicates that this was not deemed to be an important part of the interviewer-interviewee relationship in the context of the study, or perhaps that participants had made an assumption about the researcher's identity themselves.

In addition to the sexual identity of the researcher, it is also important to discuss the importance of their career identity. The interviewer's own career

experiences could perhaps influence the interpretation of experiences disclosed by participants. For example, as a woman who has previously worked in a male-dominated industry, the researcher may have been more attuned to references of masculine work environments and the impact this can have on an employee. Further, alongside the doctoral project, the researcher participated in a committee designed to improve the diversity, equality and inclusion of staff members within the higher education institution they were situated. The awareness gained during this time regarding the experiences of minorities in such a working environment may have led the researcher to assume knowledge regarding participants' experiences in such an organisation.

Further, building upon previous experiences of conducting semi-structured interviews with LGB participants, the researcher felt a greater sense of ease and comfort with the current method, and found particular benefits of using the combined timeline and narrative method for building rapport with participants. The drawing activity created a sense of ease with participants, and provided a topic of conversation that was not directly related to the sensitive nature of the interview itself.

The timeline method also provided an effective tool for building relationships within the interview scenario, by using collaboration to enhance the feeling of trust and mutuality (Adriansen, 2012). Unlike a standard interview, narrative interviews that include the production of a timeline provide the participant with a sense of ownership over the interview process (Adriansen, 2012), which reduces the perception that analytical privilege is held solely by the researcher (Rose, 1997). Key events are articulated and noted by the participant, and are not decided by the interviewer. Therefore, in this interview situation, the analytical power is shared, and the interviewer and participant are situated closer in the landscape of power (Rose, 1997).

Upon reflection, the sense of analytical power and control felt distributed between the interviewer and interviewee, which the researcher had not felt was the case in previous studies. However in one case, the researcher felt that greater control was held by the participant. Reflecting upon this specific interview, there

were many factors that led to this perception, and which ultimately resulted in a feeling of discomfort by the researcher. Firstly, the interview itself had been difficult to arrange due to multiple requests to reschedule by the interviewee. Secondly, the interview was being held in their office, which hadn't proven to be a challenge for other interviews, however this particular participant was delayed on the day, which meant that the researcher had to wait to be collected without knowing how long this would take. Finally, once in the interviewee's office, the interviewer was asked to sit on a small chair that was far from their own, away from a desk, and low to the ground, giving the interviewee a superior position in terms of the space.

Concerned that the researcher's lack of visibility of the timeline may limit its effectiveness, the researcher suggested that they both sit together where there was space for two people, however the interviewee politely declined this offer. Because of the difficulties in arranging the interview, further attempts to redress any perceived power imbalance in this scenario may have presented a block to the data collection, and could have created tension during the interview. As a result, the researcher did not pursue this further, however it must also be noted that this discomfort did not necessarily detract from the content of the interview, but may have contributed to the participant feeling that they could freely open up about their experiences as they had some control over the direction of the interview.

It is important to note that not all interviewees demonstrated the same level of engagement with the timeline drawing activity. Whilst there was no specific reason that the participants within this sample should not have been able to participate, some participants simply did not utilise the timeline. However, even when the interviewee did not participate in the drawing activity, the piece of paper provided a useful tool for attracting attention. This meant that it was easier for the participant to be silent and reflect when necessary, and also allowed the researcher to look at the paper to think of new questions. This has been demonstrated to create a calm interview setting, with a pleasant pace, and a perception of flow (Adriansen, 2012). Participants who did engage with the timeline in the present

study provided positive feedback about its use, describing the method as *"cathartic"*, *"fun"* and *"interesting"*.

There were many examples of participants using the timelines and the paper in this way in the current study, including one participant who began to cry during the interview. Having the paper to look at and refer to during this time seemed to provide the participant with some space to experience their emotions in the setting, without feeling the discomfort of being watched by the interviewer. There were significant silences during this time—sometimes for up to 30 seconds—however the researcher believes this space would not have been created in a standard interview setting where the interviewee may feel greater pressure to continue talking.

In addition to the notes that were kept by the researcher throughout the process of data collection, a research diary was maintained throughout the entirety of the research project. This provided an invaluable tool to assist in reflecting on progress that was being made with regards to the intellectual and practical development of the thesis. Detailed reflections were documented immediately before and after each interview, which included feelings and apprehensions about the upcoming interview, thoughts and feelings about how the interview unfolded, and anything that was gained intellectually and personally in the process.

In doing so, the researcher identified aspects of the interviews that they found to be emotional or difficult themselves. This was particularly the case within interviews where participants began to cry, or spoke about instances of severe depression and suicide attempts. Though none of the participants asked for advice or guidance during this time, the responsibility to help them, particularly with follow up emails, was strongly felt. Following such interviews, the interviewer contacted the supervision team, and arranged meetings to discuss the experience of interviewing in such circumstances, and support was provided by the supervision team in all of these instances.

3.4 Participants

This section includes an overview of common challenges related to LGBT sampling, the recruitment strategy that was utilised, the demographic information of the recruited participants, and the ethical considerations that were at the forefront of the research design. The section concludes with a reflexive comment regarding the process of sampling for the present study.

3.4.1 Sampling Challenges

Sampling presents an issue for many researchers investigating socially stigmatised or concealed populations (Hart-Johnson, 2017), such as LGBT communities (McFadden, 2015), which often results in smaller than desirable sample size (e.g., Lucassen et al., 2013; Sherriff, Hamilton, Wigmore, & Giambrone, 2011). For example, the transgender community is relatively small compared to LGB populations, and may lack visibility even within LGBT networks (Barclay & Scott, 2006). Further, discrimination and stigma associated with the transgender identity may mean that such individuals are less comfortable participating in research (Davis, 2009). As a result, many additional steps were taken to maximise participant engagement.

Firstly, practical procedures were implemented to increase participant engagement. For example, all interviews were conducted in the participant's work environment, and were done so discretely in a room that was booked without reference to LGBT research. It was also ensured that participants were not incurring any expenses, and the interview timings remained flexible to allow participants to select their most desired time for the interview (Lucassen, Fleming, & Merry, 2017). Additionally, all recruitment materials utilised inclusive language (e.g., stating that anybody who identified as non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender could participate in the research) in order to maximise participation of those who do not necessarily identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This further enhanced the opportunities for intersectional considerations during the data analysis phase by including those who are not regularly given a voice in the research (Cole, 2009).

In addition to these practical steps, other procedures were implemented to help build trust between the researcher and the participants. For example, transparency in the research process was prioritised, and it was ensured that only ethical and supported communication channels were used (Hart-Johnson, 2017), such as existing mailing lists used only by LGBT Network Chairs. Additionally, the researcher utilised personal contacts within organisations to establish recruitment opportunities. This approach was particularly useful in overcoming concerns about minority communities lacking trust in researchers (Napoles-Springer et al., 2000; Silvestre et al., 2006).

3.4.2 Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited from LGBT networks within 3 large organisations in the United Kingdom. 19 participants were recruited from a higher education institution, 15 were recruited from a government organisation, and 6 were recruited from a professional association and awarding body. In order to uphold the conditions of full ethical approval for this research, participant and organisation anonymity is maintained in the reporting of this study.

A summary of the research and an invitation to participate was sent to the network Leader or Chair within each organisation (Appendix A). Following receipt of consent from the LGBT network Chair or Leader, recruitment materials were distributed amongst the members by the leaders of the network. Such materials included a short recruitment email, a full participant information sheet (Appendix B), information about the ethical approval of the research, and information about how to arrange an interview. Network leaders in two of these organisations assumed the responsibility of organising the interviews on behalf of the researcher. Participants were also given the opportunity to contact the researcher directly to organise the interview if they preferred, however none of the participants arranged their interview in this way. Participants in the third organisation were asked to contact the researcher directly to organise the interviews.

All participants were provided with an additional copy of the information sheet at the start of the interview, and were asked to complete a consent form in

front of the researcher (Appendix C). Following the interviews, participants received both a verbal and written debrief (Appendix D).

3.4.3   Sample Overview

The sample consisted of 40 professionals, who were recruited from 3 large organisations. The researcher recognises that whilst identity markers are often externally ascribed, they are also interpreted internally (Martinez Dy, Marlow, & Martin, 2017). Additionally, using binary identity options can often exclude the voices of non-binary individuals (Dickey et al., 2016) and those who self-identify outside of established categories (Nicholas, 2019). Therefore, free-text demographic information was collected, and respondent articulations of sex, gender identity, ethnicity and sexuality are utilised for reporting purposes.

In terms of the sexual and gender identities of the participants, the sample self-identified as 8 cisgender lesbian females, 26 cisgender gay males, 1 cisgender bisexual female, 1 cisgender bisexual male, 2 transgender lesbian females, 1 transgender bisexual female and 1 non-binary pansexual participant. The mean age of the participants was 39.

In terms of the ethnicity of the participants, the sample self-identified as 8 White participants, 22 White British participants, 4 White European participants, 1 White/Mixed European participant, 2 Pakistani participants, 2 Mixed [ethnicity] participants, and 1 Chinese participant. All 5 participants who identified as non-white also identified as cisgender gay males.

A tabular overview of the sample is provided in Appendix F. Due to the lack of ethnic diversity in the sample, this information has been omitted from the overview to protect the anonymity of participants. Whilst there was variation in the sample with regards to age, it became apparent that including age ranges in the overview significantly increased the likelihood of individuals becoming identifiable when considered next to other aspects of identity for which there was less diversity (e.g., bisexual or transgender identity). For this reason, age ranges have also been omitted from the overview in Appendix F.

3.4.4 Ethical Considerations

Whilst it can be the case that participants benefit from sharing their experiences with a researcher (Sikes, 2012) one must acknowledge the importance of ethical considerations in a research project in order to avoid any harm, wrongdoing or risk to participants. The nature of the current study, and the sensitive content of the interviews, demanded the highest level of ethical approval in order to protect both the researcher and the participants.

Prior to interviews, participants were provided with information regarding the study, and were asked to sign a consent form that specifically detailed what would be involved in the study, that they would be audio recorded, how their personal information and data would be stored, and how data will be used in future publication. Crucial to this process was the provision of information—and a subsequent discussion—regarding the maintenance of anonymity and confidentiality. Confidentiality in the research context refers to the protection of raw data, whereas anonymity refers to the protection of the participant's identity (Bell & Bryman, 2007).

To ensure confidentiality, the recorded data was collected and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. All raw data was stored on the researcher's university storage system only, and was encrypted to ensure that they remained confidential. All interviews were transcribed at the researcher's earliest convenience, after which time voice recordings were destroyed. Transcripts were then redacted and anonymised as soon as was feasible. Protection of anonymity of both the participating organisations and the participant's identities was of great importance throughout the research. Pseudonyms have been provided for all participants, and the organisations have not been named.

Further, due to the likelihood of emotional responses to the topics discussed in the interviews (e.g., experiences of disclosing one's sexual identity for the first time), the researcher prepared a thorough distress policy for the unlikely event that a participant became uncomfortable during the interview, giving them the opportunity to withdraw from the research process if they so desired (Appendix

E). Further, the researcher included information in the debrief package regarding support systems both within and outside of the participant's organisation, should they wish to seek any additional help without the researcher's knowledge. Though participants did become emotional during the study, they were insistent on continuing the study and declined the opportunity to pause or cease the interview.

Following thorough consideration of the ethical issues involved in the research process, ethical approval was granted by the University Research Ethics Committee: (Ref: 2018-4979-7277).

3.4.5   Reflexivity: Sampling

As already noted, the researcher utilised their contacts in different organisations in order to gain access to LGBT networks and their leaders. Existing relationships with such gatekeepers had been established in advance of the research project through other work experiences. It could therefore be argued that the engagement of the participating organisations was due to previous work relationships and career experiences, and that this process may have been more difficult for researchers who seek to work with a group of individuals to which they have no affiliation - career or otherwise.

In all three organisations, the network leaders assumed the responsibility to contact members of the network with the recruitment information. The network leaders in two of those organisations further saw that the interviews were arranged in-house, and that the timing and room booking was arranged by a member of their organisation, within the parameters set by the interviewer (e.g., number of interviews that were feasible in one day). This is likely to have influenced the extent to which participants felt the research was endorsed by their network leaders, and by the organisation as a whole. It would therefore be reasonable to assume that the success of the process, and the large number of participants recruited, is in part due to the signalling of endorsement from the organisations.

Finally, the researcher had previously worked with one of the organisations on a Masters research project in 2017. In that research, nine members of their LGBT network were interviewed over the telephone regarding their experiences in that specific workplace. Five of those previously interviewed participated in the

current study, however little reference was made to that previous study during the interview, which is perhaps because the previous interviews were conducted via telephone and so there was less assumed familiarity with the researcher.

The reflective research diary provided the opportunity for the researcher to document their thoughts and feelings before and after the interviews with participants they had previously met for a prior research project. In doing so, this allowed the researcher the opportunity to reflect on any impact that this may have had on the process of rapport building in the interview itself or the subsequent interpretation of data, however no impact of familiarisation became apparent during this process.

3.5   Data Analysis

This section provides an overview of the data analysis strategy. Whilst the process of data collection involved discussion of the timeline generated by the participants—allowing for construction of a narrative of their experiences—subsequent analysis aims to further understanding of the way in which the participants create this narrative. This means that the participant themselves embarks upon a process of meaning-making during the interview which produces data, which are subsequently used in a process of meaning-making by the researcher (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2012).

The narrative interview technique produces data that is not bound to a single analytical procedure. Instead, the selection of the data analysis technique must be driven by the aims of the research and the demands of the current study. Thematic analysis—summarised as a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006)—is arguably the most common method of analysing narrative interview data (Maitlis, 2012). Within this approach, the emphasis is on the content of the text (or *what* is being said) rather than the structural or discourse analysis (or *how* it is said) (Patterson et al., 2012).

Further, thematic analysis was deemed to be most appropriate for the current study as it allows for continuous comparisons between sets of narrative based upon recurrent themes (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016), and therefore

provides the flexibility to look for similarities and differences in experiences within the sample. Other forms of qualitative analysis, such as grounded theory and phenomenology, are deemed incompatible with narrative interviewing techniques as they often strip the research story of critical narrative dimensions (Bryant & Lasky, 2007; Gill, 2014).

Unlike template analysis, which is also used to analyse narrative interviews (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000), thematic analysis assumes no prior themes, but remains flexible enough to allow for a comparison across experiences from other minority groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis provides a coding function which can bring concepts into focus when they may otherwise diffuse in the narrative structure of the data (Frank, 2000).

The process of thematic analysis is discussed in the following sub-section, followed by a description of the steps taken during the analysis process. This section concludes with a discussion of the reflections of the researcher throughout the process of transcription and data analysis.

3.5.1   Thematic Analysis

Braun & Clarke's (2006) 6-phase method of conducting thematic analysis begins with a familiarisation stage, whereby the researcher familiarises themselves with the interview data. The second phase of the analysis involves generating initial codes that summarise short segments of the data in a meaningful way, allowing data to become organised into meaningful groups. Once this initial coding is complete, the third phase involves collating the codes into potential themes. Phase 4 involves reviewing the themes to ensure that those with insufficient data are either removed or collated into a different theme, and also to ensure that each theme is sufficiently independent. Phase 5 involves defining and refining the themes to ensure that the essence of each theme is captured. The final phase described by Braun & Clarke (2006) is the summation of themes into the production of the final report.

Interpretation of data is arguably one of the most substantial tools for a researcher when utilising an intersectional methodology (Bowleg, 2008). Intersectional analysis should explore similarities and differences in the experiences

of participants, and should not interpret key themes as representative of universal experience. However, thematic analysis aims to summarise all data into common themes and patterns, removing them from the wider narrative context in which they were discussed. Additionally, thematic analysis does not encourage the researcher to consider who does and does not mention the key themes. For these reasons, additional steps were taken to enhance the intersectional sensitivity of the analysis process, which are noted throughout the following overview of the analysis process.

3.5.1.1 Application of Method

Firstly, the researcher familiarised themselves with the data by transcribing all of the interviews, and reading them multiple times. During this time, the researcher made a series of notes about initial ideas relating to the data, which were summarised in a coding matrix, detailing significant events that participants mentioned (e.g., age at which identity is first discussed). Such reflexivity and familiarisation with the data was deemed key to ensure that the data is not fragmented and removed out of their narrative context during the process of thematic analysis. Reflexivity was maintained through the data analysis process through documentation of notes and reflections on the process, and regular discussion with the supervisory team about the role of the researcher in this process.

Following transcription, all transcripts were redacted and uploaded to NVivo 12, and the text was initially coded using a free-coding technique. At this stage of analysis, data were coded inclusively of surrounding text, so as not to lose the context of the coded text (Bryman, 2001). In vivo coding—the generation of codes based upon the actual spoken word of the participant (Manning, 2017)—was used as much as possible to capture the original language used by participants.

The codes were then arranged into an initial grouping of themes. This involved conceptualisation of key terms from both the theory upon which the research is designed, and also participants' own language. For example, participants may have referred to stereotypes directly, however in some cases they may have

described strong beliefs others hold about aspects of their identity, such as *"butch appearance"*. Generating thematic groups therefore required the researcher to use their awareness of common stereotypes within the literature to identify that this was indeed an example of such attitudes.

Another example of this interpretation process emerged with reference to specific industries. In some cases, participants referred to typically *"masculine"* or *"feminine"* industries, however in other cases the researcher relied upon previous research of occupational stereotyping, and other references such as *"male-dominated"*, to observe similarities in experiences across the data set.

The difference between perceived and actual career barriers was identified through language of the participants. Perceived career barriers were indicated through terms such as *"I would be…"*, *"I thought…"*, *"I felt…"* or *"I wouldn't have…"*. In contrast, actual career barriers were indicated through phrases such as *"I could not…"* and reference to experiences of discrimination that prevented individuals from progressing.

At this point, the researcher began to consider how the codes may be combined into overarching themes, and an initial thematic map was produced. Themes were loosely positioned within a hierarchy, however this remained flexible to allow for later iterations and development. At this stage, codes that did not appear to fit with the major themes identified were collated under a 'miscellaneous' theme, as it was not appropriate to discard codes at this early stage of the process.

Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the first iteration of this thematic map. Figure 1 shows the themes relating to stereotypes, and Figure 2 depicts those relating to general career experiences. At this point of the data analysis, the distinction between gendered and non-gendered stereotypes was emerging, as well as the general impact of stereotypes on the perception of career barriers (PCBs) and actual career barriers (ACBs). Further, career experiences and transitions appeared to be driven by external events, the importance of location, and internal challenges such as identity turmoil and identity development at work.

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Stereotypes
├── Gender
│   ├── Content
│   └── Learning
├── Non-Gender
│   ├── Content
│   └── Learning
└── Impact
    ├── PCBs
    └── ACBs
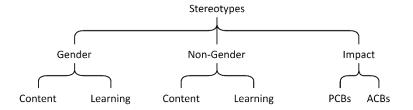
Figure 1: First iteration of thematic map – Stereotypes

Careers
├── External events
│   └── Gererational differences
├── Impact of turmoil
├── Location
└── Identity development at work
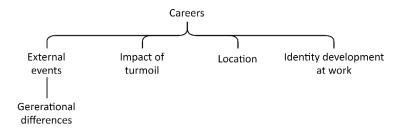
Figure 2: First iteration of thematic map – Careers

The next phase of the analysis process involved reviewing the themes and their suitability. At this stage, an updated thematic map was created to reflect this refinement (Figures 3 and 4). During this process, the theme relating to the impact of stereotypes was separated into the impact of gendered and non-gendered stereotypes, and merged accordingly (Figure 3). Further distinctions became apparent in the content of gendered stereotypes, such as those associated with traits/behaviours, and those associated with appearance. Further, the concept of job/career crafting was identified within the themes, and themes relating to identity turmoil were further divided into the manifestations and impact of such experiences (Figure 4).
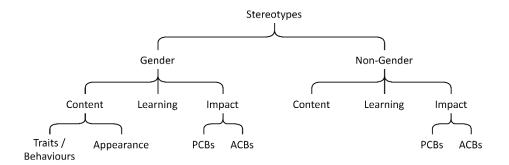
Figure 3: Second iteration of thematic map – Stereotypes
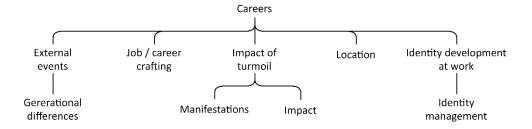
Figure 4: Second iteration of thematic map – Careers

The next phase of refining and defining the themes then culminated in the definition of clear relationships between the themes, and final names were assigned to them (Figures 5 and 6). At this stage, strategies of identity management and career crafting that had previously been captured within the careers map were identified as attempts to overcome the impact of stereotypes, and therefore the sub-theme 'strategies' was incorporated into the stereotype map (Figure 5). Further, specific manifestations and influences of identity turmoil were identified and named (Figure 6).
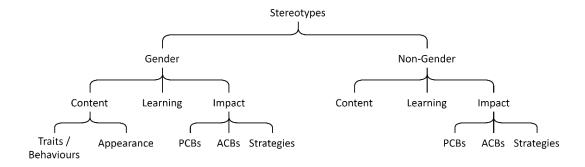
Figure 5: Final thematic map – Stereotypes
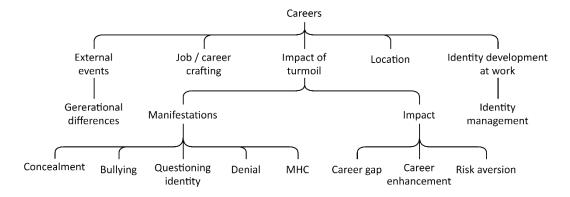
Figure 6: Final thematic map – Careers

At each stage of thematic map generation, the data and the emerging key themes were also considered in the context of participant's narratives. This involved considering who was contributing to the dominance of certain themes, and who was not, and provided an opportunity to reflect on the multitude of identities that were encompassed within the sample. To make this possible, participants' self-reported identity markers—such as gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, age group—were ascribed to each transcript, so that each of the themes could be clearly separated into those who have experienced it, and those who have not.

For those who did or did not experience the key theme, the narratives were returned to in order to identify other aspects that may have impacted this. This is deemed particularly important when considering differences in experiences of those with different sexual and gender identities. In particular, research demonstrates the importance of considering unique experiences of bisexual participants outside of lesbian and gay participants' experiences, in order to contribute to a more robust literature on bisexuality (Pollitt et al., 2018). This method contributed to the identification of additional findings, such as the importance of timing of identity turmoil experiences on the impact on career development.

It would not be feasible to include all potentially relevant identities in the analysis for this research, and therefore it is recommended that specific aspects of identity are focussed on during the analysis process (Warner, 2008). These decisions were made throughout the analysis process depending on the emergence

of salient identities that should be included in an intersectional analysis. Key aspects of identity that appeared to interact to impact the career experiences of participants were sexuality, gender identity and age.

In line with the final phase of Braun & Clarke's (2006) process, the themes were developed into the findings chapters of this thesis. The researcher's approach to the organisation of data remained flexible throughout this process. However, in deciding on the presentation of the findings in the thesis, it became apparent that the themes were grouped in a way that lent themselves to presentation within the format of the research questions. Themes relating to stereotype content, stereotype impact, and the interaction of stereotypes and careers could be clearly identified and differentiated within the thematic maps, and therefore the decision was made to compile the empirical chapters according to this structure.

Finally, it became apparent during data analysis that whilst the four non-cisgender participants also identified as non-heterosexual, there was little to no reference made to sexuality during their career narratives. As a result of this, the data regarding gender identity are discussed separately to data regarding sexuality in the remainder of the thesis.

3.5.2 Reflexivity: Data Analysis

The existing research synthesised three research domains: LGBT identity, stereotypes, and career experiences, which were each born from differing philosophical perspectives. Synthesising these domains, and utilising an interpretivist paradigm to explore these phenomena, provided the opportunity to unearth different perspectives and provide alternative viewpoints for understanding LGBT career experiences. Understanding the impact of differing philosophical underpinnings on the current research required a reflexive approach to the review of previous literature, as well as to the design of the study.

Scholars have argued that such triangulation of disciplines is necessary to effectively understand social problems (Cohen & Duberley, 2020), thereby lending support to this approach. However, it must also be acknowledged that there are both theoretical and practical challenges that are caused by applying the perspectives of different disciplines (Romm, 1998). For example, it could be argued

that tensions were apparent in the analysis process, particularly when it was necessary to identify commonalities in themes based upon the researcher's understanding of positivist literature, and the language that is typically used in these research domains.

Conversations with the supervisory team throughout the process of data analysis allowed for discussion of any biases in interpretation, including the influence of positivist literature and associated terminology. The redacted transcripts, as well as the process of analysis, were shared with the research supervisors, who were able to provide feedback about the extent to which the coding was reflective of the data, and in turn the extent to which the themes were reflective of the codes.

Though it is necessary to recognise such influences of interpretation, this process was not intended to remove or negate all biases. Instead, it allowed for the identification of any preconceptions and overinterpretation, therefore bringing reflexivity to the forefront of the analysis process. Influences on interpretation, such as the existence of prior research or others' terminology, should not be considered a critique of such research, but an element of subjectivity within interpretivist research that one must accept.

Further, the maintenance of a research journal throughout the data analysis proved to be effective not only to document reflections about trends that had emerged in the data, but also to bring greater awareness to the impact that the data analysis process has on the researcher. This highlighted the difficulties that the researcher felt during the process of transcription when the audio recording included upsetting or distressing accounts from the participants. For example, knowing which interviews were hardest to conduct for this reason made the process of transcribing them somewhat harder too.

Such feelings later resurfaced during the free coding of the text which required careful appraisal and interpretation of the text. In many cases, this evoked a sense of responsibility for retelling participants stories within the narrative context they were intended, and not stripping the emotion or circumstances from

their narratives. Again, full support was provided by the supervisory team throughout this process.

3.6   Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an overview and discussion of the methodology and method utilised in the present research. The generation of the research design and procedure was based upon a thorough understanding of the underlying research paradigm and its associated assumptions. Additionally, the use of the narrative interview and timeline methods were discussed in light of their supporting literature, and the application of the methods in the context of the current research has been evaluated.

The chapter further provided an overview of key sampling challenges in this research domain, the steps that were taken to overcome them in the recruitment strategy, the demographics of the sample and the ethical considerations that underpinned the research design and sampling. Discussion is provided for the strategy of data analysis, and the importance of intersectional considerations during this process. The chapter further highlighted key sites of reflexivity, including the identity of the researcher, the process of developing the interviewer-interviewee relationship, reflections on the sampling process, and finally with regards to analysing the data.

The following chapter is the first of three that will present the empirical findings of this research. Chapter 4 focusses on the content of internalised stereotypes and how they are learned, providing a response to the first research question. Chapter 5 then summarises the themes relating to the impact of stereotypes on career experiences, thereby responding to the second research question. In response to the third and final research question, Chapter 6 examines the extent to which perceived stereotypes interact with actual career barriers, and the importance of nuances in experience.

Chapter 4   Research Findings: Perceived Stereotypes

4.1   Chapter Introduction

This chapter is the first of three that are dedicated to the reporting of the empirical findings from the research. Due to the integrative nature of the data, discussion of the findings with reference to key theories is reserved for the subsequent Discussion chapter.

This chapter outlines the findings of the research study that assist in responding to the first research question:

In what ways do LGBT individuals perceive stereotypes that are based upon gender and sexual orientation?

In order to respond to this research question, two key themes are examined in this chapter; *stereotype content* and *learning about stereotypes*. Section 4.2 outlines the content of the main LGBT stereotypes that were identified by participants. This provides a reference for further exploration of the impact of these stereotypes in subsequent chapters. Section 4.3 then outlines the way in which individuals have gained awareness of, and in some cases have adopted, these stereotypes. This chapter concludes with a summary of these themes and a response to the above research question.

4.2   Stereotype Content

Throughout the career narrative interviews, stereotypes of both gender and sexuality were frequently referred to. This section investigates the content of the stereotypes identified and internalised by the interviewees, particularly focussing on those that were most frequently mentioned and emphasised. This provides a reference for further discussion about the impact of stereotypes in subsequent chapters. As the content of the stereotypes differed significantly depending on identity, this section discusses the content of specific stereotypes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and non-binary participants in turn.

4.2.1   Lesbian Stereotypes

Lesbian interviewees articulated an awareness of the fact that whilst heterosexual women and girls are commonly stereotyped as feminine, they were often subject to stereotypes of reduced femininity. Emma shared how attributes stereotypically associated with being less feminine would be conflated with non-heterosexuality by peers in the schoolyard:

"in the schoolyard you know if a woman is being aggressive or powerful, it's like "oh she must be a lesbian" and it's like "ok in the worst case scenario, if I sort of assert myself or am confident in speaking up or doing these things, then people think I'm a lesbian, well they're right so, that's fine"" (101; lesbian female)

Emma felt that others would interpret assertiveness and aggression as an indication of non-heterosexuality, suggesting that such typically masculine attributes are considered to be stereotypes of lesbians. Further, assumptions regarding lesbian identity were often made based upon their appearance:

"I am aware that I am gay, and I prefer to present myself in a sort of less unequivocally feminine way and those things- I often conflate those things, but I'm also aware that a lot of other people conflate those things" (101; lesbian female)

Supporting previous research, Emma alludes to a common conflation of lesbian identity and a less feminine appearance or presentation (e.g., Einarsdottir et al., 2015). Due to the prominence of such stereotypes in society, participants often indicated that appearance can be used as a signal for sexuality. This signal can act as an aid for disclosure by removing the need to verbally disclose one's sexuality. In the below quotes, Dianne reflects upon specific aspects of her appearance that conformed to this stereotype:

"I think then because I would have matched a stereotype very certainly… you kind of have to do that in your 20s don't you?" … "we were very visibly lesbian, in whatever that sort of- you know, hair on a number one, Doctor Martins, all of that stuff" (218; lesbian female)

Dianne suggests that stereotypes regarding lesbian appearance include short hair and specific clothing. Also of note in the above extract is Dianne's use of the phrases *"don't you?"* and *"you know"*, which imply that the interviewer should be well aware of these stereotypes due to their prominence in society, and that

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further elaboration is not necessary. Others echoed these common stereotypes throughout their discussion:

"in Germany it's much more common for women to have short hair… whereas here, 9 out of 10 women who have short hair are lesbians… or even certain styles of dress that immediately shout "I'm gay"… whereas in Germany that's not the case… and so in Germany I didn't feel- in terms of my appearance, I didn't feel quite as odd… not fitting in… and I'm glad that I didn't recognise quite how bizarre I must have looked to many people when I first came here." (207; lesbian female)

Here, Sarah highlights the strength of the association between women's appearance—specifically their hairstyle and clothing—and assumptions about their sexuality in the UK. However, as she grew up in a country where such associations were less prominent, Sarah did not recognise this until later in life, and so decisions regarding her appearance were not influenced by such stereotypes.

Further reiterating the conflation of appearance and lesbian identity, Emma recalled an experience whereby her classmates had tried to identify who in their cohort may identify as lesbian by listing *"all of the girls who … were quite ugly"*, which she described as a *"big stereotypical nightmare"*.

Others who referred to themselves as being or appearing feminine noted that they did not conform to the common stereotype of lesbians:

"in the 90s… I went to a disco and I was the only woman there in a skirt, and everybody started at me… I was the weirdo because I had long hair and I went to a disco in a skirt… So I was a bit of an outsider in the really pure lesbian context… because I was too feminine, but at least I could blend in… but I've always liked girly things… and then it means that I don't have to be really out, but it does mean you have to tell somebody… so pros and cons." (209; lesbian female)

Ruth suggests that appearing to be *"too feminine"* removes the signal to others about her lesbian identity. Others, such as Janine, further echoed Ruth's sentiment that such feminine presentation can create both benefits and challenges with regards to disclosure:

"there's always that minor stress of having to come out and there's always someone new that you have to steer into the conversation that you're not straight if you're not obviously- if you're not what people physically feel they would identify as a gay person, then you tend to have to come out a lot more." (223; lesbian female)

For both Ruth and Janine, non-conformity to lesbian stereotypes is based upon feminine appearance. Both extracts demonstrate that lesbian participants feel as though non-conformity to stereotypes provides them with choice over disclosure, however it also increases the pressure to reveal their identity through other mechanisms (e.g., verbally). These findings support previous research which has demonstrated that women who do not embody typical assumptions of lesbians in an organisational context are regularly assumed to be heterosexual, which creates challenges for individuals from both within and outside of the LGBT community (Einarsdóttir, Hoel, & Lewis, 2015).

Thus far, this section has explored the gendered stereotypes that lesbian participants felt subject to and have internalised about their identity. Whilst some did suggest that they are subject to stereotypes regarding typically masculine attributes, the significant majority of stereotypes identified by lesbian interviewees were more closely related to non-feminine physical appearance and presentation.

In addition to these gendered stereotypes, lesbian participants felt subject to a common stereotype that they will not have children. Some, such as Janine, felt that others made this assumption about them, based entirely on their sexuality, and used this to make further assumptions about their career trajectory:

"I don't want to have kids, but I think it's interesting how one of my previous supervisors just assumed I won't want to have kids… which is a thing. And then in a very underhand- in that kind of- essentially an insulting way, but I don't think he would have meant it to be insulting… but we were talking about career progression and he said "'cause a lot of your peers are going to be going off and having kids, and there's always a last woman standing thing in that you'll get promoted because you haven't taken time off" which is bullshit. It was insulting to me in the assumptions made." (223; lesbian female)

Others felt that assumptions were made about their sexuality because they do have children. For example, Dianne shares an experience whereby colleagues had made an assumption about her sexuality based upon the knowledge that she had a child:

"I've also had a lot of experience of people- straight people being angry and irritated… "well you said you were a mother"… so they assume I'm straight, and

then there's the "oh well you didn't tell us that"... well that was your assumption."
(218; lesbian female)

Dianne describes her colleagues' negative feelings of anger and irritation, which suggests that they interpret her choice not to verbally disclose her identity as dishonest and somewhat deceitful. This finding supports previous research that demonstrates that not having children is a common stereotype of lesbian women, and that lesbians who do have children often evoke confusion in others (Colgan et al., 2008; Losert, 2008).

Finally, lesbian participants indicated a general perception that non-heterosexual identity was often negatively stereotyped:

"I was always kind of aware of the little things that people said that were erm… that were not very nice or were unnecessarily mentioning a person's sexuality" (101; lesbian female)

Whilst the content of such negative stereotypes was not further elaborated on, interviewees felt that their lesbian identity "*perhaps wasn't a good thing*", based upon a common rhetoric and perceptions in society.

4.2.2   Gay Stereotypes

The gendered stereotypes of gay men were often discussed with reference to reduced masculinity. For example, Jason referred to stereotypes of gay men in terms of the absence of particular behaviours:

"when my cousin found out she said "oh yeah that doesn't surprise me, when you were a young boy you weren't very masculine"" (216; gay male)

A lack of stereotypically masculine attributes was deemed to be an indicator of Jason's gay identity by his cousin. Jason's peers further suggested that they became aware of his sexuality because he *"didn't like sports"*. Others further echoed the sentiment of these stereotypes, indicating that the stereotypes of gay men are often characterised by the lack of particular attributes or behaviours, such as athleticism or assertiveness. Reflecting upon an incident where a new colleague had been surprised by his experience and achievements in his career, Ryan recalled that he felt others see gay men as *"younger, less experienced [and] less authoritative"* (206; gay male).

In these cases, it seems that participants were referring to stereotypes of gay men in terms of the absence of typical masculine traits and behaviours, reflecting research which demonstrates that stereotypes of gay men are often characterised by the absence of masculinity (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2001).

Participants often discussed their awareness of these stereotypes at a young age in a negative manner, whereby typically feminine behaviours or mannerisms would induce negative reactions from others, such as bullying at school. However, interviewees later described such stereotypes in a positive way, with reference to specific feminine traits which they considered to be beneficial. For example, some outlined the common stereotype of gay men as being *"compassionate"* and *"empathetic".* Robert discussed the benefit of this common perception in an industry he had previously worked in, which involved working closely with bereaved families:

"one positive thing career wise about being gay, was that I probably had a lot more compassion than straight colleagues … there are quite a few gay men and I think it helps with the compassion that you can show" (204; gay male)

In addition to the gendered stereotypes of gay men, participants referred to other commonly held assumptions that they feel subject to and had internalised. Many indicated a conflation of aspects of their behaviour or character, and assumptions regarding their gay identity. For example, Steven describes himself as flamboyant, and also suggests that others interpret that as an indicator of his sexuality:

"I'm a bit more flamboyant, so I didn't necessarily have to say it for people to know it to be true, and it's not that I've hidden it but you hear some people say things like "oh I'd never have guessed" and that's just not something that people say to me" (205; gay male)

Others felt that the absence of particular behaviours make them *"less stereotypically gay"*. In the below quote, Anthony suggests that by displaying sensible behaviours, and being perceived as a sensible person, he is able to distance himself from stereotypes of gay men:

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"people often, in the past would say "Oh I didn't think you were gay", and you know there's a stereotype of well if you're not mincing down the corridor then you're not gay, and to be seen to be sensible and gay is a positive role model … So I'm, erm… although I don't walk into a room and announce I'm gay, I'm often quite keen for people to know that, because I think it helps break down stereotypes." (115; gay male)

Anthony appears to want to distance himself from negative stereotypes of gay men which are linked to femininity and effeminacy, however he does this by being sensible and professional within the work environment. He thereby suggests that negative stereotypes of gay men that he has internalised are incongruent with professionalism, and by displaying these professional or *"sensible"* behaviours he is not conforming to such stereotypes. This finding supports previous research which demonstrates that gay men are stereotyped as lacking professionalism (Brower, 2013).

Whilst the vast majority of these stereotypes were related to stereotypical behaviours or attributes of gay men, individuals within the sample did allude to the fact that a stereotypical appearance of gay men does exist. However, participants focussed on how closely they feel they match this stereotype, and not on descriptions of such appearance. In the below quote Ryan expresses his surprise that others do not recognise him as a gay man based upon the way that he presents himself:

"I sometimes laugh at the fact that people don't always get that I'm gay, because I sometimes think with the way I present that a lot of people would just get it" (206; gay male)

In contrast to this, Jacob expressed that he does not believe he conforms to the stereotypical appearance of a gay man. In the below quote, Jacob is contrasting himself with a gay male colleague who he refers to as having *"a lot of piercings and he used to wear his hair in a way that is unusual".* Jacob had stated that others in the department reacted negatively towards this colleague, as they perceived him as not being *"gay in the way that they thought was acceptable":*

"I don't necessarily look gay… That's probably a controversial thing to say in those terms, but I- when I [work with senior colleagues] I still wear a dark suit, and a dark tie, and I keep my hair in a conservative style" (106; gay male)

It seems that Jacob is suggesting that his colleagues believe there is an acceptable way to be gay in a professional environment and therefore there is also, by implication, an unacceptable way to be gay. Jacob further suggests that the reason he did not receive the same negative treatment as his colleague is because he conforms to an acceptable way to be gay. Further echoing this, Ryan shares a scenario whereby a colleague was comparing him to another member of staff who she did not like:

"she didn't like another member of staff who was gay, and that's alright- she didn't like the way he was as a manager- she said to me "but you're different- you don't make a big thing out of being gay"" (206; gay male)

This finding supports research which demonstrates that men who embody the stereotypical gay body at work, such as the manager in Ryan's scenario, are vulnerable to negative behaviours, such as bullying and prejudice (Einarsdottir et al., 2015). In Jacob's case, such awareness may have influenced his decision to not *"necessarily look gay"* at work.

Finally, gay males became aware of negative perceptions of gay men in society during identity development. Whilst the specific content of such stereotypes was not elaborated on in great detail, interviewees shared the impact of their awareness and—in some cases—internalisation of these perceptions. For example, Richard discussed his experience of being bullied at school, and not feeling as though he could defend himself because he felt that he *"deserved it"* for being gay. Leo further echoes this sentiment:

"I think when you grow up as a gay person, you just internalise all of the crap that is thrown at gay people, because you're a kid and that is what happens … I don't think there's any way that when you grow up with all of this that you don't internalise any of it" (109; gay male)

In both Richard and Leo's cases, it appears that they have adopted negative assumptions regarding gay men. Leo further notes that, as he adopted such stereotypes, he began *"acting against the community"* by *"not being involved in the*

gay community". Having internalised a belief that being gay was not a good thing to be when he was younger, Leo continues to distance himself from the gay community, suggesting that he still suffers with internalised homonegativity.

4.2.3   Bisexual Stereotypes

The current sample included two bisexual participants; Tessa and Matthew. Whilst Tessa referred to stereotypes less frequently during the career narrative than others in the sample, Matthew did not refer to them at all. Tessa's awareness of stereotypes of bisexual individuals was not based upon gender, but was in fact focussed on others' assumptions regarding the truth of her sexuality. One of the stereotypes that Tessa references is that bisexuality is a temporary phase, or a *"blip"* in a person's life:

"if I was to break up with my girlfriend and then marry and have children with a man, then that would be considered just like a blip in my life… and that you don't sort of carry your sexuality throughout all of your relationships." (110; bisexual female)

In addition to the assumption that bisexuality is a temporary phase, Tessa referred to a commonly held stereotype that bisexual women are assumed to be straight, whereas bisexual men are assumed to be gay. Tessa further elaborates on the perception of bisexual women as concealing heterosexual identity:

"in my head I felt like I could say "I'm not just one of those girls that tries to get attention in the club by kissing other girls"- it's almost like a double-edged sword, where I don't want that to be people's perception of me, but I also think it's a really stupid perception for other people to have. So I think I was just wrestling with that a bit." (110; bisexual female)

In support of previous studies, Tessa alludes to an assumption that bisexual women are concealing their heterosexual identity, and the purpose of such concealment is to gain attention from other people (Mize & Manago, 2018; Yost & Thomas, 2012). Tessa felt as though she was *"wrestling"* with the extent to which she challenges this common stereotype and ultimately it seems that this had a lasting impact on her:

"I kind of almost didn't want to make too much of it, because I didn't want people to think I was playing into the stereotype, so I think that's also partly why I just stayed fairly laidback about it" (110; bisexual female)

It appears that these stereotypes of bisexual individuals reinforce a perception that bisexuality is not a legitimate identity, as the common perception is that bisexual women are concealing a heterosexual identity to gain attention, and bisexual men are concealing a homosexual identity. Tessa discussed the impact of this perception with regards to proving her identity to other people, and how being in a relationship with somebody of the same sex legitimises her sexuality to other people:

"I guess when I got into my first proper relationship with a girl, which was 2 years ago, that's when it kind of solidified… not in my own head, I think I've always thought about my sexuality in the same way, but in the sense that it's almost more legitimate to other people" (110; bisexual female)

Tessa further indicates that in the absence of a relationship with a woman, she feels greater pressure to verbally disclose her identity:

"especially when I was not in a relationship with a woman, there was no part of my identity, unless I said that I was bisexual, that you could see that I'm bisexual. I almost felt like there was a need." (110; bisexual female)

These two quotes indicate that, outside of awareness of sexual relationships or explicit disclosure of identity, bisexual identity is not signalled to others, as there are no apparent stereotypes that could indicate this identity. As Tessa expresses in an earlier quote, she feels she is *"wrestling"* with not wanting to reinforce the stereotype of using her sexuality to gain attention by disclosing her identity, and also an awareness that, due to a lack of other signals, she is likely to be assumed to be straight if she does not have a female partner and does not verbally disclose her identity to others. It seems that the lack of stereotypical appearance of bisexual individuals increases the pressure to disclose their identity through other mechanisms, however participants also report the risk of conforming to additional negative stereotypes, such as not being truthful about their sexuality, but using it to draw attention to themselves.

4.2.4 Transgender and Non-Binary Stereotypes

Interviewees who identify as non-cisgender referred to stereotypes relatively infrequently compared to others. During childhood and before transitioning to their affirmed gender, participants had internalised the stereotype that gender nonconformity was considered to be indicative of their transgender identity. For example, Tracey, a female transgender participant, shares her attempts to conceal her gender identity in school, where others perceived her to be male:

"I was trying my best not to show the feminine side of me… and you know there were mannerisms so kids saying "oh that's a very feminine mannerism you just done"" (103; transgender bisexual female)

By avoiding or concealing stereotypically feminine attributes, and aligning with stereotypically masculine behaviours, Tracey did not feel that her gender identity was apparent to those around her. This becomes evident as Tracey reveals that her mum was shocked to learn of her gender identity:

"I told my mum and dad the same day about my gender change that I was going to do, my mum said "but you was into like building and Lego and bricks and construction"" (103; transgender bisexual female)

This extract demonstrates that a common stereotype of transgender individuals is non-conformity to behaviours and interests associated with their sex assigned at birth. As previously demonstrated, lesbian and gay stereotypes are also characterised by non-conformity to gender stereotypes. Gemma, also a female transgender participant, discusses how she used these stereotypes based upon sexuality to change the gendered expectations others had of her at school without disclosing her transgender identity:

"when I was a teenager I came out as gay at school at like 13 or 14… as an attempt to try and drop off any sort of expectation of being manly. I don't think I was particularly into men in any way shape or form, but by saying I was gay, nobody expected me to do the boy stuff" (303; transgender lesbian female)

By telling others that she was gay, Gemma was able to change others' expectations of her, without having her stereotypically feminine behaviours conflated with a transgender identity.

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It would seem that non-conformity with stereotypes based upon a person's assumed gender was indicative of their transgender identity. Conformity with stereotypes based upon assumed gender therefore allows individuals to conceal their gender identity when they choose to. However, participants did not discuss stereotypes that they feel subject to or had internalised based upon their transgender identity following transition.

The current sample included Sam who identifies as non-binary. Throughout the career discussion, Sam did not refer to stereotypes of non-binary individuals, suggesting that there are no specific behavioural or appearance-based markers of such non-binary identities. However, Sam did feel subject to, and restricted by, common dichotomous perceptions of masculinity and femininity, based upon their assumed gender. When others assumed Sam to be female, their behaviours were interpreted as gender non-conforming:

"up until about 12, I was quite a tomboy, which isn't- I didn't do sports, but I did a lot of science, and board games, and reading a lot of science fiction, and just lots of things that people thought were boyish… I didn't like dolls, or make up or a lot of the things that people assumed were girlish" (221; non-binary pansexual participant)

Further, gendered expectations of femininity were also apparent to Sam in terms of appearance. When others had assumed Sam to be female, they felt subject to specific stereotypes, which they deemed to be *"restrictive"*:

"women had long hair, and they wore fairly conservative clothes. If they wanted to get dressed up and sexy to go out, it was a certain type of dressed up and sexy… there wasn't a lot of room for self-expression or different clothing, and it felt really restrictive. It felt like… I wasn't allowed to be female unless I was a specific type of female, and that really was a challenge." (221; non-binary pansexual participant)

It is evident that the gender stereotypes that Sam feels subject to are both behavioural and presentational, and that they feel there is an expectation to conform to such restrictive norms. However, non-conformity to either masculine or feminine presentation (or apparent androgynous presentation) was not deemed to be an indicator of Sam's non-binary gender identity, but instead led to misrecognition of Sam as male or female by others.

4.2.5 Summary

This section has examined the content of stereotypes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and non-binary individuals. Lesbians reported internalised stereotypes of reduced femininity, and gay men reported internalised stereotypes of reduced masculinity. It could be argued that such findings support the Implicit Inversion Theory (Kite & Deaux, 1987) and research that indicates that such seemingly inverse gender stereotypes are held by lesbian and gay individuals (Clarke & Arnold, 2017; Einarsdottir et al., 2015). However the nature of such gendered stereotypes internalised by lesbian and gay participants is different. Lesbians reported significantly more appearance based stereotypes (e.g., clothing and hairstyle), whilst gay males referenced many more stereotypes based upon their behaviours or attributes (e.g., being effeminate, compassionate and flamboyant). This suggests that behaviour or trait based inverse gender stereotypes are more prominent for gay men, and appearance based inverse gender stereotypes are more prominent for lesbian women.

Bisexual participants did not discuss awareness of gendered stereotypes in relation to their identity, and did not report being aware of—or having internalised—stereotypes based upon appearance. These findings support previous research that suggests that no archetypal 'look' exists to represent bisexuality (Taub, 1999) and therefore bisexual individuals are less recognisable (Clarke, Hayfield, & Huxley, 2012). However, the findings indicate that this presents a challenge for bisexual individuals, as formal disclosure could be interpreted as conformity with other negative stereotypes associated with bisexuality, such as concealing a different identity, or seeking attention.

Many lesbian, gay and bisexual interviewees further referred to an awareness of generally negative stereotypes of non-heterosexual individuals. In accordance with theories of internalised homonegativity (Meyer, 2003), it is apparent that participants had become aware of, and had internalised, negative assumptions and stereotypes of non-heterosexual people.

Transgender participants also reported being subject to inverse gender stereotypes during childhood and before transitioning, and therefore utilised

societal stereotypes of masculinity and femininity to either indicate gender non-conformity or conceal their gender identity. Finally, the data indicates that internalised non-binary stereotypes are also associated with gender non-conformity, however the lack of stereotypes associated with non-binary or androgynous identity often leads to misrecognition of non-binary people as male or female.

4.3   Learning about Stereotypes

This section investigates the ways in which individuals became aware of both gendered and non-gendered stereotypes about LGBT people, and as the previous section demonstrates, adopted these stereotypes themselves. Participants learned about stereotypes through two key mechanisms—observations and reinforcement of behaviours—which are each discussed in turn.

4.3.1   Observations

Interviewees described the way in which they observed gender stereotypes being enacted at home by their family. Below, David discusses the somewhat dichotomous roles performed by his parents:

"they both fell into really typical gender roles, particularly for people born in in the 40s and 50s in that she was a stay at home- she had a career until she had kids, and then she didn't work until I was in junior school… and so she was always part time work, and my dad was always full time work when he could get it with his business, and so they had very particular gender roles… they shared the housework, but mum did most of the caring for us as kids… dad was the kind of breadwinner but also did some of the caring" (301; gay male)

David felt that his parents had distinct roles in the home and with regards to employment, and he refers to this as *"gender roles".* David later noted that this observation taught him that he should pursue a career and follow in his father's footsteps.

Others described observing their siblings and learning from their gendered behaviours. For example, Carl observed performances of masculinity from his *"very heterosexual brothers",* which created additional pressure for him during his identity development. During the time when Carl was becoming aware of his own

sexual identity, he felt influenced by his brothers' opinions, which in turn created a pressure to conform to their presentations of masculinity. At this time, Carl began a relationship with a woman, and felt that this was important to him, as he "*didn't want to disappoint [his brothers]*".

Participants further recalled observing gender stereotypes in educational environments, as they were being reinforced through career narratives and social pressures. Below, Tracey reflects upon her science-based childhood academic interests, which were often associated with men and masculinity:

"I remember seeing a picture of a woman doing science, and it was like the first time ever. I thought… wow… because it's almost like, erm… you know it's almost like… you see- you don't see so much now but back then, it was always guys with test tubes, you know, or sort of… all the subjects were very male" (103; transgender bisexual female)

In addition to learning gendered stereotypes through observations of family at home, participants also observed others' reactions to discussions about LGBT individuals. For some, such as David, parental reactions to *"queer roles"* signalled to him that such identity was not encouraged:

"my identity was something that- that's why I hid it, because the gendered roles in my family were clear, and there wasn't any sort of queer roles around me at all… I only ever saw queer roles either in music or on TV… and even then at that time my parents made a point of highlighting that they were queer roles… so they weren't encouraged" (301; gay male)

Others, such as Leo, observed others' reactions to LGBT identities during instances where LGBT rights were being debated politically, which meant that he was exposed to anti-homosexual dialogue:

"when I was growing up and coming into maturity and puberty or whatever, that was precisely the time when there were the big debates on Section 28… I still remember the bile when I was like 11 or 12 and, you know- I don't think there's any way that when you grow up with all of this that you don't internalise any of it, so, erm… and that's aside from what's said on the playground or what's said by parents" (109; gay male)

Leo suggests that observing such reactions and anti-homosexual dialogue leads to the internalisation of such negativity.

4.3.2 Behavioural Reinforcement

Several participants discussed others' reactions to their behaviour throughout childhood, noting how they picked up on cues from a young age about *"how you should behave based on the way people perceive you".* Such reactions indicated the content of LGBT stereotypes to participants.

Supporting previous research, reinforcement of behaviours occurred in many scenarios, including at home with family (Sumontha, Farr, & Patterson, 2017), in education environments and at work (Finsterwald & Ziegler, 2007; Hintermann, Markom, Üllen, & Weinhäupl, 2014; Moser, Hannover, & Becker, 2013). Some felt that stereotypically gender-appropriate behaviours were being encouraged and reinforced at home. For example, David shared many experiences by which his behaviours that were deemed appropriate based upon his gender were being reinforced, including manual work with his dad, which he describes as *"boyish"* behaviours that he felt were being *"instilled"* into him. Below, David discusses his experience of reinforced gender stereotypes through the toys and clothes that were given to him by his family:

> *"pretty much every hand-me-down was a matchbox car, or toys or the clothes I wore were hand-me-downs from my brothers… football shirts or whatever… so I was very much put into the box of boy… and so a boy had these characteristics, these behaviours, these aspirations and ideas" (301; gay male)*

Whilst David did not necessarily detail his reaction to these behaviours, he did share that he found an *"outlet"* for his identity in the Arts, which he kept private from his family. In contrast to this, Gary rejected an attempt by his father to reinforce gender conforming behaviours:

> *"my dad was very kind of "well I know you're bright so I can get you a job down the pit… you might even be a Deputy" and that was the maximum of his aspiration for me… He was kind of saying "your identity needs to be kind of here" and I was like "well I really don't want to go to the pit… I don't want to do that."" (212; gay male)*

It seems that Gary's father was reinforcing the association between his male identity and masculine interests and aspirations. Though Gary rejected such attempts despite pressure from his family, the experience and expectations of

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others had indicated to him that others held assumptions about what boys and men should do under the umbrella stereotype of masculinity.

Others described reactions to behaviours that did not align with stereotypes commonly assigned to their sex, which were not being encouraged. For example, Gemma recalls being told she was not allowed to attend a concert, and knowing that this was because the performers were a girl-band, and this was not deemed to be gender appropriate by her parents:

"I remember being obsessed with the Spice Girls but they were doing a show in Wembley or whatever, and my sister was allowed to go and see it but I wasn't… and I remember it was specifically because I was a boy… that was a- knowing that that was the reason" (303; transgender lesbian female)

Further, Gemma became increasingly aware of being excluded from prescribed gender activities:

"my mum was a Brown Owl in Brownies, and so every Friday she would do her Brownies group, and she- so I would have to sit in the corner and watch all the girls do things- Brownies games or whatever, and I had to sit in the corner and watch on my own like a little weirdo… which was always great fun… not. Yeah and I very explicitly knew the reason why, and it didn't feel right, and obviously that can be really demoralising" (303; transgender lesbian female)

For Gemma, this exclusion served to reinforce the perception that some activities were appropriate for girls and not for boys, as her family were discouraging her gender non-conforming interests.

Interviewees also shared experiences in adulthood whereby gendered assumptions were being reinforced. For example, Sam reflects on the experience of living in a culture of *"strict gender roles"* and noticing that men would assume them to be female, and would catcall them based upon this assumption:

"it was just another one of those cases where people treated me based on the way that I looked… in a way that I found odd or strange, or just couldn't understand why people would make those assumptions between the way that I looked and the way I ought to be treated or spoken to" (221; non-binary pansexual participant)

Whilst Sam did not discuss the way in which they reacted to this catcalling, it seems to be apparent that the experience reinforced the perception that their behaviour and appearance garnered particular reactions from others.

Participants further indicated that reactions to gender non-conforming behaviours became conflated with assumptions regarding LGBT identity during later stages of identity development. However, the specific behaviours that they were sanctioned for was different for lesbians, gay men and transgender individuals. Below, Emma recalls her mother's negative reaction to her disclosure:

"my mum really cared, and I think didn't really believe me and thought it would be a phase and was also very upset about it, and told me not to tell anyone, and began- I think she was- I think she was really worried and she started to be quite strict about what I wore and she sort of- I think there was one point where I sort of- I think I was wearing some old jeans and one of my dad's old jumpers, and she wouldn't let me go out until I'd changed into something that was more… feminine" (101; lesbian female)

Emma recalled that her mother's restrictions on her clothing was a response to her disclosure of her sexuality, and an attempt to discourage her from conforming to lesbian stereotypes of less feminine appearance. None of the lesbian participants recalled sanctioning of non-feminine or masculine behaviours or attributes during childhood, only non-feminine appearance.

In contrast to this, gay males and transgender females within the sample reflected upon experiences of sanctioning of gender atypical behaviours and interests. For example, Gary reflects upon a report from his teachers to his parents:

"it was always very clear that I was different… One of my very first school reports says "[he] should play with the boys more" which makes me cackle with laughter now, but I was always really like "no I don't want to be around the boys I want to play with the girls" erm… So the usual kind of non-gender-conforming play. I played with dolls, I played pretend games, I hated football… I was just really your archetypal sissy really… just "I aint doing that"" (212; gay male)

Unlike others, Gary did not conform to gendered pressures to change his behaviours or interests. Finally, Gemma, a female transgender participant, recalls a scenario whereby she felt she could not reveal her favourite colour because she felt that others would make fun of her:

"I remember the question was "what's your favourite colour?" and I would have been like- maybe 8 or 9, and being about half way round this thing, and as it was coming round to me I knew I couldn't say pink because it would get me made fun

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of… saying brown [laughs]… which is not a great colour… I don't think anybody's favourite colour is brown… and I said it specifically because I couldn't say pink… and that's a memory that has stuck with me for nearing on 2 decades, because it was the realisation that I knew I couldn't do these things because of the way the world perceived me… which is not great… and you sort of internalise these things and hide them" (303; transgender lesbian female)

It is apparent that Gemma felt others would react negatively to her favourite colour as it is typically deemed to be associated with girls and not boys. It is also apparent that Gemma had begun to regulate her own behaviours based upon the reactions, and presumably sanctioning, from those around her.

4.3.3   Summary

Supporting Social Role Theory's postulation that stereotypes are learned through intergroup relations (Koenig & Eagly, 2014), participants became aware of stereotypes of gender and sexuality through various mechanisms from a young age. Firstly, interviewees recalled observing behaviours during childhood that either mimicked gender stereotypes, or penalised those who challenged them. Supporting theories of internalised homonegativity (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Staples et al., 2018; Szymanski et al., 2008), participants became aware of general negative perceptions of LGBT individuals through conversations heard in the media, and also around them by their families and friends.

Another mechanism for learning stereotypes was through reinforcement and sanctioning of behaviours, in the form of positive feedback for gender-typical behaviours and negative feedback or bullying for gender-atypical behaviours. Over time, association between gender non-conformity and stereotypes of lesbian, gay and transgender individuals became apparent. For lesbian interviewees, sanctioning of gender-atypical appearance was then interpreted as sanctioning of stereotypical lesbian identity. For gay men and transgender interviewees, sanctioning of gender-atypical behaviours and interests were interpreted as sanctioning of stereotypical gay or transgender identity.

4.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the key findings that assist in responding to the first research question:

In what ways do LGBT individuals perceive stereotypes that are based upon gender and sexual orientation?

In order to respond to this research question, two key themes were identified. The data examined in the first section pertained to the theme stereotype content, and demonstrated that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals within the current sample each feel subject to different stereotypes. The second section outlined the data that was derived from the theme learning about stereotypes, and highlighted the ways in which participants learned and internalised stereotypes of gender and sexuality.

The content of stereotypes—and particularly the finding that LGBT individuals internalise different *types* of stereotypes—provides an important reference for the following chapter, which explores how such stereotypes have impacted the career experiences of the interviewees.

Chapter 5   Research Findings: Stereotype Impact

5.1   Chapter Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings of the research study that assist in responding to the second research question:

To what extent do stereotypes based upon gender and sexual orientation present perceived career barriers for LGBT individuals?

To review the impact of stereotypes on the perception of career barriers, this chapter explores the themes relating to occupational stereotypes, and the career experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and non-binary individuals that are based upon stereotypes. In order to explore the impact of stereotypes on the perception of career barriers, the focus remains on anticipation of career experiences, and not on concrete (or actual) career experiences. Participants' experiences of actual career barriers are further explored in Chapter 6.

Section 5.2 examines the stereotypes of various occupations that were commonly discussed by participants. The remainder of the chapter explores the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and non-binary individuals in turn, and the impact of stereotypes on their perceptions and anticipations of career experiences. The chapter concludes with a summary of these themes and a response to the above research question.

5.2   Occupational Stereotypes

In outlining their career narratives, participants frequently referred to stereotypes of occupations and industries, and those working within them. Such stereotypes were often described as being commonplace in society, and were frequently implied or alluded to with subtlety, due to the expectation that they are indeed commonly held.

Participants depicted stereotypes of many occupations as being gendered. For example, some industries or occupations were referred to as *"typically male dominated", "masculine", "butch"* or *"macho"*, and others as *"typically female dominated"* or *"feminine"*. Occupations that were stereotyped as masculine or

male dominated included banking, as well as physically demanding occupations, such as engineering, mining, construction, uniformed forces and what were referred to as *"industrial"* occupations, and were often referred to as *"less friendly"* than female dominated occupations.

Female dominated work environments that were commonly referred to by interviewees included nursing, cabin crew, hairdressing and the Arts. These environments were regularly referred to more positively, specifically as being more *"tolerant", "accepting"* and *"friendly"*. Below, Sam describes their perception of the difference between traditionally male and female dominated careers:

"I can imagine that some very traditionally male fields of study or careers, or departments even, would be less accepting than some female dominated ones"
(221; non-binary pansexual participant)

Participants further alluded to the fact that these gendered stereotypes are closely related to assumptions regarding sexuality. For example, men working within male dominated occupations were generally assumed to be heterosexual, whereas men working within female dominated occupations were assumed to be gay. In the below extract, Tim shares his perception of employees who work in heavy industry:

"And then you have heavy industry with mechanical stuff, and again you'd think they're all probably straight men" (201; gay male)

In contrast to this, nursing and hairdressing were referred to as having *"a bit of a reputation of being gay"*. Further, Carl describes his expectations of men working in the Arts:

"you'd think that the Arts is full of gay people, wouldn't you? It's just an assumption … I guess even working within the Arts you think "oh yeah it must be… men working within the Arts must be gay"" (203; gay male)

In these instances, participants demonstrate the relationship between gendered occupational stereotypes and assumptions regarding sexuality, by conflating femininity and perceived feminine occupations with gay identity. However, masculinity and stereotypical masculine occupations were not conflated with lesbian identity in the same way. This supports recent empirical research from

Hancock et al. (2020), who found that some occupations were stereotyped by non-LGBT individuals as *"gay jobs"*, however no occupations were stereotyped as *"lesbian jobs"*. Taken together, it could be concluded that the occupational stereotypes for *"gay jobs"* may be stronger than those typically regarded in the literature as *"lesbian jobs".*

5.3 Lesbian Career Experiences

This section reports the career experiences detailed by lesbian interviewees within the sample, including the impact of stereotypes and strategies used to navigate them.

5.3.1 Blending In

Many participants referenced stereotypes of lesbian women's appearance, and the way in which they have navigated such assumptions throughout their careers in order to conform to norms within the work environment. For example, Dianne reflected upon the changes she made to her appearance when she began her career:

"When I went to work in [my first job]… this wasn't conscious, but it clearly was… I changed how I looked completely… and I remember somebody saying to me "I want you to know this… I never would have known… you just can't tell" and what did I say to her? I went "oh thank you" [laughs]" (218; lesbian female)

Dianne had previously described her appearance as *"matching the stereotype",* however in this extract she alludes to the fact that changing her appearance removed the signal of her sexual identity to others. Removing the stereotypical outward signals allowed her more choice over disclosure:

"I didn't want people to know I was a lesbian as the first thing they knew about me, because there's so much more to me… although it is so central and important to my identity. I think I'd got so fed up of the responses I was getting, and I realised it was because they only had to look at me and they could tell." (218; lesbian female)

Dianne suggests that once others became aware of her lesbian identity based upon her appearance, this would be regarded as the dominant aspect of her identity by others. By changing her appearance, and removing this signal, she felt that her colleagues would place significance on other aspects of her identity.

Dianne further elaborates on the pressure that she felt to change her appearance and remove this outward signal to assist with the development of her career:

"I do wonder about how I changed how I look… I decided that I'd got to do that career wise, I had to look differently" (218; lesbian female)

Others indicated that their ability to outwardly conform to feminine stereotypes (and therefore not conform to lesbian stereotypes) was of benefit to them in the work environment. During the discussion of her career, Ruth made comparisons between her experience, and the experiences of two of her colleagues:

"maybe it was a conscious decision, I don't know why, but I ended up always looking more feminine… not massively so… but there was another woman on my course who was externally much more dykey in her appearance and behaviour… so we often had conversations about what it was like to be at Medical school as a gay person." … "I think it probably made it a bit easier. You know, now… with what I know… I don't think I would have come up against all of these microaggressions that this other person on my course came up against… because I could just kind of blend in" (209; lesbian female)

Here, Ruth acknowledges that her feminine appearance helped her to conceal her identity from others when she chose to, and that this helped her to avoid the *"microaggressions"* and other discriminatory experiences that her colleagues may have been subject to. This sentiment was echoed by Janine:

"I'd be interested to know whether more butch presenting women, for example, feel they experience more barriers… I don't know… or just assumptions made about them." (223; lesbian female)

Both Ruth and Janine suggest that their feminine appearance helped them to overcome or avoid some of the barriers that they may have faced in the work environment had they conformed to common stereotypes of lesbian women. This supports previous research which has demonstrated that individuals in stereotypically incongruent work environments employ assimilation techniques in order to blend in and conform to the majority (Fernando et al., 2019).

Some participants described the ongoing challenges that they face with regards to the impact of stereotypes of lesbians. For example, in the below extract,

Emma reflects upon the expectations of women in the workplaces and how she tries to balance these beliefs:

"I am sometimes conscious of feeling that I need to present myself in a slightly stereotypical way, otherwise people might think I'm straight, and then I wouldn't be very comfortable. Conversely, I am also trying to balance that with like, not just coming off as the gay one, so you know, this is kind of peek not girly outfit, but also I'm not wearing a tie... there's just something about trying to find a balance where it's like... people might- I suppose using stereotypes to try and encourage people to perceive you in line with your identity but therefore also being aware that you're reinforcing stereotypes in the process, which is not very helpful" ... "you know there's a meeting that I might get to go to in the next few weeks with a bunch of [senior leaders], and if I did get to go then I'd need to look smart, and would it be better in that meeting if I turned up wearing a nice suit, or if I turned up wearing a nice dress? And I have both, you know, that's fine, but there's a slight thing of "who are these people and what are they gonna think of me?" and there's the balance between me feeling comfortable in the way I'm presenting myself but also not putting myself in a position where I think people are judging" (101; lesbian female)

Emma describes a constant need to find a balance between conforming to the stereotype of lesbian women (i.e., by looking less feminine) in order to signal her identity to others, but also being cautious that in doing so she may be reinforcing the stereotype which also has negative consequences. Emma's reference to other people *"judging"* her less feminine appearance suggests that she is concerned that this may lead to discriminatory or exclusionary behaviours from others, particularly in the context of a meeting with senior leaders.

Emma had previously worked within an environment which was dominated by women and gay men, and where there was a stronger emphasis on appearance. During this time, Emma referred to the pressure to conform to feminine styles of dress:

"I remember getting an email ahead of the first [event] I did with them, which was explaining what the dress code was and it was like "the dress code is all black, no jackets for men" and then it was like "women, we love individuality in this [organisation] so like... big jewellery, big make up, all fine, but no trousers, you have to wear a skirt" and I remember being like "I'm sorry, what part of me being more comfortable wearing a pair of trousers- like you love individuality, as long as individuality means jewellery" and it was bizarre... I remember saying this to

someone and being like "this is ridiculous, I'd rather just wear a pair of trousers" and they were like "you can't do that"- you know I remember turning up to an [event] where I was like awkwardly in a skirt that I didn't want to be wearing … [it] sort of sometimes feels like, you're sort of being told to not look gay" (101; lesbian female)

Emma suggests that heterosexual or feminine appearance was valued in this work environment, and non-conformity to this style of dress was actively disallowed. This supports previous research which demonstrates that in some work environments, conformity to heterosexual stereotypes is demanded of workers in order to fit the corporate image (Adkins & Merchant, 1996; Riach & Wilson, 2014; Tebaldi & Elmslie, 2006; Witz, Warhurst, & Nickson, 2003) and non-heterosexual appearance is discouraged or even sanctioned.

5.3.2 Career Progression

Lesbian participants within the sample also described their anticipation that their identity would enhance their success in particular careers, due to the stereotypes associated with them. Below, Emma discusses the benefit of being perceived as more masculine within a leadership role:

"I think there is a benefit to being perceived as more masculine, because there is more license to display the kind of confidence and assertiveness that men are allowed to display, because I think I get put into that category" (101; lesbian female)

Emma alludes to the fact that stereotypes of lesbian women being masculine provide *"license"* for her to display certain attributes that are deemed to be important to be successful in a leadership role. This suggests that she feels she would not face the same sanctions as heterosexual women who demonstrate similar attributes. This lends support to previous research that demonstrates that perceived congruence of stereotypes creates a *pull* toward masculine work environments for lesbians (e.g., Schneider & Dimito, 2010).

Interviewees spoke about how perceiving a similarity between the stereotypes they feel subject to, and those of individuals within a certain career or industry, removes some career challenges. When discussing the opportunity to work for a company with two lesbian Directors, Janine spoke about the positive

perception that her identity would be *"embraced"*, and would not present a barrier to her in any way.

5.3.3 Summary

Lesbian participants described perceptions of enhanced career opportunities in occupations that are deemed more masculine, such as leadership roles, lending support to previous research that suggests that lesbians feel a greater sense of freedom about entering or endorsing a gender atypical career trajectory (Croteau et al., 2000; Fassinger, 1996; Lippa, 2002; Morgan & Brown, 1991; Schneider & Dimito, 2010).

However lesbian participants seldom referenced the role of stereotypes in creating the perception of career barriers, or a *push* from stereotypically incongruent professions. Most did refer to experiences of navigating common stereotypes of appearance, including changing how they look, when they entered the work environment. This may suggest that the lack of perceived career barriers is due to the individuals' ability to navigate perceptions using such identity management techniques.

5.4 Gay Male Career Experiences

This section reports the career experiences of gay male participants within the sample, who described many consequences of internalised stereotypes throughout their careers, and strategies that they had used to overcome them.

5.4.1 Fitting In

Many spoke of the career decisions they had made based upon the anticipation of not fitting in with the stereotypical type of person working within a specific industry or occupation. For example, those who felt subject to stereotypes of low masculinity spoke of their reluctance to work with an *"overly masculine"* demographic or in a work environment that they perceive to be *"full of testosterone",* because they did not feel they would comfortably fit in with the type of people who are likely to work in those environments.

Throughout his career narrative, Leo discussed his long term career aspiration to work in the uniformed forces. In the below extract, Leo describes the emergence of this aspiration, and his subsequent thoughts about it:

"there was part of me that just dreaded the idea of doing an office job, and like really flirted with the idea of whether I wanted to be a Police Officer… or… even in the Army, and like never- that's not something I've ever done. And I'm not entirely sure what role my identity played in that… I would expect it discouraged me at some point… because those are quite macho professions… at least when I was growing up" (109; gay male)

It becomes apparent in this extract that there is a *"macho"* occupational stereotype associated with the profession, and this is somewhat divergent with the stereotypes he felt subject to. In turn, this incongruence may have discouraged him from pursuing this aspiration. Below, Leo discusses the impact of this perception on him:

"jobs like being a Police Officer… I think they are much more… community based is the wrong term, but you kind of have to fit in, and the risk there is not fitting in, and it being a bit of a disaster is the result. And I suppose that does have some interplay with identity 'cause if my sexuality is a big part of my identity, that could be the reason for not fitting in" (109; gay male)

Here, Leo suggests that his sexuality may be a reason for not fitting in within the Police. Anticipating this negative experience, Leo decided against pursuing a career in the uniformed forces, in favour of training to become a Therapist, which he refers to as "*a form of directly helping people which isn't macho*". This allowed him to continue pursuing his interest and his desire to help others, without feeling that he does not conform to occupational stereotypes.

Sean further echoed the sentiment that the perception of not fitting in with colleagues can be *"off-putting".* Reflecting upon the fact that his employment contract was due to expire soon, he notes that whilst working within the banking industry would be a good opportunity for him based upon his experience, he anticipates that he would not fit into such an environment based upon stereotypes he is aware of:

"you often hear stuff about, you know… hyper-masculine culture, whether it be a tech firm or like… the highly driven investment… you know, Wolf of Wall Street kind of culture, where you know it's like really hard working- hard partying- they're all doing drugs and stuff like that, or yeah where it's all like hanging out with the boys and going fishing and going to a game and going to the strip club afterwards or whatever things people do- I would find… yeah it would be off-putting to me because I feel like I wouldn't know where to fit in in that" (111; gay male)

Sean references the specific behaviours he would expect from individuals within this environment based upon the stereotype of *"hyper-masculine culture".* In this environment, Sean may also be concerned that the boundaries between work and private life are somewhat blurred, as he indicates his expectation that colleagues would work hard together and also engage in many non-work related activities too. Sean may therefore be concerned that his own private life would become exposed, and that identity concealment may be more difficult.

Robert outlined the decisions he was making regarding his career after completing his degree in geology. Robert had previously suggested that his academic interests had led him to study a degree that he was most interested in. However, when he began the degree course, he noted that the other people on his course were *"really straight and macho"* and became aware that this is a likely reflection of the industry his degree naturally led him to. He then began to question whether he wanted to pursue this career, asking himself *"How's that going to go down on an oil rig? Am I going to be the only gay man on the oil rig?"*. This ultimately led him not to pursue that career after university, and instead he was unemployed for 6 months.

Others spoke hypothetically about their career options, and jobs they could potentially move to in the future. Reflecting upon his career interests, Thomas described the impact of the perceived stereotypical type of colleague in the workplace on his career decisions:

"If there was a job where I thought "oh, the money's really good, work's good" but if it was in an area where I thought it was going to be scary straight men all the time, it would affect me not choosing to go somewhere" (105; gay male)

It is apparent from the above extract that perceived non-conformity to the stereotypical make-up of the workplace, and fear of the subsequent social

exclusion, plays a significant role in Thomas' decision not to pursue a career in that area.

Charlie's career narrative provided multiple examples of the impact of the perception of incongruence in stereotypes, specifically with regards to the anticipation of not fitting in. Charlie had spent most of his career working within a HR role, for a variety of different companies. When he first qualified, he was living in a region that offered an abundance of opportunities in the oil and gas sector, which would provide him with a stable career path through which he could progress. However, his perception that this would lead to a work environment of *"primarily men"* discouraged him from pursuing this career path:

"it's an oil and gas industry, and the options that seemed available to me for HR were to go offshore. Didn't particularly see that as being an environment I wanted to be in. Just being offshore on a rig with primarily men in small confined spaces… I suppose I just didn't find that very appealing, which was why I decided to get a job in the public sector… because there isn't much else to do in [that city]" (112; gay male)

Charlie later reflected upon the perceived incongruence between his own identity and the stereotypical make-up of the industry, and the further impact it would have had in terms of identity disclosure:

"if you're willing to go offshore then it's quite easy to get the opportunities, so I kind of ruled that out- I didn't want to be spending 3 weeks away, probably having to conceal my sexuality- I know people that work offshore and to this day they conceal their sexuality" (112; gay male)

In the above quote, Charlie specifically notes that if he had pursued a career offshore, it would have been easier for him to get opportunities, and ultimately progress his career. It would be reasonable to conclude from Charlie's career narrative that a perceived incongruence of stereotypes, and subsequent anticipation of not fitting in, led to the perception that working in this environment would provide additional challenges for him, and the decision not to pursue a career in HR within oil and gas.

Reflecting upon the impact that this has had in other aspects of his career, Charlie described his aspiration to join the Navy Reserves, and his reluctance based

upon his perception that he would be *"surrounded by so many perceived straight men":*

"I just wouldn't join an organisation where I feel that I couldn't bring my whole self to work so... does that mean that there are ones that I wouldn't join? Yeah. Like I even toy with it now but I need to lose some weight... I wanted to join the Navy Reserves, and I put that off when I was younger, again because of my sexuality... because you know, you can't be LGBT, and even then when you could be, it was like... is that really the environment that I want to be in? Would I be comfortable in that environment? I'm not sure ... I don't identify as not being male, but being surrounded by so many straight- or perceived straight men... again I think it comes back to these close quarters kind of thing... it just doesn't appeal to me." (112; gay male)

Charlie insinuates here that not conforming to the dominant identity of his potential colleagues created the perception that this would be a challenging and uncomfortable work environment.

In contrast to these negative experiences of feeling they didn't fit in, some suggested a similarity between the stereotypes of individuals within their industry and the stereotypes they are subject to, based upon their identity. Participants reported that this created a perception that they were indeed *"part of the norm"*, or working within their industry was *"kind of expected".*

Interviewees further discussed the positive impact this had on their work experiences. For example, during his career narrative, Thomas recalled his period of employment as cabin crew with a multinational airline. He noted how his *"sexuality definitely affected [him] getting that [job], or rather affected [him] applying for it".* He recalled that, during his time within this role, he felt that he was part of the norm:

"the assumption is as cabin crew, that you are a gay man, and it's nice that people think you are the norm" ... "I probably enjoyed my time there so much because that is the only time when I felt like being gay is the norm" (105; gay male)

Thomas further describes the feeling of relaxation that emerged from being able to be himself at work, and feeling the acceptance from his colleagues as part of the norm:

"as cabin crew we just joke about, and everyone's in the same boat, and you can be really relaxed about a lot of things, whereas I watch what I say more here" (105; gay male)

It seems from these extracts that, whilst apparent incongruence between stereotypes of themselves and of an occupation can create a perception of not fitting in with a particular work environment, congruence between such stereotypes gave gay male participants the perception that their identity would be welcomed and embraced as a conforming identity.

Some participants described strategies that they employed to overcome these concerns regarding not fitting in within the masculine work environment. One such strategy included concealment of identity. For Robert, this was particularly prominent during his time at university:

"it was kind of quite uncomfortable, and the sort of people who were actually on my course… most of them were like really straight and macho and all the rest of it, so I never came out throughout university" (204; gay male)

It seems that the description of his colleagues as being *"really straight and macho"* was a significant contributor to his decision not to disclose his identity at University. Similarly, George indicates that his decision to disclose his identity changed when he moved to a male-dominated work environment:

"I kind of more or less in that space- more or less- not went back into the closet, but I became much more guarded about letting people know… there were a few course mates- women who I worked with on projects, but it was not that kind of environment anymore" (307; gay male)

George refers to being more guarded about letting people know about his identity, due to the change in environment. In addition to concealment of identity, others indicated career decisions that they made to overcome perceived career barriers, based upon non-conformity to occupational stereotypes. For example, David outlines the career aspiration he had when he was a young boy and was facing significant pressure at home to conform to gendered norms:

"I really wanted to be a Cat Rescuer, so I decided I really needed to be a Cat Rescuer, like a Fireman that rescued cats from trees… and I remember thinking "it's a

masculine job so therefore it's ok…" however I was going to do it in my own way"
(301; gay male)

Here, it is apparent that David is negotiating a balance between his career ambition, and conforming to gendered stereotypes of work, by crafting a specific aspect of a masculine industry and doing this in his *"own way".*

In addition to instances whereby his perception of incongruent stereotypes has led to a decision not to pursue specific careers, Charlie further reflected upon the impact of his perception of working with a certain type of person in organisations and industries on his career as a whole:

"there has been a reluctance to do anything where I find myself in close quarters with what I assume would be straight men, and I've avoided that… my career has been around women, and all of my- well, not [the restaurant], but all my managers have been women… All the managers I respected have been women. So… as a gay man am I more comfortable around women? Probably." (112; gay male)

Here, Charlie alludes to the role that his sexuality plays in feeling that he does not fit in in typically straight male work environments, and is more comfortable working with women. Charlie's experience demonstrates multiple instances of perceived incongruence between identity and occupational stereotypes, which has signalled to him the likelihood of encountering challenges on the associated career path.

5.4.2 Safe Space

For some, incongruence between stereotypes associated with their identity and occupational stereotypes led to a perception of intolerance toward their identity within those work environments. Specifically, participants perceived that not conforming to occupational stereotypes would increase intolerance of their identity, and that there would be less support available for them. In the following extract, Tim discusses his perception of the jobs that were consistently available to him:

"when I was looking for a more senior role, and looking at the types of jobs that were coming up, they would be things like factory work- you know safety within a factory or a building site, and I would be- is the word reticent? I wouldn't want to- is

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it because of how I'd be perceived? Potentially, yeah, because they are maybe seen as a little bit more- not as tolerant. That's the impression I get" (201; gay male)

Tim describes his perception of factory or building site work environments, which are traditionally stereotyped as masculine or male dominated, as less tolerant. Despite providing career opportunities for him, this perception dissuaded him from pursuing these opportunities. Jason also reflected upon his impression of certain industries based upon a perception that they are less friendly, and the way in which he would avoid them:

"there's certain industries in my mind that I just associate with being less friendly, and it might be completely wrong, but there is an uneven landscape… so construction and engineering I would have avoided… education I thought was quite friendly, and academia especially… [my degree area] I thought was quite- to be stereotypical I thought anything creative would be pro-difference and therefore pro-LGBT" (216; gay male)

It is apparent from these extracts that gay male participants were impacted by the perception of enhanced discrimination in such environments, which in turn leads to decisions to avoid them. In contrast to this, others within the sample indicated that the similarity between stereotypes based upon their identity and stereotypes of those within certain industries provides a signal for perceived safety and acceptance within the work environment. For example, Thomas noted that he perceived that his colleagues at the airline would be less likely to be homophobic than elsewhere, due to his perception that many gay men work within the industry. Below, Charlie discusses the impact of the convergence of stereotypes based upon his identity and of those who work in hospitality:

"I dare say that I thought the hospitality space was a safe space for LGBT people… Hotels seem to be full of particularly gay men… I mean working wise [laughs]." (112; gay male)

Charlie's assumption that the hospitality industry has a high proportion of gay men working within it appears to indicate to him a degree of acceptance toward LGBT people, and that this is a safe environment to work in. Further, Jason echoes this sentiment by describing the way in which his perception of artists encouraged his ambition to pursue such a career:

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"I don't know if maybe I wanted to be an artist because I thought they'd be more accepting, but I did think at the back of my mind "well if I become an artist, I'll be amongst people who are either gay or LGBT or cool with it, so that's great"" (216; gay male)

Perceptions of safety and acceptance by others often led participants to feel positively about being open about their identity, which is in contrast with earlier discussions regarding perceptions of intolerance and not fitting in. Interviewees described their perception of stereotypically aligned industries as spaces in which they *"can just be more free and open".*

Participants in the sample who had felt that their occupational interests were subject to stereotypes they did not identify with, often described decisions that they made throughout their career to minimise the impact of this, including choosing specific teams or departments that they deemed safer or subject to fewer or different stereotypes. For example, Jacob spoke of his ambition to work within law, but simultaneously being concerned about the attitudes of his colleagues within large law firms. Because of this, he made the decision that he would only seek jobs within small organisations, and within a specific department:

"it's the part of law that is closest to working in the creative sphere, because you're working with a lot of designers and university students... and I was working with people who were quite open-minded and liberal... There were other people from the LGBT community working in that kind of area... so that for me made me much more comfortable in my profession" (106; gay male)

Jacob's concerns were somewhat overcome by his decision to work within certain types of organisations, and departments which he perceived to be more *"open-minded and liberal".* Similarly, despite his concerns that he would feel much more *"insular"* in a *"lads"* environment, Steven referred to his current career ambitions as all being male dominated. He stated however, that in choosing the departments or industries he would work in, the *"type of male",* and specifically the proportion of *"alpha males",* would have the greatest influence over his decisions:

"I think politically speaking, the type of alpha male there is very different to the typical alpha male- those are about power, whereas the others are maybe more about showing off... so I don't feel like I would actively not fit in with that male environment." ... "because those are traditionally left-wing type fields, I don't feel

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that you get that kind of alpha male in that kind of environment… as you would with like a building site, or sales, or finance, or stocks and shares, where you traditionally think Wolf of Wall Street" (205; gay male)

Here, Steven is alluding to the qualitatively different stereotypes that different occupations are subject to, and that these stereotypes are the result of multiple factors, and not just the gendered make up of those who work within them.

Finally, participants spoke about how they would be less concerned about the impact of stereotypes on their career progression in industries or organisations that signal a moral standing. Michael indicates this below:

"previously I wouldn't have said that I would work in banking, but there are companies that are trying to make the profession better… and the same with tech… there are some companies now that are working in different ways and have a better moral standing." (306; gay male)

Michael suggests that in organisations that are demonstrating their commitment to ethical or moral contribution, he feels he would be protected from anticipated negativity or negative attitudes that may arise from perceived stereotypical incongruence. This is in contrast to the associations noted previously by Sean and Steven of masculine work environments with the *"Wolf of Wall Street"* which is typically associated with unethical and immoral behaviours.

Leo similarly reflected upon his decision to pursue a career in an organisation that he perceived to be male dominated, but also to have a reputation for being politically correct:

"What other people might refer to as political correctness sounds pretty great to people who are unsure about their identity" (109; gay male)

In these scenarios, it appears that participants had decided to pursue their interests, despite perceived incongruence, because they were able to craft their careers or occupations in a way that afforded them protection from anticipated negative experiences, and associated career challenges.

5.4.3   Perceived Glass Ceiling

Gay male interviewees within the sample further alluded to the impact of comparing themselves against the stereotype of successful people within certain

industries. For example, Steven outlined a common comparison of gay men with straight women, and his anticipation of being subject to the same glass ceiling effect that women commonly experience:

"But then you also have the stereotype of the gay man which is somewhat synonymous with the straight woman… like if you categorise people, the gay woman is somewhat synonymous with the straight man… and then when you look at discrimination in regards to gender, you would fit on the feminine side as opposed to the male side… so when it comes to the glass ceiling, you'd expect yourself to lie there" (205; gay male)

Specifically with reference to his ambition to work in a management role, Steven notes the following:

"I've always thought "hmm, maybe do I fit within this category where people don't expect me to be a leader because they see me as effeminate, whereas a masculine person is seen as a leader?"" (205; gay male)

Steven felt that others believe he may not be successful as a leader because he doesn't match the masculine stereotype. Steven notes that this perception may have been a contributing factor to his previous jobs not being *"particularly well paid",* and his lack of progression. The incongruence between stereotypes of gay men and stereotypes of successful leaders have been demonstrated in previous empirical research (Liberman & Golom, 2015). The above extract further demonstrates the way in which this impacts gay males' perceptions of success in such career pursuits.

Tim reiterates this sentiment, by outlining the impact that perceived misalignment with successful people within his industry had on him:

"I think it is having an impact on career development because I think for LGBT who hear those kind of comments, that feeds into confidence and whether you think you deserve to be in [the organisation]- whether you deserve to be in this kind of job… it feeds into what research you think you should do … It feeds into how you are seen by other people and whether you get put forward for a promotion. It feeds into whether you literally get funding for [projects] … I think it feeds into all of that stuff in quite complicated ways that's quite hard to put your finger on… 'cause it's not about somebody saying "you can't have this job because you're gay" but it is about reactions to you, and therefore how you might be seen if you go for a promotion or a particular job… but at the same time it's about how you see yourself… so that

affects what you think you should do or apply for… or what you think is legitimate."
(201; gay male)

Tim alludes to the complexity of the relationship between stereotype incongruence and perceived career barriers that lead to career-limiting behaviours, such as decisions not to apply for promotions. This quote reveals the multifaceted impact of divergent stereotypes on perceptions of career success.

In contrast, others pointed to the specific assumption that the convergence of stereotypes created the perception of enhanced opportunities. For example, Andrew shares his thoughts about his career that became apparent to him shortly after disclosing his identity to others:

"I came out quite young… to my mum when I was about 12, and she was totally fine with it, and I think that's when I started to think I could be a- 'cause I think I was worried about those things- so I think I was like "oh I actually could be like a Fashion Editor if I wanted to be one" or "I could, you know, do something arty" or blah blah blah" (108; gay male)

He later elaborated on this, and how he felt that a job within the fashion industry could now be a possibility for him, because when he was growing up he noticed that *"it's always gay people who work for fashion".*

In order to reduce the negative impact on career progression that individuals were anticipating, some participants, such as Christopher, felt that they needed to conceal their identity at work:

"I don't feel like I'm necessarily an extravagant kind of person, but I have felt that… at certain job interviews for example, I've thought "oh maybe I shouldn't- maybe I should just look more straight" (305; gay male)

Christopher felt that he should *"look more straight"* within this environment, presumably to minimise the risk of discrimination, and increase his chance of being successful at the job interview. Also of note here is the way in which Christopher describes himself as not *"necessarily an extravagant kind of person"*, indicating that he does not believe he conforms to common stereotypes of gay men, yet still feels he should alter his appearance to increase his chance of success. Others, such as Eddie, decided to conceal their identity to avoid losing out on career opportunities:

"I felt that work was work and private life was private life… and whilst they told me stories about their kids and their private life, there was no formal story for me to really engage with them… I could have engaged at some other points but I chose not to… because of this pressure to conform I suppose… that was key… and I didn't want to lose out on opportunities had I done that." … "I always wanted personal life to stay private in a sense because I think people judge… so there's an element of… it was my perception. I didn't want to miss out on opportunities." … "I think the best way to manage your networks here is to… vanilla yourself… in a sense" (215; gay male)

In order to avoid the experience of actual career barriers, such as not being offered career opportunities, Eddie chose to *"vanilla"* himself by not engaging with conversations about his personal life. This could be taken as an indication that, for Eddie, concealment extends beyond the act of not disclosing his identity, but also involves toning down aspects of his character or behaviour.

Others in the sample did not necessarily feel that they needed to conceal their LGBT identity, however they did adapt aspects of their presentation or behaviour depending on the situation. In the below extract, Ryan describes this adjustment:

"how you present yourself in some situations might be different to others- what you say in a meeting is different to what you say outside of it… yeah… all of that adjustment kind of stuff which I think LGBT people are quite skilled at 'cause they've had to be… they've learned to negotiate those tricky paths and we don't always get it right, but we can read a lot of situations fairly quickly and work out whether we can be open or not- whether it's safe or not… in that kind of situation." (206; gay male)

This seemed to be particularly prominent for Ryan, as he worked in an environment that was mostly made up of women and gay men, however the senior roles in his profession are *"dominated by men"* and *"they're not gay men either, usually… most of the more senior men that I know are heterosexual"*. It could therefore be assumed that Ryan manages and adapts his identity presentation depending on the groups of colleagues he is with, and the extent to which he believes he conforms with the group.

Ryan indicated that he tried to minimise the impact of stereotypes—and challenge expectations of gay men—by signalling his expertise and seniority to others:

"I started putting [my senior title] on my email signature, and on my door, because I kind of wanted people to know that… not because I wanted more respect but because… yeah it's quite important for them to know that, actually someone who looks like that and is gay, is in that kind of position… there's a signalling there" (206; gay male)

It appears that Ryan is trying to challenge assumptions about gay men and their lack of competence and professionalism, which has been documented in previous research (Brower, 2013). These assumptions further lead to decreased respect for gay men who behave in a gender-inconsistent way (Heilman & Wallen, 2010; Rudman, 1998). Whilst previous research has demonstrated that gay men conceal their sexuality to minimise the impact of these assumptions (Knopp, 1999; Rofes, 2000; Skelton, 2000), this extract demonstrates that signalling expertise to others using workplace identity management techniques is also used as a strategy to challenge these stereotypes.

Whilst Ryan indicated that he was trying to challenge stereotypes, others actively tried to conform to gay male stereotypes in work environments that they felt were aligned with stereotypes based upon their identity. For example, when working within a stereotypically female dominated industry, Steven recalls the following:

"to become more personable, and to try and make people like me more, I would actively ham up the "gay best friend" stereotype… the really flamboyant, saying lots of words you'd hear on Ru Paul's Drag Race… and talking about what people were wearing in a very positive way… noticing their haircuts and stuff… and actively trying to be more stereotypically gay to make people like you" (205; gay male)

Later reflecting upon the reason for actively trying to conform to such stereotypes, Steven noted the following:

"perhaps because I wanted a promotion, I wanted recognising, perhaps because it was my first job and I wasn't confident… whatever the reason was, I definitely hammed up my sexuality, for sure" (205; gay male)

In this scenario, it is apparent that Steven was actively trying to conform to positive stereotypes of gay men in order to enhance his progression in this work environment. It seems that whilst perceived incongruence of stereotypes led participants to avoid or challenge stereotypes to minimise the glass ceiling effect, perceived congruence of such stereotypes led some to exaggerate stereotypes in order to enhance career opportunities.

5.4.4 Signalling Sexuality

Whilst most participants discussed congruence between identity and occupational stereotypes in a positive manner (e.g., by enhancing opportunities and perceptions of fitting in), others made decisions not to pursue a specific career due to the confluence of their identity with a common stereotype of those within that industry, and concerns that their sexuality may become apparent to others because of their stereotypical role. During the discussion about his career, Alex shared his childhood ambition to become a Doctor. Over time he became aware that this may not be achievable for him based upon his academic achievement, and others had advised him that he may be better suited to pursuing a Nursing degree, where the academic requirements matched his school grades. Alex had initially become aware of common stereotypes of male gay nurses through his mother's career:

"One of the things that I was exposed to was actually really through my mum, because my mum was a Nurse, and that was one of the things that- as a stereotype, lots of gay guys do nursing… and yeah in terms of my sort of… I think there's a stereotype about these male gay Nurses" (220; gay male)

Alex then described the way in which this common stereotype dissuaded him from pursuing a career in nursing:

"I thought "well if I'm not going to be a Doctor then I don't want to be a Nurse"… maybe just 'cause I sort of didn't think it would be- I don't think I wanted to do that type of thing. But maybe it's my own prejudice in a way, but that's how I was exposed to it all… my mum's friends were gay male nurses and I always thought… I suppose it was me just not being- at that point I just wasn't comfortable with my sexuality… so I was just thinking "I hope I'm not like these guys"… which is a bit of a stereotype, and is probably my own really bad prejudices in a way… I just didn't want to be put into that box." (220; gay male)

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It seems that Alex was concerned about working in a role where his occupation may be considered a signal for his identity, or may lead others to make assumptions about his identity. In another example of this effect, Carl made a career decision based upon wanting to work in a role that would help him to be *"heterosexual presenting".* He had already turned down a scholarship for music, and had also made the decision not to study art at university, which had been his ambition until that point. Instead, he took a job with an insurance company, in part because he was feeling pressure to conform with his heterosexual brothers, and their stereotypically masculine career paths. Carl further noted how, as his relationship broke down and his gay identity became more salient to him, his aspirations for working at the insurance company also broke down.

Throughout his career narrative, Kevin described many of his interests, art-based hobbies and extra-curricular activities in arts centres as *"stereotypically gay things"* to do. His career, however, was based around maths and economics, and despite being successful, he didn't feel that he'd *"found a career or job that he really fit"*. In describing his approach to his career, he stated the following:

"I want to do it in- be who I am on my terms in my own space and time, rather than to fit anybody else's idea of what it should be" (114; gay male)

Kevin alludes to the fact that others have an idea of what or who he should be, and he appears to be uncomfortable with such a prescriptive stereotype. Whilst he did not elaborate further on whether this perception influenced his early career decisions, he later reflected on the way in which the development of his identity impacted his decision not to pursue a career that was more in line with his artistic interests:

"maybe if I was probably more confident and possibly better guided earlier on… I might have done things a bit differently. I might have chosen a degree subject- but I don't know what I would have- the obvious thing is something in english, but maybe something like product design of something… maybe something more arty and gay"
(114; gay male)

Kevin notes that his lack of confidence was one of the reasons he did not pursue *"something more arty and gay"*. He made this decision at a time when he had not disclosed his identity to others, and was not confident about it himself, and

therefore was concerned about the degree to which his occupation should signal his sexuality.

In contrast, Thomas considered the ability to signal his identity using his occupation as a positive side effect of his career:

"because I've come in and been quite open about being cabin crew before and you see that little flicker in people's eyes where they say "ah", so I know that's me out" … "I did always enjoy saying "oh I'm cabin crew for [an airline]" you know… and all of the assumptions that go with that, most of them are like "oh right so he's a gay man" (105; gay male)

Thomas indicated his enjoyment in using his career as a signal of his gay identity to others, due to the prominence of stereotypes within the industry. Thomas further demonstrates how family members also found that his career provided a signal for his gay identity:

"I remember my dad saying to me that people say "what does your son do?" and he- my brother's very like "grr man"… "and my other son does cabin crew" and people say to him "oh so he's gay?" and dad goes "yeah" [laughs]" (105; gay male)

Thomas suggests others perceive a dichotomy between his brother's perceived masculinity and stereotypes of him based upon his job as cabin crew.

5.4.5   Summary

Gay male participants reported feeling that their gay identity would be beneficial for progression and would increase their perceptions of inclusion within stereotypically congruent work environments or occupations, representing a pull towards such career trajectories, and supporting previous research that has indicated this perceived benefit in such professions (Croteau et al., 2000; Lippa, 2002; Morgan & Brown, 1991; Schneider & Dimito, 2010).

However in addition, stereotypes created perceived career barriers for gay males, including concerns regarding fitting in and perceived intolerance in certain industries, as well as perceived barriers to progression and apprehensions about the way in which certain occupations may signal their identity to others. Such perceptions represent a push away from stereotypically incongruent work environments or occupations.

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Supporting the central tenets of Circumscription and Compromise Theory (Gottfredson, 1981), participants implemented their self-concept throughout their careers using strategies to overcome the perceived incongruence between stereotypes of themselves and of occupations. Strategies that were employed to overcome the negative effect of stereotypes predominantly included crafting careers towards work environments where they are less likely to experience prejudice as a result of their behaviours and interests. Other techniques used to overcome perceived career barriers included signalling expertise to others, in order to negate assumptions about their (in)abilities.

5.5   Bisexual Career Experiences

The research sample included two bisexual interviewees; Tessa and Matthew. As noted in Chapter 4, Tessa referred to stereotypes less frequently during the career narrative than others in the sample, and Matthew did not refer to them at all. This section therefore focusses on Tessa's career experiences and the ways in which they were impacted by stereotypes of bisexual individuals. Further discussion of Matthew's career experiences is included in Chapter 6.

Tessa had studied law at university, and following successful completion of her degree decided not to pursue it as a career. One of the reasons for this was her perception that law is *"one of the last bastions of archetypal gender roles"* and further elaborates:

"my perception of it would be that working in a classic male dominated law firm, I wouldn't be very comfortable disclosing my identity, and if I did it would almost be... tokenised." (110; bisexual female)

In this extract, Tessa expresses that her sexuality may become a salient aspect of her identity from her colleagues' point of view. Whilst Tessa does not feel she would necessarily experience exclusion or discrimination as a result of not fitting in, she does feel that this tokenisation of her identity would make her uncomfortable in disclosing her identity to her colleagues in this specific environment. Tessa further reflected upon her perception of other *"archaic"* work

environments, and noted that she would *"feel more cagey about disclosing [her] identity, or feel like [she] was being sort of boxed into a sort of role, or an identity".*

Tessa's concerns about the *"tokenisation"* of her identity in these work environments may be the result of her awareness of common stereotypes of bisexual individuals. Tessa may be concerned that her identity will be tokenised because it's unlikely that there will be many—or indeed any—other openly bisexual employees in the work environment. Her identity is therefore likely to draw attention to her, however her disclosure may be read by others as her wanting them to focus on this aspect of her identity, thereby conforming to stereotypes of seeking attention. These concerns have also led Tessa to conceal her identity from her colleagues in her current work environment:

"initially I was quite guarded in terms of what it would be like, just in terms of what the people would be like, because I had quite strong preconceptions of what everyone would be like- kind of white, male, upper middle class" … *"for a long long time, I didn't tell anyone that I was bisexual- that I was in a relationship with a woman … I think potentially because my team was a bit older than the average [in the department], and I kind of sensed that a lot more people's views were a bit more, erm… conservative"* (110; bisexual female)

Over time, Tessa began to disclose her identity to her colleagues, and said the following regarding her experience of being open about her sexuality in the workplace:

"it's not that I'm not comfortable with my sexuality, it's that I try to get ahead of people's preconceptions or ideas about what a bisexual woman is like, I suppose." … *"I've always anticipated people's preconceptions about it more than I should have done. And so I've therefore probably been- yeah sort of like I've had to construct it in an artificial way, rather than just being who I am… either construct it or just not disclose it at all."* (110; bisexual female)

Tessa suggests that she is aware of common stereotypes of bisexual women, and tries to change these preconceptions by *"constructing"* an identity that does not conform to these stereotypes, or concealing her identity from colleagues. Such identity management techniques may have assisted Tessa in overcoming some of the barriers and negative experiences that she had anticipated in other occupations and industries.

5.5.1 Summary

Perceived invisibility of bisexuality, and assumptions regarding the intensions of bisexual individuals who vocalise their identity disclosure, created a situation whereby the participant felt their bisexual identity must be carefully constructed so as not to conform to stereotypes of attention seeking. This is particularly evident in less tolerant and liberal environments, and therefore strategies employed by the participant to avoid this situation involved crafting careers away from these environments, and using identity construction techniques to navigate others' assumptions.

5.6 Transgender and Non-Binary Career Experiences

Transgender and non-binary participants within the sample discussed scenarios whereby their career aspirations changed over time due to increased awareness of gender-based career stereotypes and the associated perception of incongruence between their identity and that particular career.

Tracey recalled the changes in career options she has aspired to over her lifetime. As a child, she recalled career interests in construction, building and cartography, which she describes as *"stereotypically boyish".* As she became more aware of her gender identity, her interests changed as she realised that such subjects were *"harder for women",* and were in fact stereotypically associated with men and masculinity. Whilst a family member had arranged for her to meet with somebody in the construction industry for networking purposes, she recalls being discouraged by the *"maleness of the whole construction thing"*. Discussing her current career options, she noted the following:

"construction I probably still couldn't do, because I was just thinking about the woman I passed on my way to work today… she was surrounded by guys… there were guys all about but… but she had a clipboard and she was doing something like Quantity Surveying and I thought great, but I bet there is still a lot of macho, you know, on site" (103; transgender bisexual female)

In this scenario, *"maleness"* seems to refer to both the nature of the construction work, and also the dominant identity of people on the site. Further, Tracey's reaction to the woman on site performing the quantity surveying role

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seemed to be characterised by admiration. Tracey became very emotional during the interview upon reflection of her childhood interests, which could indicate her regret for not pursuing those interests in her career. Similarly, Sam shared their initial interest and success in maths and science, and how this changed over time:

"in primary school I was really interested in science and math, and I did the Math Olympics when I was like 9 or 10 for a couple of years, and I won some awards… I did summer school programmes at the local university where I did math and science, and had a lot of fun… but then when I got to high school and started to feel more gender pressured, I dropped some of the math, so stopped focussing on math, and I didn't think I would want to be a Scientist… I think I did when I was a little kid, but by the time I got into high school I'm sure I had picked up the message that it wasn't cool, or it wasn't sexy, or it wasn't for female people" (221; non-binary pansexual participant)

It seems that over time, Sam became increasingly aware that these subjects were not stereotypically considered to be *"for female people",* which led them to drop the subject and not pursue this career option. However, as Sam became more aware and more confident about their own identity over time, they recalled specific examples of purposely challenging stereotypes of others, in order to prove that their identity does not determine their ability to perform stereotypically divergent roles. Sam indicated their awareness of assumptions about their ability based upon their identity, and pursuing their interests regardless:

"I just didn't like when people made assumptions about me based on what they thought someone with my body was like… and I found that really annoying and deliberately went out and did things like computer programming just to show them I could" (221; non-binary pansexual participant)

Further aiming to challenge anticipated incompatibility of their perceived gender and ability to work within male dominated work environments, Sam reflects upon the benefit of using a gender neutral title:

"it certainly does help that I have the title Doctor, because one, it's a gender neutral title, and I love that… and it also makes it harder for people to dismiss me as a Scientist… you know for people to say "I don't believe you" or "what do you know about it, you female person you"… it just- I don't know it gives me a certain sort of status that I think not necessarily appearing to be male, it's kinda hard to come by, if you don't appear to be male… just a sort of believability that comes with being

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called Doctor, and working at [the organisation], and putting "Scientist" as my job on all the forms that require your job" (221; non-binary pansexual participant)

Sam indicates that having the title Doctor provides them with more respect, which is not often granted to those who are perceived to be female within the male dominated environment in which they work. This further demonstrates how individuals overcome the negative impact of stereotypes by managing their identity through signalling seniority and expertise, and not just through concealment.

Whilst Sam shared experiences of putting themselves in situations where they aim to counter restrictive stereotypes, others such as Beth decided to work in an environment where stereotypes based upon gender or sexuality were less pronounced:

"I read about male and female scientists… so it wasn't that I was expecting it to be heavily one sided or the other… and I guess the way I was brought up was… erm… sort of… everyone was equal, so I didn't expect it to be one way or the other really."
(219; transgender lesbian female)

In making the decision to work in an environment where the occupational stereotypes where less restrictive, Beth felt that she was reducing the likelihood of experiencing negative experiences due to the stereotypes she felt subject to.

5.6.1   Summary

For transgender and non-binary individuals within the sample, restrictive gender stereotypes create the perception of barriers to progression in occupations that are considered to be incongruent with the stereotypes associated with their affirmed gender identity. This translated into decisions to navigate careers towards environments where there is less of a prominent occupational stereotype. Further, the non-binary participant within the sample described efforts to challenge and overcome restrictive gender stereotypes which are often based upon others' assumptions of their identity. However, it seems that stereotypes had a greater impact for transgender individuals pre-transition or before affirming their gender identity.

5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored key themes within the data in order to provide a response to the second research question:

To what extent do stereotypes based upon gender and sexual orientation present perceived career barriers for LGBT individuals?

To review the impact of stereotypes on the perception of career barriers, this chapter has examined the themes relating to occupational stereotypes, and the career experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and non-binary individuals. This chapter has demonstrated the dynamic impact of stereotypes on the career experiences of LGBT individuals in the sample. However, the extent to which such perceptions were reflected in interviewees' actual career experiences was dependent on multiple factors, which are explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 6   Research Findings: Stereotype-Career Interaction

6.1   Chapter Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings of the research study that assist in responding to the third and final research question:

How do perceived career barriers, based upon stereotypes, interact with actual career barriers experienced by LGBT individuals?

This chapter explores the nuances in participants' narratives, and the reasons why some may feel subject to more career barriers based upon stereotypes than others. To respond to the research question, the chapter examines the themes relating to actual career barriers and individual differences.

Section 6.2 explores individuals' experiences of actual career barriers that they have faced due to stereotypes based upon gender and/or sexuality. Section 6.3 then explores the individual differences that further understanding of participants' unique career experiences, and why some may be impacted differently by stereotypes. The chapter concludes with a summary of these themes and a response to the above research question.

6.2   Actual Career Barriers

Chapter 5 explored the way in which stereotypes of gender and sexuality created the perception of career barriers. This section outlines the way in which such stereotypes contributed to, or interacted with, experiences of *actual* career barriers, such as discrimination and exclusion. Participants, such as Ryan, demonstrated their awareness of the difference between such experiences:

"it's not about somebody saying "you can't have this job because you're gay" but it is about reactions to you, and therefore how you might be seen if you go for a promotion or a particular job" (206; gay male)

Ryan describes how reactions from others can influence decisions such as whether or not to apply for a promotion, representing a perceived career barrier, whereas an actual career barrier would be represented by the discrimination in the recruitment process based upon LGBT identity. The following two sub-sections

explore interviewees' experiences of discrimination and exclusion, based upon stereotypes of their LGBT identity.

6.2.1   Discrimination and Bullying

Some participants shared their experiences of being discriminated against due to the stereotypes associated with their identity. Below, Michael recalls the way in which his manager's attitude towards him changed after he disclosed his gay identity:

"I just felt that it might have been safe for me to say I'm gay… I did, and I had my boyfriend at the time coming in to the corporate event that we were doing… and I immediately felt like my boss' attitude towards me changed dramatically, including when he made a comment about me potentially not being capable of being a good manager because I'm gay" (306; gay male)

In this situation, Michael describes the way in which his manager conflated his identity with his perception of his ability to perform his job. This conflation seems to be based upon the divergence of stereotypes of successful managers and stereotypes of gay men, thereby supporting research which demonstrates discrimination towards gay men for management and leadership roles due to a perceived dissimilarity in stereotypes (Barrantes & Eaton, 2018; Liberman & Golom, 2015; Morton, 2017). It is important to note that this comment was made to Michael after a successful working relationship of over five years, during which time concerns about his performance as a manager had never been raised, suggesting that his manager's stereotype of gay men had overridden his own perception of Michael's performance in his role. This experience ultimately led Michael to leave this job and seek employment elsewhere.

Paul described feeling that the feedback he receives regarding his work performance and opportunities for progression are influenced by stereotypes of *"campness"*:

"another piece of feedback that has come up quite a few times is "you need to be a bit more- you need to be able to be a bit more formal" which- so sometimes I do interpret that as "stop being so camp"… people are like "you have to make sure you're credible, you have to have gravitas" and I'm a bit like "well I thought I did,

I've always had positive interactions and it's worked"… and I've always wondered whether sexuality or, you know, campness, sort of feeds into that." (113; gay male)

Paul believes that the feedback he receives is not an accurate portrayal of his performance or his behaviours, but is instead influenced by others' stereotypes regarding his sexuality. Others, such as Greg, described explicit bullying that they experienced at work, due to their sexuality:

"I wasn't out at work at that period of time, and there was proper LGBT discrimination at work. I was a young camp man, so I was proper bullied because of the way that I was… without being out at all… just for the way I was" (211; gay male)

Greg describes his experience of being bullied at work for his identity, based upon a conflation of his behaviour and assumptions about his sexuality, despite not having revealed his sexuality to his colleagues. This supports the recent assertion that the disclosure process is not reduced to a decision made by an individual, but instead that colleagues play an active role in drawing their own conclusions about a person's identity (Einarsdottir et al., 2015).

6.2.2   Exclusion

In addition to the above experiences of discrimination, participants further described more subtle experiences of exclusion from colleagues, which impacted their careers in less explicit ways. For example, Emma noted how she has experienced more subtle instances of negativity in the workplace:

"there are very rarely kind of overt things where it's in issue… there are just always gonna be small things where someone says something in a way that you're kind of like "hang on" and there are just always gonna be little things that make you feel uncomfortable" (101; lesbian female)

Some described feeling that their colleagues did not respect them, and attributing this to their identity. In Beth's case, she felt that colleagues treated her differently when she returned to work following her transition:

"I had to keep going up to people and asking them to do things in a different way, and there was always resistance in there… and that resistance got worse when I transitioned, erm… people talking over you and all sorts of things. I never realised how- well you heard of it before but how people treat men and women differently. I

was quite shocked at how one person would treat you so differently, literally from one moment to the next… just because of my gender. And it was upsetting… I suppose" (219; transgender female)

Beth believes that resistance towards her from her male colleagues was increased after transition, and that this reaction was based upon her gender identity. Others felt excluded from work environments because of both their sexual and gender identity. For example, Emma shares her feelings towards workplace discussions of minorities:

"conversations about improving the inclusion of women in the workplace, or the representation of women in the workplace that- I think that often gets err… those conversations often kind of seem to fall back on creating a sort of version a woman in the workplace, which can often end up I think being quite exclusive, not just on the grounds of things like sexuality, but you know makes a certain set of assumptions that- it's like "ok, but that doesn't work for me" … but that then- also then an interesting angle where like- stuff looking at like staff LGBT networks and that sort of thing, tend to be- and are here… very male dominated, so some of the sort of LGBT conversations tend to be about gay men, and the women conversations tend to be about a sort of version of woman that doesn't quite work… so you're just a bit like "where do I fit into this kind of thing?"" (101; lesbian female)

Emma felt that the strong emphasis on gender can be exclusive to those who conform to gender norms, or the dominant *"version of a woman in the workplace"*. Alongside this, the representation of LGBT staff is mostly male, and so she feels that this *"inevitably kind of creates a slight undertone of not necessarily feeling like you fit in"*.

Emma further reflected upon her experiences in a previous role, which was stereotypically dominated by heterosexual women, and gay men:

"I'm stereotyping- there are a lot of gay people in music, but err… they are mostly men, or at least that is the stereotype of the kind of gay person that it's ok to be in that world" … *"the women were supposed to look a certain way and behave a certain way, and I didn't fit into either … I was neither gay enough or woman enough"* (101; lesbian female)

Emma appears to feel somewhat trapped between expectations of women and expectations of LGBT individuals. As a result of feeling that she could not conform to either group of restrictive stereotypes, Emma chose not to pursue this

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career further, despite having completed an undergraduate degree in a related field.

Sam, who identifies as non-binary and pansexual, shared many experiences of feeling that their gender identity had created barriers to progression throughout their career. Sam had a varied career path which involved studying in different departments, working within different industries, and even working and studying in various different countries. Below, Sam recalls their experience of taking computer classes at university in the US:

"in undergraduate degree when I started taking computer classes, I found I was really in the minority and everyone seemed to be cisgender male people, and there was a few apparently female people, and it… yeah I felt quite excluded. It felt like I wasn't allowed to participate in the conversations, and people didn't want me in the group for group work, and that- it seemed to be that "if you insist on trying to play with us, you're going to have a hard time of it"" … "I did feel quite isolated… and it seemed like the majority- the typical computer dude was happy to allow me to feel isolated." (221; non-binary pansexual participant)

Sam felt isolated within this environment, and as though they would have to work harder to be successful in this domain due to this exclusion. Towards the end of this degree, Sam relocated to Spain and lived there for a number of years. Sam feels that gender identity would likely present numerous challenges throughout their career:

"there wasn't a whole lot of career opportunities in Spain, partly because that was at the time of the credit crunch… so everywhere had this recession, but in Spain in particular there didn't feel like there was a lot of opportunities for advancing… it felt like people were just trying to get by, and that… it was going to be more difficult for women or people who look like women to get by because- just things like… I could tell that some of my friends at work were being treated very differently based on whether they were a parent, male or female… just the opportunities and the way that bosses spoke to employees… it was all just a little bit gendered, and I just thought "you know what, this is gonna be really hard to advance here"" (221; non-binary pansexual participant)

Sam ultimately moved away from Spain and decided to return to education to complete a Masters degree within a humanities department in the UK, and then moved to a North European country to complete a PhD within an Engineering

department. Below, Sam shares their perception about the differences in attitude regarding gender that they experienced in each of these settings:

"when I was in the Masters degree that was within the [humanities] department, and I didn't feel there that anyone was bothered about gender or sexuality in that it wasn't acknowledged- it wasn't a barrier... it didn't seem to be a problem because I saw people who were gay or bisexual or- I'm not sure about trans... there was one non-binary person as well... and it was not a big deal, everyone had lunch together and it was fine. Whereas in [the country in Northern Europe] I was in an Engineering department, and that was much more male dominated, and much more traditionally male dominated... so there wasn't even men with long hair that they wore in a ponytail... men had short hair, women had long hair ... so I think I would be less likely to mention it in conversation for example... which might mean that I'm less likely to partake in conversation... and therefore less likely to be seen as in the inner circle, and yeah that could be a kind of social barrier... more I think, than a genuine legal or strict or formal barrier" (221; non-binary pansexual participant)

Sam recognises here that, whilst they did not necessarily experience discrimination based upon their gender identity, the exclusion that they felt created a *"social barrier"* to progression.

6.2.3   Summary

This section has demonstrated that, in addition to the perceived career barriers discussed in Chapter 5, stereotypes based upon gender and sexuality also created actual career barriers for some. These findings thereby support research that demonstrates the role of stereotypes in the discrimination experiences of LG individuals (Ahmed et al., 2013; Drydakis, 2014; Tilcsik, 2011), and further demonstrates how stereotypes create career barriers for transgender and non-binary individuals, which has not previously been examined. However, not all participants described experiencing actual career barriers due to stereotypes. The remainder of this chapter explores the nuances in interviewees' experiences and possible reasons why some were more or less affected by stereotypes than others.

6.3   Individual Differences

Throughout the career narrative interviews, it became apparent that whilst there were many shared experiences discussed, the extent to which participants were impacted by stereotypes of gender and sexuality was influenced by other

factors and career experiences. This section explores some of these individual differences in order to further understanding of why some were more impacted by stereotypes than others.

6.3.1 Mapping Identity and Careers

During career discussions, many referenced periods of identity development, and the challenges that were associated with this experience. Examples of these challenges include identity realisation, denial, concealment, rejection from family and friends, and mental health challenges that are associated with these experiences. Analysis of the data revealed that these challenges had a significant impact on participants' career trajectories, however the manifestation of the impact was dependent on the timing of these identity challenges.

This sub-section explores the ways in which these challenges impacted career experiences, by examining the career trajectories of those who recalled identity challenges at different life stages. The career narratives of ten participants will be discussed, as they provide clear evidence of the themes identified. However, almost all of the participants could be categorised within one of the four scenarios presented below, and shared similar experiences to those whose stories have been selected. Conclusions drawn and themes identified are therefore based on the larger data set, and not limited to the sub-set identified below.

6.3.1.1 Early Identity Challenges

Some participants shared their experiences of identity challenges at a young age, which were typically caused by their gradual awareness of their emerging LGBT identity. Many began questioning their identity during their school years, describing a *"sense of difference, [but not] knowing how to articulate it"*. Michael reflected upon his experience of identity realisation in his home country in South Eastern Europe, which he refers to as *"not very inclusive … or diverse"*, as follows:

"I sort of realised quite early that it's not ok or acceptable for me to express who I feel attracted to… and I always felt quite wary about how I express myself, how I show affinity to specific groups, or how I show that I'm attracted to someone or not… which was quite difficult" (306; gay male)

Others note their difficulty with accepting their sexuality. For example, Janine referred to herself as being *"gay at school [but not] accepting [she] was gay".* In order to explore the impact of these experiences at a young age, this section examines the career trajectories of David, Sarah and Andrew.

David's Story

David experienced identity challenges from a very young age. He recalled that he started to question his sexuality from the age of 5, as he had *"conflicting ideas and feelings"* towards his peers. He points out:

"I remember knowing very early on that I had some difference to people around me… difference that I wasn't allowed to speak about, which I remember feeling quite confused by" (301; gay male)

As he was becoming aware of his sexuality, he refers to a period of denial:

"I kind of tricked myself into thinking my sexuality might have been a phase… because I was like "oh it's a phase to go through… by the time I'm 20 I will have kids and a wife"" (301; gay male)

Reflecting upon the impact that these experiences had on his education and career, David notes the following:

"I remember this kind of… especially difficult kind of… tension to be able to think about… "who can I tell? Who can I not tell? Can I tell anyone? Is this something I will work through? Is it a phase?"… all of that kind of nonsense… I remember feeling like it was something I really had to deal with myself, and it's not something I could put out. So it kind of pushed me, I guess, to be quite studious… quite focussed on my academics… quite interested in reading, writing, listening" … "these experiences as a kid, they led me to a career which was- which I thought I was crafting around being based on things I could understand, and they weren't intangible… they were quite tangible things that I could touch" (301; gay male)

David's early experiences led him to specific career aspirations, which he continued to pursue throughout his education and the early stages of his career. Reflecting upon his experience of working in an organisation which was in the process of making many of his colleagues redundant, whilst there was no threat to his own job, he pointed out:

"I'm very lucky because I'm quite mobile with my job and I can take my skills to other places… many of the people who made redundant weren't, and it was really hard on them, and I remember feeling that quite vividly… and that was my flag to say "get out" basically… that was my "ok it's time to press eject and just leave"… so I just left, and I remember going to my boss at the time and saying "here's my notice, I'm leaving"… and the standard thing for a boss to say when you're leaving is to say "oh what are you doing? Where are you going to?" and I remember saying [laughs]… "nowhere, I'm not doing anything, I'm not going anywhere" and he was like "really?" and I was like "yeah I'm not travelling, I don't have a new job, I'm just out of here" [laughs]" (301; gay male)

David subsequently decided to take some time to reflect upon his aspirations for his career, and found a new role:

"it was just a fixed term contract for 12 months… so it didn't give me security, it didn't give me any stability … I didn't have any guarantee of a job afterwards, but it felt like the right thing to do for my career" (301; gay male)

Despite being aware of the risks associated with this role, David took the job to advance his career, knowing that this would provide opportunities for development. David's subsequent career transitions were similarly driven by his aspirations to pursue his interests, and a confidence to choose occupations that allow him to progress, even when such transitions involved an element of risk.

Sarah's Story

Sarah experienced significant challenges with regards to identity development as a child. At the age of 9, Sarah recalled the following:

"I read an article in my mother's women's magazine about some lesbians, and they were basically saying they- "the fact that we have to hide away is really driving us mad… you're constantly pretending… you can't be yourself"… and I read that and I thought "yeah that's me, and that's what my life is going to be"… and I was totally distraught." (207; lesbian female)

Sarah further recalled that, as a result of these challenges, she began to self-harm at the age of 10. This continued throughout her teenage years, until she was hospitalised at the age of 16. Sarah concealed her identity from her family and friends throughout this time, as she was fearful of a negative reaction, and decided that she wanted to move from her all-girls school to a mixed school to *"change*

[her] sexual orientation". In order to gain her parents' support for this, she felt she needed to disclose her sexuality to them. Sarah shared this experience:

"I enlisted the help of a teacher … she organised a meeting with my parents at the school, and she explained my sexuality to them and er… erm… my father just said "that's completely unacceptable" and my mother was pretty taken aback as well … from then on I felt even more isolated, including at home, because I had this sense that they basically were repulsed by me and… and that was obviously not a very comfortable position to be in so I was very lonely." (207; lesbian female)

In addition to rejection and isolation from family members, Sarah also felt rejected from peers following disclosure:

*"But as I became more aware of my sexuality, those relationships became more and more difficult and I became more and more isolated. And I ended up really very lonely in my mid to late teens… I basically couldn't relate to my peers anymore."
(207; lesbian female)*

Reflecting upon the impact that these experiences had on her education and career, Sarah recalled the following:

"when I changed to the new school I knew very few people, and I decided I was going to work really hard… I was going to focus on school 'cause there was really nothing else that I had, and so I did focus and I really worked extremely hard, and I got top marks. My A-Levels were top within the school by some margin- I was third in the entire town which is… erm… and er… yeah that was kind of nice" (207; lesbian female)

Achieving these qualifications provided Sarah with an abundance of opportunities for university, and she was able to choose what she wanted to study from a range of disciplines in some of the best institutions in her home country and the UK. Sarah's career transitions were characterised by a *"commitment to achieving"*, which helped her gain opportunities throughout her career such as scholarships and funding to pursue her interests.

Andrew's Story

Andrew recalled first disclosing his sexuality to his mother at the age of 12, who did not react well. At the age of 15, Andrew recalls the following experience:

"mum somehow forgot, and I had to come out again when I was like 15... I think what I was doing is I was struggling with- I think I was just struggling with what I wanted to do, and what my personality was- just growing up in general, so I think I had a little bit of a breakdown when I was like 15 or 16, so I had to come out to my mum again, and she took that the complete opposite way to the first time, so I struggled with that" (108; gay male)

Andrew suggests here that he was struggling with the emergence of his sexuality, and what that meant for his identity. Coupled with the negative reaction to disclosure that he experienced, this caused significant mental health challenges for him. Later reflecting on the impact this had on his education and career, he recalled the following:

"that experience, or growing up gay, made me the tough person that I am today, because I accepted from a really young age- from about 13 or 14 I accepted that- I was always prepared to be kicked out the house at any moment, so I'd always just not really speak to my mum and dad that much... didn't really have that close relationship with my mum... So yeah it was about that time that I realised I didn't need anyone and I distanced myself from that kind of family situation, because there could be a day where something bad happens ... I think that's when I became more motivated to work hard at school, so I think that's when I started to get good grades, and then I think at that age I was like "I'm gonna work my arse off so if mum and dad do kick me out, at least I've got good grades behind me, and don't have to struggle that much"... like what's worse than being kicked out and having bad grades as well ... So my focus was like "work your arse off at school, and then you can go and do something you actually want to do and you don't have to speak to people at home ever again" so I think that was the approach that I took" (108; gay male)

Andrew notes that his decision to focus on his studies was the result of negative reactions to his identity disclosure, including anticipation of rejection from his family, and feeling concerned that he needed to be more independent and self-sufficient in the future. Achieving high grades then provided him with a range of opportunities for further education, which in turn provided excellent training and work opportunities.

At the time of the interview, Andrew was in the very early stages of his career, and spent some time discussing his future career ambitions:

"I think you realise when you get here that like… "Oh I'm really enjoying this stuff, I want to be doing more challenging stuff, I want to be working my way up"- I don't even think it's that I want to be paid more or get more responsibility or whatever, I think people just want to be celebrated a lot more and have interesting work, and that happens the further up you go" (108; gay male)

It seems from this extract that Andrew's career transitions and future aspirations are determined by his self-reliance and motivation to be successful, and to pursue his interests.

Trends

Those who had experienced early identity challenges typically felt pushed into being *"quite focussed on [their] academics",* and suppressed feelings regarding their sexuality or gender identity by becoming *"quite studious".* It is apparent that for these individuals, social exclusion and isolation became a driving force for the pursuit of a career. For Andrew, this academic focus provided him with protection from needing to rely on others, including his family. Similarly, David's academic interests were focussed on *"a route that was quite analytical"* and less on *"human interaction"*. In these cases, it seems that academic achievement and career success provides some degree of protection against anticipated negative experiences such as rejection from family and friends or workplace discrimination. This apparent positive side effect of isolation seems counterintuitive in light of research which has highlighted the importance of social support for LGBT individuals in developing career aspirations and career maturity (Fisher, Gushue, & Cerrone, 2011; Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006).

Those who experienced early identity challenges typically mapped their identity and career timelines in similar ways. The career timeline was often full and well detailed, including many important career experiences and showing the ways in which career transitions were decided upon. In contrast, the identity timeline typically contained notations at the beginning (during childhood), and then was left mostly blank and unchanged for the remainder of the timeline. It would be reasonable to conclude that participants who overcame identity challenges at a young age were able to dedicate cognitive resources to career planning later in

their education, as they were no longer experiencing the identity confusion, denial and sense of difference during the critical period of career development.

6.3.1.2 Later Identity Challenges

Some recalled identity challenges that they experienced in their adult lives, such as at college or university, or at certain points during their careers. Such experiences were typically caused by awareness and denial of their LGBT identity, and included concealment, rejection from friends and family, and mental health challenges that emerged following these negative experiences. For example, Michael recalled his denial of his emerging sexual identity during university:

"I was sort of 18-21… I was still discovering who I am, and my sexual orientation… being quite hidden about it… some people alluded to it but I completely rejected the idea" (306; gay male)

Similarly, Sean shared his feelings regarding his identity development as a young adult:

"I didn't come out until I was about 21 or something, and that was not from like, particular fear of rejection from my family- like, my older brother is gay, my family is super gay- it was never a fear, it was more that I just didn't want to be gay myself" (111; gay male)

Sean later reflected upon this decision not to come out, and noted that this was related to his dislike of standing out, and in fact he *"hated the idea of being gay because that makes you inherently stand out".* This section explores the experiences of Beth, Gemma and Thomas, who shared similar identity challenges in their adult life, in order to identify the impact on their career trajectories.

Beth's Story

Beth recalled her experience of identity realisation during university:

"I realised that I was trans at uni… and I tried coming out at that point, and it was a- I was putting out feelers, and I was trying to talk to the gay friends I had, and then I found out they were quite transphobic when they were talking about one of their other trans friends, so I decided that it was probably best if I just bottle it up and hide it away." (219; transgender female)

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Beth's negative experience of trying to disclose her identity at this point had a significant impact on her identity development. Beth concealed her identity until much later in her life, having married and started a family, before disclosing her affirmed gender identity to those around her. During this period of concealment, Beth recalls being extremely unhappy, and that her decision to disclose her identity was the result of feeling that she could not cope any longer.

Regarding the impact that this experience had on her career, Beth shared the following:

"it did affect my confidence and that sort of thing 'cause I couldn't be my true self… and basically my ambitions were like… "what's the point?" a lot of the time" (219; transgender lesbian female)

Beth further suggested that concealing her gender identity, and the resulting unhappiness that she felt, impacted her confidence in her ability when applying for jobs. She did not feel there was any significant value in building a career, when she was so unhappy concealing her identity. Over time, she decided that she needed to stop pursuing any career interests that she had and instead make more pragmatic career decisions:

"at the start it was more idealistic to go into medicine and medical chemistry… that sort of thing… try and make a difference. But as time went on it was becoming more practical and just wanted a steady pay check… or a pay check… just that kind of stability." (219; transgender lesbian female)

Regarding career progression, and specifically pay increases, Beth reflected upon her career thus far:

"technically ever since [my first role] and now here, I've actually been at the same paygrade… and it was just more changing the environment because I either didn't feel comfortable, or some other issues" (219; transgender lesbian female)

Here, Beth is alluding to the fact that challenges she has faced throughout her career, relating to her identity, have led her to seek similar roles but in different organisational environments, and her belief that moving to new organisations has reduced her ability to progress within those roles and left her stuck on the same pay grade. In sum, Beth's career decisions were typically characterised by necessity

and pragmatism, whilst her career interests and desire to progress were given less priority.

Gemma's Story

Gemma shared many experiences of battling with her emerging gender identity during her childhood and teenage years, and experiences of bullying throughout secondary school because of her identity. These challenges caused episodes of depression for her which led to multiple suicide attempts and hospitalisation. Gemma remained in denial about her identity until she was 19, and came out at that point because she didn't feel she could handle this experience anymore.

Reflecting upon her experience at a grammar school which was heavily focussed on academic achievement, she notes:

"it was expected that you achieve, and when you're being bullied and you're having a tough time in your day to day, you don't sort of think about those things" … "that was the last thing on my mind, I was just trying to stop myself from killing myself basically… I was just trying to get through the day" (303; transgender lesbian female)

Gemma suggests here that, understandably, her career and academic achievement was not a priority to her during this time when she was being bullied and suffering with depression. Reflecting upon her peers' aspirations to attend university and pursue career goals, Gemma added the following:

"I didn't think I would reach 18 years old… that just wasn't a thing that was going to happen. When you're trying to kill yourself at 14 years old you're not thinking about going to university or getting jobs… because that's not going to happen. That's for someone else." (303; transgender lesbian female)

Gemma decided to leave school at 15, and in the below extract she reflects upon the impact this had on her career:

"it is important to emphasise in my experience that I did drop out because I was trans, and school wasn't right for me" … "when I was 14 years old I couldn't deal with that… and that meant that I didn't get the opportunities that I would have had if I didn't have to deal with that." (303; transgender lesbian female)

Reflecting upon the development of her career, Gemma described the opportunity to decide on a career path as a *"luxury"* that she did not feel she had. She feels that her experiences during her education resulted in many missed opportunities, and has resulted in the following impact:

"I think being LGBT has affected my career, but not by me trying to conform or anything… but by me not actually being able to conform maybe… not being able to continue at school- not being able to go in and do my A-Levels, or go to university"
(303; transgender lesbian female)

For Gemma, the experience of identity turmoil during a crucial time in her education distracted from her ability to plan and focus on her career during education, when others around her were able to prioritise this. Gemma's career transitions were predominantly based upon the limited opportunities that were available to her once she was in a position to pursue a career.

Thomas' Story

Thomas shared many examples of identity challenges throughout childhood and early adulthood. Thomas was bullied throughout his school years for being *"pretty effeminate",* which led to him feeling isolated for most of his education. Thomas concealed his identity from others because of this experience, and did not disclose his sexuality until he left school and moved to a different environment. At this time, he notes the way in which his social life changed as he moved to a different environment and became more open about his identity:

"I went from being a very introverted, quite alone… I just did not have friends 'cause secondary school was just horrible, erm to suddenly I came out, I still had problems with some people but I made friends- I discovered partying and I did not study"
(105; gay male)

Reflecting on the impact that this newfound social life had on his education, he added:

"I did bad, I got D's in my A-Levels, and that was after doing some exams twice, but going to a party the night before your A-Level exam is probably not sensible" (105; gay male)

Thomas further reflected on the impact that identity challenges had on his career aspirations. Specifically, he notes that he *"didn't have any career goal, [he] just wanted to be happy".* In explaining his lack of aspirations, he points out:

"my aspiration was always just to be happy, and because I was happy I think that's definitely affected my lack of aspiration, because I found somewhere where I was happy so why would I leave it?" (105; gay male)

It could be argued that this lack of aspiration limited Thomas' career progression or perceived work-related success, and encouraged him to make decisions based upon happiness and not on aspiration or ambition. Thomas' career decisions were based upon finding comfort and stability in a role, and not necessarily on progression.

Trends

Participants who experienced identity challenges during adolescence and adulthood typically demonstrated interactions of their identity and career timelines. During periods of turbulence and high activity depicted on the identity timeline, there was often a gap in the detail on the career timeline. This was also evident during the narrative discussions, as identity and careers were usually discussed in tandem, until interviewees shared these experiences of identity challenges, at which point the focus remained on identity. This suggests that career planning was less of a priority during times of identity turmoil, and as this was during a critical time for career development, this often led individuals to miss out on significant education and workplace opportunities.

This finding supports research which demonstrates that heightened vigilance to guard against LGBT discrimination and rejection comes at the expense of cognitive resources, time and energy to engage in academic and career activities (Meyer, 2003). Further, identity challenges often lead LGBT individuals to report truancy and school avoidance, thereby providing them with less access to course materials, and increasing their isolation from those who can provide academic and vocational support and guidance (Garofalo, Deleon, Osmer, Doll, & Harper, 2006; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Poteat et al., 2014; Rosenberg, 2002). However, this concept of identity turmoil remains somewhat distinct from minority stress, which

relates to the chronic stress that individuals suffer as a result of stigmatisation and fear of harm from others (Meyer, 2003). Instead, identity turmoil in the above narratives pertains to the challenges individuals faced when coming to terms with their own identity.

6.3.1.3 Ongoing Identity Challenges

The previous two sections have explored the career trajectories of those who had recalled experiences of identity turmoil within a defined period of time. However, others felt that they had never felt committed to a specific identity, and that challenges relating to their identity development were ongoing. In order to explore the impact of ongoing identity challenges, this section focusses on the career trajectories of Emma and Leo.

Emma's Story

Emma recalled early experiences of identity realisation at a young age, and her feelings at this time:

"I suppose when I was about 8 that was the first time I remember just having a really strong sense that there was something about me that just wasn't like everyone else and I couldn't work out what it was and it just felt like there was something that just really didn't fit and I couldn't understand it" (101; lesbian female)

It is apparent that Emma became aware of feeling different to her friends and peers, however at such a young age she was not attributing this to sexuality. In the below extract, Emma reflects on her immediate reaction to her identity realisation:

"realising I was staring at this teacher and that was quite weird... and I wasn't supposed to be doing that... and just thinking "oh my god maybe I'm- maybe I'm gay" and then immediately shutting that down and being like "no no no- you're not gay... that's a thing that other people are, don't worry about it- you're just- just stop thinking about this and it will all be fine"" ... "managed to convince myself that not thinking about it was the answer for about 4 years... mostly by telling myself that I went to an all girls' school, and I didn't know any boys, and if I did then I might think some of them are attractive..." (101; lesbian female)

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Emma became extremely concerned that if she revealed her identity to her friends, then her parents would somehow find out. In her late teens, she felt that her parents would feel *"betrayed"* if they found out about her identity from somebody else, and so she didn't feel she had any *"safe route"* to discuss her emerging identity with anybody. Emma became depressed during this time, highlighting the significant impact that this concealment had on her.

In contrast to those who overcame identity challenges, and expressed confidence in their identity, Emma discussed the challenges that she continues to face and how this manifests itself in the work environment. Below, Emma reflects upon the experience of moving from university into a professional environment:

"starting work involved going from an environment where I was kind of quite surrounded by LGBT peers- I think at university you get to sort of try out being who you want to be, and you get to make stupid mistakes- yeah you get to kind of give it a go, and if you get it wrong that's fine… everyone's trying it out, so that's fine. And some of that can include things like what you wear and, like feeling comfortable dressing in different ways, and not necessarily having to commit to that" … "but it feels like in the workplace you can't- I couldn't turn up in a tie on Monday without then turning up in a tie on Tuesday to Friday, like I can't turn up in a tie on Monday and a dress on Tuesday, so yeah there's less- you're sort of supposed to commit to something in a way that I sort of- I'd rather not have to do" (101; lesbian female)

Emma appears to feel restricted in terms of opportunities for identity development now that she is working in a professional setting. It seems that Emma feels that there is a degree of flexibility in identity commitment that is afforded in university environments, but is not deemed to be acceptable in a professional environment. Others similarly described the experience of moving from a university *"bubble"* as being *"really intense".*

Further reflecting upon her feelings about her identity in the work environment, Emma shared that she regularly questions where she fits in with her colleagues:

"there are a lot of gay people in music, but err… they are mostly men, or at least that is the stereotype of the kind of gay person that it's ok to be in that world. And it was sometimes like- sometimes there would be a slightly odd kind of… cultural thing, but there was something slightly cliquey thing about… you know [there were]

gay people- but they [were] men… and then the women were supposed to look a certain way and behave a certain way, and I didn't fit into either, do you know what I mean?" … "Somehow I was neither gay enough or woman enough" (101; lesbian female)

It is evident that Emma feels trapped between expectations or beliefs about acceptable ways to be gay and acceptable ways to be a woman, and feels that her own identity does not conform to either of these. This ultimately provided a catalyst for Emma's decision not to pursue a career in music, despite having strong aspirations since childhood and completing a degree in the subject area.

Leo's Story

Leo described the internal challenges he faced regarding his identity development and realisation as a child. Discussing his feelings about his identity as an adult, Leo shared the following:

"I'm definitely not a Kinsey 6, but I'm not sure how far the other way I am… So I define as gay but I'm also not entirely sure… and I know most people never are, and that's fine." (109; gay male)

It appears from this extract that, similarly to others in the sample, Leo does not consider his identity to be fixed, and therefore does not necessarily commit to a specific label regarding his sexuality. For Leo, this creates a degree of uncertainty, and in the following passage he reflects on how this affects his career:

"I'm not really good at uncertainties like that, so there's an element of identity that is in flux, and not entirely settled, but I'm not sure about it, and I think that's- in terms of the impact that's had on my career, I think- I think my objective for my career has always been to have stability, because I've actually never felt grounded either in my identity or in the community that I associate with my identity… I've not taken particular risks with my career- I've done pretty well, but I've never sort of, you know, I've never struck out to do something radically different" (109; gay male)

Leo suggests that there is a trade-off between career instability and identity instability, later stating that if he has some stability in one, he *"can be a bit less stable in the other"*. Further reflecting on the impact this has on his future career ambition, he notes:

"I can cope with some instability in my career but I would need stability elsewhere in my life. I'd find it really difficult to change my career now when I'm single, I live on my own, and I'm still like- I just don't really know what I'm doing, whereas those things are easier when you're settled, whenever that will be … I don't think I'm willing to take those risks until I feel I have more stability in terms of things like my identity, and the things that come out of that like long-term relationships and family and all of that." (109; gay male)

It could be assumed from these extracts that Leo has avoided taking risks which could have progressed his career, in favour of remaining in a stable role. Further echoing this sentiment, he commented that the experience of identity challenges removes a sense of stability, and as a result of not having that for a long time, *"it's often quite easy to stay where you are comfortable"*.

Trends

Participants who discussed ongoing identity challenges appeared to experience difficulties with identity commitment in professional environments, as well as an aversion to risk taking behaviours during their career. Further, these participants noted key milestones across the entire identity timeline, and fewer detail and changes on the career timeline. This could be indicative of a preference to remain in a stable role and not take significant risks, for individuals who never feel a sense of identity stability.

This finding indicates that LGBT identity development has a negative impact on *career resilience*, first defined by London (1983) as *"a person's resistance to career disruption in a less than optimal environment"*, who also noted that this concept is comprised of self-efficacy, risk taking and dependency. Though this concept has been featured in—and applied to—a vast amount of research domains since this time (Mishra & McDonald, 2017), to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the impact of LGBT identity development on career resilience has not yet been examined.

6.3.1.4 Limited Identity Challenges

In contrast to those whose narratives have been explored thus far, a small number of interviewees shared mostly neutral or positive experiences of identity

development. To examine the impact of this, this section explores the career trajectories of Matthew and Jason.

Matthew's Story

Matthew reflected upon his experience of identity realisation as a teenager in the following way:

"I've been aware I'm bisexual since, I don't know, early teens… came out I guess- although I never really had a coming out I just- when I started sixth form- I changed school for sixth form, and so from the age of 17 I never came out, it was just apparent I was bisexual from the way I lived." (102; bisexual male)

Matthew did not share some of the challenges that others faced, such as identity denial or rejection from others. Throughout the discussion of his career narrative, Matthew frequently concluded that his bisexual identity had *"no impact"* on his career experiences, and instead expressed his frustration and difficulty in understanding how his career would be informed by his bisexual identity:

"But do I think it would have an impact on how I would choose my career- how I would advance my career- what I would do and what I've done so far? No" … "I appreciate there may be areas of the country or professional life where it still is highly negative… I think those are ever decreasing- they certainly haven't impacted me, and if they did- if someone did try and discriminate… I don't think it would hold me back" (102; bisexual male)

Reflecting upon the reason that he feels his identity would not impact his career experiences, Matthew shared that he does not consider his sexuality to be *"central to [his] identity",* and feels that this is why he would not be held back by experiences of discrimination.

Jason's Story

Jason's experiences of identity formation and disclosure were generally positive. After disclosing his identity to his friends and family at the age of 13, Jason gained many other friends who identified as non-heterosexual, and therefore felt supported with the development and expression of his identity.

During discussion of his career, Jason expressed that he had been worried that the research interview would be based upon experiences of homophobia and

discrimination, and that it would be *"a really boring interview"* because his experiences had generally been positive. Moreover, it became apparent that Jason had begun incorporating work on LGBT-specific issues into his career, and that this was prominent on his CV. Discussing his future employment aspirations, Jason shared the following:

"I want to be more visible, and that feeds into what I want to do with my work because downplaying the LGBT work in my research would be pushing me back to that kind of invisible space" (216; gay male)

It appears from Jason's trajectory that his confidence in his identity was providing a focus to his career development. Others in the sample who were less confident about their identity may not have taken opportunities to conduct work specifically on LGBT issues, for fear of signposting their sexuality to others and future employers in this way.

Trends

Matthew and Jason both depicted a lack of interaction between their career and identity development on their timelines. Whilst the identity timeline lacked detail (e.g., simply showing when they were *"not out"* and *"out"*), the career timeline contained significant detail regarding transitions and key development experiences. It would be reasonable to assume that neutral or positive experiences of identity development had only had a positive impact on career development for these two participants.

It seems that for those who are secure and stable in their identity, and have been during critical periods of career development, they are more able to effectively focus cognitive resources on career development tasks, thereby supporting the bottleneck hypothesis (Meyer, 2003).

6.3.1.5 Summary

This sub-section has demonstrated that timing has a significant impact on the way in which identity challenges affect career experiences, including the degree of choice people feel they have over their career development and trajectory. The findings detailed in this sub-section support the bottleneck hypothesis, which states

that LGB individuals experience disruption to career development tasks when cognitive resources are focussed on sexual identity development, and vice versa (Hetherington, 1991; Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006), and also extend this theory to demonstrate that transgender individuals are similarly affected.

The findings further extend this theory by demonstrating that this negative effect is dependent on timing, and therefore may not be the case for those who overcome significant identity challenges before critical career planning begins in adolescence. In contrast, these individuals may benefit from having devoted additional time and energy to their academic endeavours to help them deal with social isolation and exclusion.

Those who did not report feeling that they had committed to a specific identity reported risk averse behaviours, indicating a negative effect on their career resilience (London, 1983; Mishra & McDonald, 2017). The experience of challenges with regards to identity appears to impact the degree to which individuals feel they have opportunities to pursue their career ambitions, with some describing the need to make pragmatic career decisions, irrespective of the consequences of stereotypes.

Support is also provided for the more recent concept of identity authenticity, and the impact this has on LGBT career experiences. Those who demonstrated greater security and stability over their identity, or authenticity (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), seemed more able to effectively manage discrimination and stereotypes throughout their careers, allowing them to focus on career development tasks (Russon & Schmidt, 2014).

6.3.2 Generational Differences

Participants frequently considered their own experiences in comparison to others', with regards to generational differences in attitudes towards LGBT identities. Many commented on the improvement in acceptance and tolerance of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender identities over time, describing younger people as generally more *"relaxed"* about identity, *"likely to have less issue with LGBT people"*, and less *"dismissive"*. As a result of this perception of difference in

terms of attitudes, older interviewees felt *"much happier coming out to younger people"*, than they did to those in their own generation.

Participants further reflected on the change in attitude over time, and the impact that that will have had on younger peoples' experiences based upon their identity. Reflecting upon his experience of recently moving to a team which is made up of younger people, Graham said:

"Younger generations are much more relaxed, so they don't care about this camp middle aged guy working with them, it's not relevant- they don't care… I've never had any comments here whereas previously people have sort of made jokes about it" (107; gay male)

Gemma reflected on the impact that differences in attitudes has with regards to parents' enforcement of restrictive gender stereotypes:

"they're at a point now where they aren't immediately dismissive… they're not saying "no you can't do this" or "no you can't play with trucks" or "no you can't wear this" because the stereotypes are slightly less restrictive now… but they're still problematic" (303; transgender lesbian female)

Gemma notes that gender stereotypes are less restrictive, and whilst she does note that they still exist and are still problematic, they present less of a challenge than they did when she was growing up. There were many reasons attributed to these differences, such as changes in legislation, and the experience of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which are discussed in turn below.

6.3.2.1 Legislation

Many participants referenced the implementation of Section 28, a law passed in 1988 by a Conservative government that stopped councils and schools from promoting the teaching of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship. The introduction of this law had significant impact on school experiences. For example, Gary shared his experience of being subject to a homophobic attack in school from another child, and the teacher taking the side of the attacker because *"Teachers could not address [the issue of homophobia]"* at school. Gary shared that this made him feel invisible at school.

This feeling of invisibility or silence was echoed by many. Robert recalled that sexuality was a *"taboo subject"* in the 1970s and 80s, and because of this he did not feel he could disclose his identity at school or university. Sean further noted that nobody in his school was openly gay in the early 2000s, however he now feels that it's *"an entirely different landscape"* for teenagers today.

Those who were older at the time that Section 28 was introduced, and were no longer in school, felt as though it encouraged negative attitudes towards LGBT people in society. In turn, this made them less comfortable disclosing their identity openly.

Participants regularly referenced the changes in LGBT protective legislation, such as anti-discrimination legislation, when reflecting upon the differences in experiences between generations. Below, Mark describes the differences in attitudes of members of the LGBT network in his workplace:

"you have some people who are like that guy was who are in their 50s, who- when they started working in [the organisation] it was illegal- people lost their jobs over it and everything else … then you have 40s and people like me who are like "well I had a shit time at school and grew up in a shit town" … but if you talk to a 20 year old now, first of all they wouldn't identify just as gay, but I don't even think sexuality is at the forefront of their thoughts actually" (104; gay male)

Here, Mark references the increased risk of discrimination that older LGBT people would have experienced, alluding to the vast differences in experiences of LGBT individuals from different generations with regards to workplace and career experiences.

Sharing his own experience of workplace discrimination, Robert reflects upon his reaction to being told he was not being offered a job because the hiring manager had found out he was gay:

"back in the early 90s there just wasn't the sort of anti-discrimination legislation that there is nowadays and I just took it on the chin." (204; gay male)

The lack of anti-discrimination legislation in the 1990s meant that Robert did not feel he could challenge the hiring manager's discriminatory behaviour. Older interviewees also reflected on their experiences of hate crimes and discrimination outside of the work environment. Greg reflected upon the severe crimes he

experienced when he was younger because of his identity, and his perception of change over time:

"I've been chased several times just for being in a gay club. But that was part of it. I wouldn't say it was pleasant, but we knew it was part of doing that. So I think in comparison at that time somebody saying something nasty at work was quite mild… and now I wouldn't tolerate it at all… that's the difference. If it happened now I would turn back and say something, but at the time I didn't feel like I could say anything at all. I think that's the main difference. With all the progress we have made since the 80s, not only can we be out but we can confront people now which at the time we couldn't" (211; gay male)

Greg suggests that, when he was at an early stage in his career, he was somewhat less impacted by negative experiences at work than he is now, because he had bigger concerns regarding his safety outside of work. In comparison, he feels that he would be more likely to respond to challenges in the workplace now because of the protection and support now afforded by updated legislation.

6.3.2.2 HIV/AIDS Epidemic

Older participants in the sample recalled their tragic experiences of growing up during the development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the impact that this had on their identity formation and career. Some felt that during this time they had to *"go back in the closet"*, losing a sense of freedom regarding openness about their identity. Participants recalled seeing adverts on TV regarding HIV/AIDS, and felt that this reinforced that gay sexual behaviour was perceived as *"a terrible thing"* by others in society.

Below, Graham compares his experience of coming out during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, with experiences of younger people today:

"when I was coming out- when I was young obviously HIV was rife and everybody was worried about that, and if you were gay everybody thought you might have HIV or AIDS, and you might pass it onto them and things like that, whereas people now in their 20s- they are aware of it but it doesn't have that same sort of stigma, or the thought of somebody being gay they must automatically have HIV or something like that, so that's really good, and people are just much more relaxed about their sexuality" (107; gay male)

Graham insinuates that differences in experience contribute to younger people feeling subject to less stigma about their LGBT identity, and therefore more relaxed. In the below extract, Gary shares his experience of being part of the LGBT community during the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and how this impacted him at work:

"At this time, though… I was having first relationships which was tricky because… lots of people around me who I had become friends with were starting to develop AIDS… so suddenly the social circle I'd developed were starting to have major problems, so that was really depressing. And again you've got no family to call on, and you can't talk to people at work about it… so I might be up talking to someone all night because they were in bits because they'd had a diagnosis which was almost certainly fatal, and then had to go to work… and you couldn't say to somebody "my friend has got AIDS" because they would say "well we don't want you working here" and that kind of thing… so I was desperately worried" … "I started going to the gym because I'd put on loads of weight driving around for all this time, so I thought I should do something… I used to run 10k 3 or 4 times a week … So the weight dropped off me. So what did all my staff say? "[he] has got AIDS"… and I had several parents saying "are you OK?" and me going "yeah I am actually" and so that was really hard." (212; gay male)

Here, Gary suggests that the stigma around sexuality, that resulted from the development of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, created additional challenges in the workplace. Whilst he was suffering tragic circumstances in his personal life, he was unable to share this information with colleagues and seek workplace support, as there was a risk that he may lose his job as a result. Further, he was subject to others' assumptions about having HIV/AIDS himself.

6.3.3   (Re)Location

Geographical location appeared to have a significant impact on career decisions made by many. Some recalled wanting to move away from their home countries where their identity is criminalised, or where LGBT hate crimes were extremely common. For example, some wanted to move away from countries where *"it wasn't possible to be out"* and move to the UK which—as the few identity resources they found were UK-centric—they perceived to be *"a mythical safe space"*. Michael shared the following experience from his home country in South Eastern Europe, which he described as *"not very inclusive … or diverse"*:

"In my private life, the environment was quite… aggressive… so I remember me being in [the capital city], coming out of a gay club… outside in front of the club with one of my friends whilst he was trying to light a cigarette, and someone crossed the street and picked up a brick to throw at us, because we were outside of a gay club. It was just shocking, and I was like "I need to leave this country"" (306; gay male)

Michael made the decision to leave that country, despite having a successful career there. Others who were born and raised in the UK shared their own perceptions of tolerance and acceptance of their identity in the areas that they grew up. For some, such as Mary, growing up in small villages in the UK meant that they were very rarely exposed to non-heterosexual or non-cisgender identities. Below, Alex describes the experience of moving away to a bigger city:

"I think being in a big city was definitely something I considered in terms of tolerance, and being able to be myself" (220; gay male)

For these individuals, an important development in their career was the opportunity to move away to a bigger city, which they perceived to be more tolerant and accepting. This was often the case when participants made decisions regarding moving to university. Many felt the process of moving away from home to study was important for identity exploration, as *"a lot of people find themselves at university".* Michael shared his experience of moving away:

"Went to university, and because I'd moved from a relatively small city to a bigger one for university, I also started exploring what my identity looks like and why do I feel attracted to men" (306; gay male)

It seems that being in a new environment with new people provided participants with opportunities for identity development. Others spoke of the specific city that they moved to as a driving factor for choosing their degree course. The following extract from Jacob demonstrates the impact that perceptions of tolerance in different cities can have on key career decisions:

"I wanted to go to Oxford [University] … and that's what my school would have expected me to do.. and then I remember watching Queer as Folk on TV, and it was a really big turning point in my life, and so I put Manchester as one of the options on my UCAS form, and I remember even selling it to my parents … 'cause it was erm… not as good a university for the course … I remember justifying it to my parents by saying "oh it's close to home and I want to be close to my parents" but the real

reason was that I'd seen Manchester on TV and it looked amazing, and it glorified gay life in a way, and I thought "I want a piece of that… I want to experience that""
(106; gay male)

It seems that for Jacob, the opportunity to live in a city that *"glorified"* gay life was more important than the reputation of the degree course he was studying. Jacob achieved sufficient grades to choose from either of these universities, and recalled the following decision:

"I ended up choosing Manchester as my university, because… I'd always made the decision that when I went to university I'd be fully out, I didn't want to hide my sexuality… 'cause I felt like that was the kind of place where I could not- wouldn't feel any risk of any repercussions" (106; gay male)

Others, such as George, reported similar experiences of choosing their university city based upon their perception of safety:

"you can see there is quite a strong link in that from very young… I think it was after I read that book… for me London certainly seemed to be a safe place, and that's why I chose London for my degree, and when I came here and realised there was a community here, that became very important to me" (307; gay male)

For these individuals, perception of acceptance of LGBT identities played a significant role in their decision regarding which university to attend, and in some cases, which degree course to study.

Others felt that geographical location may limit their future career opportunities. Many reported that they would not work in countries where they perceive they would not be safe, due to perceptions of intolerance and acceptance of LGBT identities. Some noted that they could be offered *"an absolutely perfect role"*, but they *"would say no to it if it meant [they] would have to travel to an unsafe place"*. Below, Michael reflects upon the impact he believes this may have on his career:

"we have offices in Dubai and Singapore, and we usually have appointments there, and I was thinking "does the organisation understand the risk of sending me to Singapore for example?"… or "is the fact of me being open in the organisation reducing the possibility of me even getting that appointment"… because they don't want that risk for me or for them … that's why I said it might have been counterproductive to my career progression, because there was an appointment in

Singapore that I wanted and I started conversations about it, and they said "hold it there, we'll review it later on"" (306; gay male)

Michael describes the risk of travelling to other countries as *"counterproductive to [his] career progression",* highlighting the significance of the impact this could have on the career opportunities for LGBT individuals. Those who did report travelling to *"unsafe"* countries for work, such as David, shared strategies they used to protect themselves:

"I go back in the closet when I go to a country where I could be- 'cause I travel a lot and go to countries in which it's illegal, and I do feel unsafe, as you would, in those countries where I'm working with organisations in those countries… so I do make sure that I'm just not out in that particular situation" (301; gay male)

Many of the participants were working and living in London, and shared their positive perceptions of LGBT acceptance there. They referred to London as *"a bubble"* which is *"very easy for gay people",* and spoke of their reluctance to move away from there. For some, such as George, moving to London was an important factor in their career decision:

"I must say in London you're a lot safer… I don't feel safe in many parts of the UK, but certainly in London I feel safer because the diversity and resources and visibility is high… and I pursued a career in the UK, and in London in particular because I covet that security" (307; gay male)

Similarly, Jacob recalled his decision to move to London from a small town in the North of England:

"I was open that I was gay there, but I never felt as comfortable there because it was, you know, a much more traditional area… so for me it was really important that I would move to London, or at least to a bigger city, and- because I felt like I would be able to be more open and comfortable with my identity in a larger city. So I definitely think it was instrumental in getting me to move from [the North of England] to London." (106; gay male)

Reflecting on his career since this point, he added the following:

"I'm better off staying in London, and I like living in my little London bubble, even though… I think if I was straight I wouldn't have done that. Had I been straight, I would have moved to another city, but on its own it has been enough to make me stay where I'm most comfortable." (106; gay male)

It seems from these extracts that location, and specifically living in London, has had a significant influence over Jacob's career decisions, and pursual of career opportunities. These extracts support research that demonstrates that LGBT individuals select cities to move to—whether for education for work—based upon an appraisal of freedom and liberation from discrimination and marginalisation (Taulke-Johnson, 2010). Further, the findings demonstrate that those in smaller and more rural villages in the UK may face greater pressure to conform to gender norms (Taulke-Johnson, 2010) and may also experience less exposure to LGBT identities.

6.3.4 Summary

This section has explored the individual differences between interviewees, which may have led to differences in the extent to which stereotypes have influenced their careers. Such differences include the experience and timing of identity turmoil, which changed priorities away from careers altogether for some, and encouraged others to focus their attention on their academic and vocational achievements. The experience of challenges with regards to identity appears to impact the degree to which people feel they have opportunities to pursue their career ambitions, with some sharing the need to make pragmatic career decisions.

An additional difference that emerged from the data was with regards to differences in attitudes regarding identity between older and younger generations. Older participants, who embarked upon their careers at a time when workplace support for LGBT communities was scarce, and who were realising their identity during the development of HIV/AIDS epidemic, described different experiences to those who have had anti-discrimination legislation support throughout their lives and careers. It could be argued that older participants were less concerned about societal stereotypes of LGBT individuals during the early stages of their career, as concerns about explicit discrimination and the lack of protective legislation were of more importance at that time.

Finally, many noted the importance of location on their career decisions. LGBT identity, and perceptions of tolerance and safety, appeared to restrict where they felt comfortable living in working, which could limit career experiences and opportunities. Differences in experiences became apparent between those who

were raised in supportive and tolerant communities, and those who moved to the UK, or moved to a bigger city, from less tolerant places.

6.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the findings of the research study that assist in responding to the third and final research question:

How do perceived career barriers, based upon stereotypes, interact with actual career barriers experienced by LGBT individuals?

In order to respond to this research question, the chapter outlined the findings that are encapsulated within the themes actual career barriers and individual differences, to identify aspects of participants' narratives that may further understanding of nuances in experiences. In doing so, the chapter has identified differences in narratives and experiences that can explain why some are impacted by internalised stereotypes more than others. These findings are considered with reference to the preceding empirical chapters in Chapter 7, the Discussion chapter.

Chapter 7   Discussion

7.1   Chapter Introduction

Thus far, the thesis has detailed the background literature upon which the study was based, the approach that was taken to respond to the research questions, and the empirical findings that emerged following data analysis. This chapter provides an evaluative discussion of the current research study, beginning with a summary of findings in relation the research questions, and a discussion regarding their position within the context of key debates and assertions within the literature (section 7.2).

The remainder of this chapter provides a discussion of the implications of the findings and the limitations of the research project (section 7.3). Section 7.3.1 details the contributions to career and stereotype theories, with additional reference to the implications of methodological choices. This section details the extent to which the findings are able to support or challenge existing theories, and suggestions for further research that incorporates the findings of the current study within the framework of such theories. The practical implications of the research are then discussed in section 7.3.2, including impact on LGBT career development and suggestions for organisations. Section 7.3.3 provides a discussion of the limitations of the research and suggestions for how further studies may overcome such challenges. These limitations include sampling challenges, organisation engagement and recruitment, and finally challenges that relate to the research design.

7.2   Discussion of Findings

The aim of the research was to explore the impact of internalised stereotypes on the career experiences of LGBT individuals, with a focus on perceptions of career barriers. In order to satisfy this aim, three research questions were identified in Chapter 2. This section summarises the findings in response to each of these questions, before discussing the integrative themes in section 7.2.4.

7.2.1   Perceived Stereotypes

The first research question asked *'in what ways do LGBT individuals perceive stereotypes that are based upon gender and sexual orientation?'*. The data examined in Chapter 4 highlighted that the content of stereotypes internalised by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and non-binary participants was indeed different.

Lesbians internalised stereotypes that were primarily based upon reduced femininity. For example, whilst participants did refer to assumptions based upon typically masculine attributes such as confidence, greater reference was made to not being considered feminine. Though stereotypes of not having children and of general negative perceptions were discussed, the predominant stereotypes internalised by lesbians were based upon appearing less feminine than heterosexual women. For example, participants referred to short hairstyles and certain styles of dress. Lack of feminine appearance was further considered to be a signal of lesbian identity, and therefore those who deemed themselves to be *"too feminine"* felt that they had greater opportunity to conceal their identity. This supports previous research that demonstrates that lesbians who do not embody stereotypical assumptions are assumed to be heterosexual (e.g., Einarsdottir et al., 2015).

The data further indicates that gay men internalised stereotypes based upon reduced masculinity. For example, whilst participants did reference some feminine attributes and effeminate mannerisms, the focus of stereotype content was related to a lack of masculine attributes. Stereotypes included not having an interest in sport and being less authoritative than heterosexual men. Further, internalised stereotypes of gay men were typically related to behaviours or attributes, such as being flamboyant, and reference to appearance was infrequent. The absence of masculine behaviours and attributes was considered to be an indicator of gay identity, and therefore those who conformed to stereotypes of masculinity and did not consider themselves to display flamboyant behaviours felt that they had more opportunity to conceal their identity.

Taken together, these findings present the argument that internalised stereotypes of gay men and lesbian women are multifaceted and are not simply reduced to bipolar conceptualisations of masculinity and femininity. Gay men internalised stereotypes related to reduced masculinity and not necessarily increased femininity, and lesbians internalised stereotypes of reduced femininity and not enhanced masculinity. The gendered stereotypes that are internalised by lesbians and gay men are therefore less extreme than the common societal stereotypes, which research typically positions as the opposite of those of their heterosexual counterparts (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Mize & Manago, 2018).

One reason for this distinction may be that LG individuals internalise more androgynous stereotypes, which would lend support to the argument that societal stereotypes are better represented in this way (Bem, 1974; Clarke & Arnold, 2017). An alternative suggestion for the emergence of this finding is that participants were engaging in self-selective stereotyping, and distancing from extreme gender stereotypes due to negative connotations. This would lend support to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) which posits that it is easier to integrate positive stereotypes with the self-concept to promote personal self-esteem, as the internalisation of negative stereotypes serves to threaten one's social identity.

Further, among participants, the dominant internalised stereotypes of lesbians are based upon appearance, whereas for gay men they are focussed on behaviours. This suggests that the stereotypes of gay men extend to assumptions about abilities and capabilities, however this is not the case for stereotypes most commonly internalised by lesbians. Though this distinction in stereotype content is apparent in previous research (e.g., Einarsdottir et al., 2015), it has not yet been articulated in this way.

Though based upon a small sample, the data suggests that internalised stereotypes of bisexuality are that it is not a legitimate identity, which has different implications for men and women. For women, identifying as bisexual was described as a form of *"trying to get attention"*, whereas for men, identifying as bisexual is

believed to be an attempt to conceal a *"true"* gay identity. These findings are consistent with previous research that has investigated the content of bisexual stereotypes and gender differences (Mize & Manago, 2018; Yost & Thomas, 2012).

In accordance with previous research, bisexual interviewees did not report internalisation of appearance or gender-related stereotypes (Clarke et al., 2012). This means that for identity to be known by others, they often feel that they must verbally disclose their bisexuality. However in doing so, bisexual women risk conforming to the stereotype of concealing heterosexuality and seeking attention, and bisexual men risk being assumed to be concealing a gay identity. Internalisation of bisexual stereotypes therefore creates a barrier to disclosure. Whilst non-disclosure of bisexual identity is often reported as a mechanism for protection against biphobia and discrimination in the literature (e.g., Doan Van, Mereish, Woulfe, & Katz-wise, 2019; Pachankis, Mahon, Jackson, Fetzner, & Bränström, 2020), the current findings suggest that non-disclosure may also owe to concerns regarding conformity to internalised stereotypes.

Male to female (MtF) transgender participants recalled the internalisation of gender non-conformity before transitioning or affirming their gender. Perceived gender non-conformity, such as feminine mannerisms and liking the colour pink, was considered to be indicative of transgender identity. Therefore, conforming to male stereotypes and expectations, or removing masculine expectations by claiming a gay identity, provided the opportunity for participants to conceal their transgender identity. Though based upon a sample of just one participant, the data indicates that internalised non-binary stereotypes are also associated with gender non-conformity, however the lack of stereotypes associated with non-binary or androgynous identity often leads to misrecognition as male or female. Though this finding is somewhat predictable given the considerable overlap between perceived gender conformity and gender identity (e.g., Fast & Olson, 2018), the internalisation of stereotypes based upon gender non-conformity—and their impact—has not previously been examined within this community.

Stereotypes based upon gender and sexuality were observed by participants both in the home and in others' career narratives, whereby seemingly heterosexual

men were associated with certain professions such as mining, however seemingly heterosexual women were associated with caregiving and appeared infrequently in career narratives during education. Gender stereotypes were further reinforced at home through familial expectations and the restricting of gender non-conforming interests. Participants' experiences of learning about stereotypes echo Social Role Theory's postulation that stereotype content is generated following intergroup relations, and experience with out-groups (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). In accordance with previous studies, the findings suggest that such beliefs and assumptions were learned in the home (Sumontha et al., 2017), and in an educational setting through exposure to career narratives (Finsterwald & Ziegler, 2007; Hintermann et al., 2014; Moser et al., 2013).

Over time, and as participants began to disclose their identity to others, negative reinforcement of gender non-conformity became interpreted as negative reinforcement of LGBT stereotypes. Herein lies a further distinction between the experiences of lesbian and gay male participants that has not been previously identified. Whilst sanctioning of gender non-conformity for lesbians was based upon their appearance, for example being told to look *"more feminine"*, such reinforcement for gay men was based upon behaviours and interests, such as gender non-conforming child's play.

Finally, in support of theories of internalised homonegativity (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Staples et al., 2018; Szymanski et al., 2008), negative stereotypes of LGBT individuals were also learned and internalised through observation of societal rhetoric. Older interviewees recalled their awareness of stigma and prejudice towards the LGBT community and the ways in which this was heightened during the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the Section 28 debate.

7.2.2   Stereotype Impact

The second research question asked *'to what extent do stereotypes based upon gender and sexual orientation present a perceived career barrier for LGBT individuals?'*. The data examined in Chapter 5 suggests that many occupations are stereotyped as being gendered. Typically feminine or female-dominated occupations, such as nursing, were considered to be more tolerant, friendly and

accepting than masculine or male-dominated occupations, such as mining and construction. Further, interviewees indicated that men who work in masculine professions are typically assumed to be straight, whereas men who work in feminine occupations are assumed to be gay. This was not the case for lesbian, bisexual or transgender identity, supporting Hancock et al.'s (2020) preposition that whilst some jobs are considered "*gay jobs*", no professions are considered to be "*lesbian jobs*".

The data discussed in Chapter 5 further indicated that the impact of stereotypes on perceived career barriers was different for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and non-binary participants. Lesbians in the sample indicated that when they began their careers they made a conscious decision to change their appearance in order to blend in, and to not have their lesbian identity immediately apparent to colleagues. Some reported feeling that this was important to be successful and to avoid any microaggressions that they may encounter should they conform to stereotypes of lesbian appearance. This suggests that whilst lesbian stereotypes may present a perceived career barrier, the lesbian women in the sample anticipated and overcame such barriers by changing their appearance.

Furthermore, pressure to conform to feminine appearance was heightened in instances where professionalism was demanded, such as in meetings with senior management. For lesbians, conforming to such professional standards required gender-conforming appearance, such as typically feminine clothing. This finding lends support to previous research by indicating that the ideal professional stereotype is conflated with heterosexuality, and therefore women who conform to less feminine—or lesbian—stereotypes risk being considered to be unprofessional (Brower, 2013; Connell, 2015; Reddy-Best, 2018; Woods & Lucas, 1993).

In some cases, lesbian participants indicated that conformity to stereotypes enhanced opportunities in leadership and management positions as they felt that they had the *"license"* to display stereotypically masculine attributes, such as confidence and assertiveness, which heterosexual women were often penalised for. Therefore lesbians did suggest that they felt a pull towards stereotypically masculine professions, supporting previous assertions (e.g., Schneider & Dimito,

2010). However, lesbian participants did not describe a push from occupations due to incongruent stereotypes. This could be due to the content of lesbian stereotypes being based upon appearance—which interviewees indicated they had changed—and not on assumptions about their abilities to perform in specific roles.

In contrast, gay males discussed multiple forms of perceived career barriers in masculine professions. For example, some gay men felt discouraged from working in masculine professions such as law enforcement due to concerns regarding fitting in with colleagues, particularly due to non-conformity with stereotypically masculine interests and behaviours. Some indicated that they chose not to pursue interests in such occupations for this reason, however others relied on identity concealment to protect them from the negative impacts of perceived incongruence of stereotypes when they were in masculine work environments. Gay men further indicated that they felt encouraged to work in stereotypically feminine professions because they would fit in there, describing themselves as being *"part of the norm".*

In addition, gay men indicated concerns regarding exposure to discrimination and bullying in stereotypically masculine work environments. In contrast to this, they felt that they would be afforded a degree of protection from discrimination when working in stereotypically feminine professions or within female-dominated teams, and so often reported crafting their careers towards these work environments. The concept of *career crafting* refers to the ways in which people engage in proactive behaviours aimed at attaining optimal person-career fit (Tims & Akkermans, 2020). Career crafting is made up of three distinct components: *cognitive career crafting*, *task career crafting* and *relational career crafting*. The latter refers to the importance of building relationships with colleagues, and appears to be evident in the narratives of gay men in the sample who navigated their careers towards environments based upon the perceived similarity of stereotypes, attempting to improve person-career fit.

Gay men in the sample further felt that stereotypes would present a career barrier in masculine professions in the form of challenges to progression and barriers to promotion. This was particularly the case for management and

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leadership roles, as there was a perceived incongruence between stereotypes of gay men and of leaders. This supports the assertion that, similar to heterosexual women, stereotypes of gay men are considered to be incongruent with stereotypes of leaders (Liberman & Golom, 2015; Morton, 2017).

This perceived incongruence of stereotypes led to career-limiting behaviours such as decisions not to pursue promotions or apply for project funding. In order to overcome concerns regarding barriers to progression, participants reported changing or toning down their behaviours to conform to masculine perceptions of professionalism. When others were aware of their gay identity, interviewees reported utilising strategies to signal their professionalism or expertise to others, in an attempt to challenge the stereotypes of gay men. This finding extends research that demonstrates that ideal professional stereotype is conflated with heterosexuality (Brower, 2013; Connell, 2015; Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009; Woods & Lucas, 1993), by identifying that gay male participants had implemented strategies to negate these stereotypes once their sexual identity was known by others.

In contrast to this, some gay males reported feeling that their opportunities for progression would be enhanced in typically feminine professions. Some suggested that they would be more likely to conform to stereotypes of gay men in these scenarios to further enhance their recognition and opportunities for success.

In some cases, conformity to occupational stereotypes was perceived to be a deterrent for gay men. Some felt discouraged from professions that could signal their sexuality to others, and in some cases, chose less feminine-typed roles to conform to heterosexual stereotypes and conceal their sexuality. In contrast, others described signalling their sexuality through their profession as a benefit, as it indicated their sexuality to others without them having to formally disclose it. Congruent with previous research, in most cases perceived congruence of occupational and sexual stereotypes was described positively by participants, and indicated a pull towards typically feminine or female-dominated occupations (e.g., Ellis et al., 2012; Lippa, 2002, 2010). However, in contrast to lesbians, gay men

further indicated that they perceive a push away from typically masculine or male-dominated occupations due to the perception of incongruent stereotypes.

Literature that explores the impact of stereotypes on the careers of LG individuals typically focusses on their endorsement of—or pull towards—gender atypical careers (e.g., Ellis et al., 2012; Lippa, 2002, 2010). The current findings highlight that in addition to these perceived opportunities, gay men also experience the perception of career barriers in—or a push away from—gender typical work environments and careers (e.g., perceived masculine occupations). In contrast, lesbians did not report perceiving career barriers in stereotypically incongruent—or typically feminine—careers.

Whilst occupational stereotypes based upon gender have previously been applied to the career experiences of lesbians and gay men (e.g., Ellis et al., 2012), the relationship between bisexuality and occupational stereotypes has not been previously explored. In the present study, the lack of gender—and otherwise visible—stereotypes noted by bisexual participants meant that no specific occupations or professions were referenced as being seemingly incongruent based upon their own internalised stereotypes.

However, though based upon a small sample size, bisexual interviewees did indicate that stereotype-based prejudice would be heightened in masculine professions and male dominated work environments where they perceived attitudes towards their identity to be less tolerant and less liberal. This led one interviewee to change her career path away from the law profession following successful completion of her degree. In other work environments, awareness of the stereotypes that others hold about them encouraged individuals to construct their identity in an artificial way, or conceal their identity altogether, thereby reducing the impact of such assumptions.

Career experiences of transgender individuals based upon stereotypes further represents an area of research that has not been previously examined. Though based upon a sample of just four participants, transgender and non-binary participants reported feeling that stereotypes of gender non-conformity had impacted their childhood aspirations. For example, those who had particularly

masculine interests during childhood felt that they needed to abandon such aspirations in order to conform to gender stereotypes following MtF gender affirmation. The belief that stereotypes associated with such occupations did not align with their affirmed gender led some to avoid pursuing such aspirations—or feeling pushed from such occupations—and instead embark on career paths where they felt the occupational stereotype was less restrictive.

The non-binary participant within the sample had similarly stopped pursuing certain aspirations due to others' perception of their gender identity and the degree to which it aligned with their interests. However, later in their career, they began to pursue interests with the aim of challenging stereotypes and assumptions regarding their perceived gender, by proving their abilities and expertise to others.

7.2.3   Stereotype-Career Interaction

The third and final research question asked *'how do perceived career barriers, based upon stereotypes, interact with actual career barriers experienced by LGBT individuals?'*. The data presented in Chapter 6 indicated that, despite many implementing identity management and career crafting strategies to avoid the negative impact of perceived incongruent stereotypes on their careers, some did also experience actual career barriers such as discrimination, bullying and exclusion. Such findings support literature that demonstrates the impact of external LGBT stereotypes on discrimination experiences (Drydakis, 2014; Tilcsik, 2011). Thus far, such research typically focusses on replicating discriminatory experiences in the recruitment process in a laboratory setting (Tilcsik et al., 2015), and therefore the current findings extend this to demonstrate the ways in which external LGBT stereotypes contribute to discrimination, bullying and exclusion in the work environment.

The lifespan approach used provided the opportunity to explore the nuances in identity development or career trajectories that could help further understanding of such differences in experiences. It is apparent in the data that the timing of identity development provided one such explanation for these differences. Those who experienced identity development challenges later in their lives—typically from adolescence onwards—described the negative impact that this

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had on their mental health and their education. This finding lends support to the bottleneck hypothesis (Hetherington, 1991), which posits that additional stress experienced by sexual minorities during the development of their sexuality leads to a conflict between the psychological resources that can be devoted to helping navigate this period, and those that can be dedicated to career development behaviours (Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006).

Supporting this theory, participants in the current study who experienced identity challenges and associated turmoil during critical phases of career planning were negatively impacted, as they did not have the cognitive resource or indeed the motivation to engage with career development opportunities. This led to career transitions that were primarily based upon pragmatism, such as the need to secure an income.

A small number of participants who had experienced very few challenges in relation to their identity development did not indicate any interaction of identity and career. Instead, they were able to pursue their interests and ambitions, and focus their cognitive resources on doing so. Taken together, these findings support the underlying proposition of the Bottleneck Hypothesis by demonstrating that challenges regarding identity development can detract crucial cognitive resources from career development (Hetherington, 1991; Lyons et al., 2010; Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006).

Existing research supporting this theory indicates that identity development can either have a negative or neutral impact on career planning and development. However, the findings further extend this theory by highlighting that early identity challenges that are internally resolved before critical phases of career planning begin could potentially be advantageous for career planning. Those who experienced this early identity realisation and resolve felt that the isolation they suffered and their inability to share their experiences with others had pushed them to focus on academic endeavours. For some, the anticipation of rejection from family due to emerging LGBT identity increased their perceived need to be self-sufficient, and therefore encouraged them to work hard to build a successful career. These participants described career transitions based upon the pursuit of

their interests and aspirations, and were able to identify roles and occupations that they felt were well aligned with their self-concept and identity.

This finding is somewhat counterintuitive to the dominant assumption that social support is an important contributor for LGBT individuals in developing career aspirations and career maturity (e.g., Fisher et al., 2011; Schmidt & Nilsson, 2006). Research typically focusses on the negative impact of identity development and risk of rejection on careers and academic achievement (Hetherington, 1991), and positions protective strategies and supportive interventions as mediating factors in this relationship (Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, & Russell, 2018). The findings of the current study indicate that, for some, academic focus can itself be conceptualised as a coping mechanism for identity turmoil and a protective strategy against the risk of rejection, leading to high attainment for those individuals.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the sample in the current study is limited to those in employment, and therefore it is only representative of those who did achieve a degree of academic success. It would be wrong to assume that this is the case for all LGBT individuals who experience identity development, associated turmoil and social exclusion at a young age.

Some participants described ongoing identity challenges at the time of the interview, and discussed the career impact of not necessarily committing to a specific identity. These interviewees perceived work environments as being restrictive and not conducive for identity development. Implementing the self-concept—one's sense of self (Gottfredson, 1981)—throughout their career did not necessarily seem to be a priority for them. Instead, career transitions were driven by the need for career stability, and these participants tended to avoid career transitions that were associated with risk, as they felt that they needed career stability during times of identity instability, which may be indicative of low career resilience (London, 1983). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the impact of LGBT identity development on career resilience has not yet been examined.

There was a general perception amongst interviewees that younger generations are more accepting of LGBT identities, and hold less restrictive stereotypes of minorities, and therefore that career experiences of LGBT individuals

had improved over time. Older participants referenced significant events in their narratives more frequently than younger participants, such as Section 28 and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. During these episodes, they raised greater concerns regarding explicit discrimination and safety both in and out of the workplace, and therefore implicit forms of discrimination due to stereotypes played a less significant role in their career trajectories than that of younger generations.

These findings lend support to the progressing narrative that negative attitudes towards LGBT communities are declining in the West (Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2016), and that LGBT career experiences are improving over time (e.g., Baunach, 2012; Keleher & Smith, 2012). Further, the research indicated that younger participants typically disclosed their identity to others earlier than older participants, which is consistent with previous research (McCormack, Anderson, & Adams, 2014; Robinson & Espelage, 2011).

Many indicated that geographical location and a need for relocation was an important contributing factor during career decision making processes. For some, vocational decisions were driven more so by location than by occupational aspirations. Pursuing a career in a city or country that was perceived to be more accepting of their identity was of great importance to some, and in some cases, even more so than the role itself. Some further described their reluctance to apply for roles which may require international travel due to concerns regarding differing attitudes and legislation related to LGBT identity. Career decisions were therefore more likely to be driven by availability of jobs and other pragmatic factors than for others in the sample who did not face the same constraints.

Whilst some research has examined the role of sexuality in university selection (Taulke-Johnson, 2010), the importance of geographical location is often overlooked in the career development experiences of LGBT individuals. The findings indicate that such consideration can present a career-limiting barrier by reducing the opportunities available to those who are relocating to an area or city where they perceive greater safety.

7.2.4   Integrative Findings

Thus far, findings have been discussed in response to the research questions posed. This sub-section provides a discussion of the findings outside of the context of the specific research question by exploring four integrative themes which emerged during the data analysis.

7.2.4.1 The Importance of the Stereotype

One of the significant findings of the current study is that the extent to which careers are impacted by stereotypes, and the way in which careers are navigated in response to them, is dependent upon the nature of the stereotype the individual has internalised. Based upon the findings discussed earlier in this section, it is reasonable to suggest that the differences in types of stereotypes that lesbians and gay men had internalised could explain the differences in experiences of perceived career barriers. The stereotypes internalised by lesbians were predominantly based upon appearance and did not extend to include assumptions regarding their (in)ability to perform particular roles. However, gay men are often associated with feminine behaviours, such as being flamboyant and less authoritative, which are more likely to generate assumptions regarding their (in)ability to perform certain roles, particularly within a typically masculine work environment.

Furthermore, whilst previous research has focussed on the ways in which LG individuals manage their identity at work through changes to their appearance (Brower, 2013), the current research suggests that the identity management techniques used by lesbians and gay men differ. Lesbians in the present sample were more likely to manage their identity by changing their appearance in order to conform to feminine stereotypes, allowing them to blend in and conceal their lesbian identity. However, gay men were more likely to manage their identity by signalling expertise and professionalism to others, in order to challenge stereotypes or minimise assumptions regarding their identity. The nature of the stereotype that individuals had internalised therefore impacted the identity management techniques employed by lesbians and gay male participants.

One potential explanation for such differences could be attributed to perceptions of competence. Alongside warmth, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002) deems competence to be one of two dimensions upon which all minority groups are perceived by others, and notes that these two dimensions reflect the content of stereotypes of such groups. Previous research has showed that lesbians and bisexual women are rated higher for competence than gay men (Vaughn et al., 2017), and therefore internalisation of these assumptions could assist in understanding why gay men were more likely to perceive career barriers based upon their identity, and to employ identity management techniques to signal their expertise or competence to others.

Based on the findings that gay men are more likely to internalise stereotypes regarding (in)competence than lesbians, and also that concealment techniques are somewhat more difficult for gay men than for lesbians, one would expect that this would increase the likelihood that gay men would be exposed to discrimination throughout their careers. However, research consistently demonstrates that lesbians report higher levels of bullying and discrimination than gay men (e.g., Hoel et al., 2014). The findings of the current study suggest that one reason for this distinction in experiences of discrimination could be that gay men respond to internalised stereotypes by employing strategies that navigate their careers away from environments or roles where they may face such discrimination. It could therefore be concluded that strategies employed in response to perceived career barriers serve to prevent the experience of actual career barriers based upon stereotypes. As lesbians do not internalise stereotypes regarding competence, they are less likely to employ such career crafting strategies which could explain their greater exposure to discrimination throughout their careers.

Alternatively, the difference in experiences of discrimination could be explained by the stereotypes of competence that are held by others. As gay men are subject to stereotypes based upon competence and ability, it may be the case that they are considered to be less of a threat to the career development of others than lesbians are. They may therefore be less likely to suffer discrimination and exclusion as a response to this perceived threat than lesbian women.

Internalisation of stereotypes associated with the personal characteristics of warmth and competence has not yet been explored within the literature, as the model focusses on social perceptions of outgroups. However, the above findings indicate that the internalisation of competence stereotypes may impact career experiences, providing rationale for exploring this mechanism further. Additionally, identifying the importance of the nature of internalised stereotypes in understanding the impact they have on careers supports the use of an intersectional approach in the study of both identity management and career experiences.

7.2.4.2 The Luxury of Career Choice

In exploring the impact of stereotypes on individuals' careers, there is often an implicit assumption made that individuals have a degree of choice and flexibility in their careers, and that such choice is a response to stereotypes. However, not all participants in the current study felt that they had such flexibility in their career decisions. Experiences of identity turmoil, geographical circumstances and generational context all led to a perceived limitation on the choice that some participants felt they had regarding their career trajectories.

Such restriction of choice led some participants to make career decisions based on pragmatic needs, in spite of the stereotypes they had internalised based upon their LGBT identity. This meant that stereotypes regarding careers and identity were not always apparent in individuals' career experiences, as they had prioritised other needs, such as location and income, over the realisation of their career aspirations.

For example, individuals who had experienced challenges regarding identity development during adolescence and had left school without completing their education had prioritised opportunities to earn income and support themselves over the choice to pursue stereotypically congruent occupations. Others had prioritised relocation to a city or country where there is a greater representation of the LGBT community, and had accepted opportunities based on this need despite concerns regarding perceived incongruence of occupational and identity

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stereotypes. Internalised stereotypes may therefore be less apparent in an individual's actual career development experiences as the extent to which they could craft their careers in response to such stereotypes could be limited.

This finding highlights a particular challenge for research that explores the impact of stereotypes by focussing on actual career experiences, as the impact of internalised stereotypes may not be apparent in career trajectories because of the limitations people perceive on their career choice. Though well aware of the stereotypes they were subject to by others, and had internalised themselves, some participants described not choosing particular career paths because of perceived stereotype incongruence as a *"luxury"* that they did not feel they had.

The impact of this finding bears greater significance when considered in the context of the previous sub-section. Section 7.2.4.1 highlights that individuals may respond to internalised stereotypes by employing career crafting strategies and navigating their careers, and that this may reduce the likelihood of encountering negative experiences such as workplace discrimination. However, the findings discussed in this section suggest that for those who do not feel they have the luxury of choosing between different career paths, such techniques may not feel like an option. Individuals who feel their career choice is limited by contextual factors or identity development challenges may therefore be less able to craft their careers towards an environment where they will feel safe, and may face greater exposure to discrimination in their careers. In this case, safety and protection from discrimination could also be considered to be a luxury. Future research should therefore explore ways in which perceived choice can be enhanced in order to increase opportunities for individuals to craft their careers.

7.2.4.3 The Benefits of Early Identity Development

Another significant finding that emerged from the current research was that early identity challenges that are internally resolved before critical phases of career planning begin could potentially be advantageous for career planning. Those who felt that they overcame such challenges during early childhood used their negative experiences as a drive to perform and achieve academically. Furthermore, some

described experiences of loneliness and a lack of social support as a benefit during their education, as they were not distracted and instead focussed on their academic work. For some, the anticipation of rejection from family due to their emerging identity increased their perceived need to be self-sufficient, and therefore encouraged them to work hard to build a successful career.

The findings of the current study therefore indicate that academic focus can itself be conceptualised as a coping mechanism for identity turmoil and a protective strategy against the risk of rejection, leading to high attainment for those individuals. However, the sample in the current study is limited to those in relatively secure and typically well-paid employment, and therefore the sample did not provide the opportunity to explore the experiences of those whose academic endeavours suffered significantly as a result of identity turmoil and social exclusion at a young age.

It also became apparent from the data that those who felt that they had resolved their identity development conflict at a young age had referenced the negative impact of stereotypes less frequently than others in the sample. One potential explanation for this could be that early identity development had heightened their awareness of stereotypes, and therefore provided more opportunity to practice navigating such assumptions, for example by learning effective strategies to conceal their identity when needed.

Research has previously identified that lesbians and gay men develop skills in social perceptiveness as a result of frequently assessing their social environment when making concealment/disclosure decisions. This phenomenon has been studied in the context of occupational segregation, and has been used as an explanation for the greater propensity of lesbians and gay men to seek roles that require social perceptiveness (Tilcsik et al., 2015). The current study extends this finding by highlighting that those who experience early identity resolve may be more likely to develop such skills than those who experience identity development and realisation later in their life.

Another potential explanation that could support this finding is that those who had experienced early identity development had observed the challenges

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faced by older LGBT individuals throughout their careers. Acknowledging that their identity may contribute to the experience of career barriers later in life, individuals may have decided to employ strategies from a young age to protect themselves from this potential restriction of their future careers, and to maximise the options available to them throughout their career trajectory. Supporting this suggestion, participants who had experienced early identity development had described career transitions that were typically based upon pursuing their interests, and noted that their academic success afforded them this opportunity.

Building upon the discussion in sections 7.2.4.1 and 7.2.4.2, the enhanced choice and opportunity that is perceived by individuals who have experienced early identity development—and used this to drive their academic achievement—could be of significant benefit in terms of crafting their careers toward safe environments. Moreover, it could be the case that factors such as geographical location and generational context could enhance the likelihood that individuals will experience early identity development and resolve, as those who are more exposed to other LGBT individuals may feel better equipped and supported in such identity development. Contextual factors may therefore not only enhance or delay perceived career choice themselves, but may also contribute to other experiences (such as timing of identity development and resolve) which in turn can enhance or limit perceived career choice.

Adopting a lifespan approach allowed for the identification of this finding, and therefore future research should explore the extent to which timing of identity development impacts careers across the lifespan, and not restrict this study to experiences during adolescence and critical phases of career planning.

7.2.4.4 The Absence of Visible Stereotypes

As discussed in section 7.2.1, bisexual and non-binary participants did not report the existence of stereotypes based upon appearance or behaviours, and therefore did not feel subject to such stereotypes based upon their sexuality or gender identity. That there are seemingly no visible stereotypes regarding

individuals with non-binary identities means that, in order for their identity to be known by others, they must explicitly communicate this to them.

This finding could explain the higher rates of bullying and harassment faced by bisexual individuals that is typically reported in research (e.g., Hoel et al., 2014). Until the point at which an individual communicates their identity, it is unlikely that the person they are communicating with would assume that they are bisexual or non-binary. It is more likely that individuals will be perceived to be cisgender, transgender, gay or lesbian, as there are visible stereotypes readily associated with such identities. It therefore follows that the act of communicating their non-binary gender identity or bisexuality to others will in itself violate the assumptions that others have of them.

In disclosing their identity, bisexual and non-binary individuals are frequently exposing themselves to the backlash effect by others (Rudman, 1998), defined as the social and economic reprisals for being perceived by others to be behaving counter-stereotypically. Stereotype literature has identified that when individuals act or behave in a way that is not expected of them based on how others perceive them, they are subject to negative reactions from others, ranging from implicit to explicit acts of discrimination and exclusion. The discrimination and exclusion faced by bisexual and non-binary individuals may therefore be heightened by the act of disclosing their identity and negating the assumptions others had previously held about them.

Supporting this explanation, research demonstrates that not only are non-binary and bisexual individuals more likely to experience discrimination than lesbian, gay and transgender individuals, but also that disclosure of such non-binary identities is often met with feelings of shock and betrayal (Harrison, Grant, & Herman, 2012; Hoel et al., 2014). Such feelings indicate that individuals do not consider others to be bisexual or to identify as non-binary until the point at which this is explicitly communicated. The current findings indicate that this may be due to the lack of visible stereotypes held about this community.

Recent research has documented a rise in prominence of non-binary identities, with more young people identifying as non-binary (Clark, Veale,

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Townsend, Frohard-Dourlent, & Saewyc, 2018), and such identities becoming increasingly recognised in society (Monro, Crocetti, Yeadon-Lee, Garland, & Travis, 2017). It may therefore be the case that, over time, such identities come to be visibly recognised through the development of stereotypes. Future research could explore this development over time, allowing for identification of ways to minimise their impact in society and reduce the negative outcomes that have been documented throughout this thesis.

7.3   Implications and Limitations

This section provides a discussion of the implications of the findings of the current study both in terms of contribution to theory and recommendations for practice. This is followed by a critical review of the limitations of the study and recommendations for overcoming such challenges in future research.

7.3.1   Theoretical Implications

The research findings can be applied to a range of key theories of stereotypes and careers, to extend their applicability to LGBT individuals. This section details the ways in which the findings contribute to dominant theories within the domains of stereotypes, careers and identity development, as well as contributions to theory that are generated based upon the methodology of the research.

7.3.1.1 Implicit Inversion Theory

The Implicit Inversion Theory (IIT; Kite & Deaux, 1987) postulates that the gendered stereotypes of lesbians and gay men are inverse to that of their heterosexual equivalents, and that these stereotypes are held by LG individuals themselves (Clarke & Arnold, 2017). Research supporting this theory typically demonstrates that lesbians are stereotyped as masculine, and gay men are stereotyped as feminine (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Jackson & Sullivan, 1990; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Page & Yee, 1985; Wong et al., 1999).

Findings from the current study challenge this proposition by indicating that the stereotypes internalised by lesbians are more closely related to exhibiting less

femininity, and not necessarily heightened masculinity. Further, gay men internalised stereotypes that were based upon a lack of masculinity, and not necessarily increased femininity. This could be indicative of a decline in the strength of gender stereotypes of lesbians and gay men over time, and suggest that they are better defined as androgynous, rather than inverse (Barrantes & Eaton, 2018; Clarke & Arnold, 2017; Niedlich et al., 2015).

The findings could also extend the IIT, by highlighting that the type of stereotypes that lesbians and gay men internalise are different. Though some reference was made to behavioural stereotypes (e.g., assertiveness), internalised assumptions of lesbians were predominantly focussed on appearance (e.g., hairstyle and clothing). Further, whilst it was suggested that there is a stereotype of gay men's appearance, internalised assumptions regarding gay men were predominantly focussed on behaviours (e.g., being flamboyant).

This distinction is apparent in previous research. For example, gay male participants in Einarsdottir et al.'s (2015) study described being subject to stereotypes of being *"a drama queen and an attention seeker", "too loud", "so gay, flamboyant, extrovert and verbose",* whereas lesbians were stereotyped as *"not beautiful"* and having *"bad dress sense"*. The authors concluded that *"stereotypes portray lesbians as ugly and physically undesirable and gay men as unserious and shallow"*, which alludes to the different types of stereotypes that lesbians and gay men are subject to. However, until now, this distinction has not been articulated in this way.

The finding that lesbians and gay men are subject to different types of gender stereotype has implications for the way in which such stereotypes are examined and measured. Research that employs the IIT as a framework for understanding the impact of stereotypes typically involves asking participants to assign a group of items that are either representative of stereotypical masculinity or femininity—including traits and characteristics—to different identities, including heterosexual men and women, lesbians, and gay men (e.g., Hancock et al., 2020). In doing so, such research does not account for the relative strength or predominance

of these stereotypes, and therefore overlooks nuances in implications that various stereotypes can have (e.g., appearance vs attributes).

Further, the extent to which different stereotypes are internalised is often overlooked by research employing the IIT. The current study indicates that stereotypes of gender and sexuality are internalised by lesbians and gay men, and therefore this finding warrants exploration of their impact in other domains in addition to career experiences. Utilising a research method that allows for examination of internalised stereotypes, as well as their relative strength, will increase the specificity of studies exploring the impact of such assumptions, and so by implication, will enhance the effectiveness of interventions to overcome such impact. Interventions are discussed in further detail in section 7.3.2.3.

Although based upon a relatively small sample, the findings indicate that transgender individuals are subject to—and internalise—inverse gender stereotypes during childhood and adolescence, pre-transition or before affirming their gender identity. For transgender women in the sample, gender non-conforming interests such as masculine career aspirations were deemed to be stereotypical of transgender identity. By indicating that transgender individuals are often subject to inverse gender stereotypes at this time, this research provides rationale for possibly including them within the IIT, and advancing knowledge of transgender stereotypes and experiences by including them in future research within this framework.

7.3.1.2 Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; Lent & Brown, 1996; Lent et al., 1994) asserts that both contextual and personal factors influence occupational interest, selection and performance. SCCT proposes that gender socialisation and gender stereotypes influence perceptions of ability and self-efficacy (Bandura et al., 2001; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) which, rather than actual competence (e.g., grades), is a better predictor of academic and occupational outcome (Bandura et al., 2001; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Lent et al., 1994). The theory further considers occupational stereotypes to be an important contextual factor in career related

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decision making (Fouad, 2007; Lent et al., 1994, 2000), restricting or expanding vocational interest as early as adolescence, when gender-typical aspirations begin to develop (Fouad & Santana, 2017; Lent & Brown, 2019). The theory therefore posits that perceived incongruence between identity and the stereotype of a successful individual within an occupation can indeed present a perceived career barrier, as this perception correlates with lower levels of career decision self-efficacy (Luzzo et al., 1996).

Thus far, application of this theory to the LGBT community has been limited to the examination of the relationship between static constructs, such as experiences of discrimination and career decisions based upon perceived safety. Findings of the present study therefore provide a theoretical contribution to SCCT by revealing the role of internalised stereotypes as a factor that influences LGBT career development. Findings indicate that perceived congruence of occupational stereotypes can provide opportunities or support for both lesbians and gay men, however perceived incongruence of such stereotypes also creates the perception of career barriers for gay men.

Further, though based on a small sample, the results indicate that transgender and non-binary participants only experience perceived career barriers based upon gender stereotypes, and do not perceive enhanced opportunities or advantage as a result of stereotypes based upon their identity. The impact of stereotypes on career aspirations and decisions was limited to pre-transition or pre-gender affirmation for transgender women in the sample. Though these findings must be considered within the context of the limited sample, this may explain the finding from research that suggests that those who identify as pre-transition report lower career decision self-efficacy than those who identify as post-transition (Dickey et al., 2016). Transgender individuals may be more susceptible to—and impacted by—gender stereotypes during this period, as they are living in a body that does not express their gender identity, which in turn may reduce their career decision self-efficacy.

The findings further extend this theory by highlighting the importance of geographical location as a contextual factor in the career decision making process

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of LGBT individuals. Participants reported career decisions based upon the need to relocate to a city or country that afforded them more safety and protection against prejudice and discrimination. Though members of other minority groups may share such concerns, LGBT individuals are somewhat uniquely impacted by the vastly different legislative protection (or indeed persecution) that exists across regions internationally.

The current study also highlights the importance of understanding identity development experiences when examining the factors that influence career decisions. Those who experienced identity development challenges during critical phases of career planning (e.g., during secondary school and college) felt that the disruption this caused to their academic achievement reduced their career options, and they therefore had to make more pragmatic career choices instead of pursuing aspirations. For these participants, career trajectories and actual career experiences were not representative of their perceived career challenges, but instead were based upon a need to secure an income and career stability. Future research that utilises the SCCT framework to explore LGBT careers should consider implementing a similar method to examine the impact of identity development in tandem with career trajectories.

7.3.1.3 Think Manager, Think Male

Researchers have demonstrated the impact of role congruity in an occupational setting, by showing a congruence between stereotypes of how leaders should behave and stereotypes of men (e.g. assertive and competitive), and incongruence between stereotypes of leaders and stereotypes of women (e.g. nice and compassionate), and have termed this phenomenon the Think Manager, Think Male paradigm (Schein et al., 1996). This concept was further extended by Liberman & Golom (2015) whose research showed greater congruence between the stereotypes of heterosexual male and female managers and the successful manager prototype, than between the stereotypes of gay male managers and the successful manager prototype. Based upon this, others have suggested that this

phenomenon should be called *"Think Manager, Think Heterosexual Male"* (Morton, 2017).

The present study lends support to this extension of the paradigm, by showing that gay men felt that working within a masculine or male-dominated profession presented perceived barriers to progression, due to incongruence in stereotypes associated with successful people in those roles (e.g., managers). This in turn led to career limiting behaviours, such as decisions not to pursue promotions or apply for project funding to advance their careers. Further, this perception led to changes in behaviours in order to conform to masculine perceptions of professionalism within such environments.

However, the current research also challenges the above paradigms by indicating that lesbians in the sample felt that, in management and leadership roles, their *"license"* to display stereotypical masculine attributes such as confidence and assertiveness was beneficial and enhanced their perceived opportunities. It may therefore be the case that when individuals think manager, they do not necessarily think male, or even think heterosexual male, but in fact they think *masculinity*. Future research that examines these paradigms and their impact should consider the importance of masculine stereotypes and their association with other identities, and not limit this concept's application to heterosexual men.

7.3.1.4 Circumscription and Compromise Theory

Circumscription and Compromise Theory (Gottfredson, 2002) describes how career aspirations are formed during childhood, and develop with the evolving self-concept. The circumscription phase refers to the process of determining the suitability of roles based upon self-concept, defined as *"one's view of one-self, one's view of who one is and who one is not"* (Gottfredson, 1981, p.547). Implementation of the self-concept throughout a career involves the selection of occupations that are congruent with self-image. The compromise phase outlines the way people may sacrifice certain career choices following consideration of both contextual obstacles and available opportunities (Gottfredson, 1981; Lawson et al., 2018).

The present study extends this theory to include LGBT individuals, by demonstrating that incongruence between self-image and occupational stereotypes created the perception of career barriers, leading to the abandonment of childhood career aspirations for members of this community. Gay men revealed their anticipation that they would not fit in within masculine professions, would face barriers to progression, and would be exposed to greater discrimination. Implementation of the self-concept in their career experiences was evident through strategies to craft careers towards environments where they felt they would be *"part of the norm"* and their opportunity for progression would be enhanced, such as typically feminine professions.

Further, though based on a small sample size, MtF transgender and non-binary participants described abandonment of childhood career aspirations due to perceived incongruence between their self-concept, and occupational stereotypes. Though this impact on LGBT careers has been hypothesised in the literature (e.g., Chen & Keats, 2016; Croteau et al., 2000; Wada et al., 2019), it had not yet been empirically explored.

7.3.1.5 Career Construction Theory

Career Construction Theory (CCT; Savickas, 2005) provides a framework for examining the interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals construct themselves, impose direction on their career behaviours, and make meaning of their vocational trajectories. In relation to the role of stereotypes in career development and perception, the theory notes how exclusion from certain experiences, such as gender atypical experiences in childhood, can reduce confidence in approaching those activities and could reduce interest in occupations that are associated with them (Savickas, 2005).

Clear reference to CCT was evident within the timeline and narrative data, which demonstrated significant interaction between career experiences and identity, with each influencing the other throughout. In doing so, participants indicated how they implemented their developing self-concept into their careers, by making career decisions that were reflective of their identity exploration. This

supports the CCT and also highlights its applicability to LGBT careers as a research framework.

These findings warrant further application of the CCT to LGBT careers. The results indicate that those who experience ongoing identity challenges related to their sexual or gender identity development are perhaps less likely to implement the self-concept throughout their career, instead seeking stability to counter their experiences of identity instability. Used as a tool for aiding career development, career construction counselling has been applied to assist women with life and career design. The Career Construction Interview (Savickas, 2013) involves construction and deconstruction activities based upon the self, identity and career, with the aim of dispiriting ideas, beliefs, scripts or incidents (including gender biases) to open up new pathways previously considered infeasible.

The findings of this research indicate that this method could be used as an effective tool for assisting LGBT individuals in overcoming perceived career challenges based upon stereotypes outlined in the data. The present study therefore provides a theoretical basis for using the CCT and the associated Career Construction Interview as a mechanism for assisting LGBT individuals in overcoming career development challenges.

7.3.1.6 Methodological Contributions

Research Design

The research design employed in the study addresses key limitations of previous research, including the overreliance on quantitative studies of stereotypes and careers. The combination of applying a visual timeline and narrative interview represents a seldom used method in research within the LGBT stereotype and careers literature, however it allowed for significant insight into the interaction between identity and career, and perceptions of career experiences as a result of such interaction. By using a lifespan approach to study identity and career development, the research was able to capture the continuous reassessment of careers and identity and the multiple transitions that were made, responding to calls to provide longitudinal evidence regarding the impact of stereotypes (Poteat

et al., 2014). As previously noted, such data, which reveal the dynamic nature of career and identity development, is rarely captured due to the overreliance on measuring career development experiences and aspirations at a static point in time.

The visual timeline further assisted in building rapport with interviewees, as has been discussed in Chapter 3. It could be argued that the timeline method helped them feel more comfortable during otherwise personal and emotional discussions and reflections, and therefore allowed for greater insight into the experiences and perceptions than would have otherwise been afforded. This study demonstrates that the use of such a methodology is appropriate and advantageous to facilitate future research focussed on exploration of LGBT experiences, by alleviating some of the social barriers that hinder the elicitation of personal and emotional discussions with stigmatised minority groups.

Participants

The study further addressed a common critique of previous LGBT research: that bisexual and transgender participants are often overlooked or underrepresented. Though the present study was limited in sample size of bisexual and transgender individuals, inclusion of members from such communities advances the currently limited research regarding their career experiences.

Further, the intersectional sensitivity that was employed during the data collection process allowed for detection of nuances in experiences, particularly with regards to different experiences of identity development and of gender stereotypes. For example, by collecting demographic information using participants' terminology, a greater variety of identities within the transgender community could be identified, and distinctions in their experiences could be explored. This approach responds to calls in the literature to honour the unique and intersectional experiences of this community (Hoffshire, 2017).

The research contributes to careers literature by exploring the lived experiences of those who are at advanced stages of their careers. Much of the existing research that examines the impact of stereotypes on careers utilises student populations, and assesses their career aspirations at a specific point in time

(e.g., Ehrlinger et al., 2018), however there are many challenges that must be considered when using student populations in such research. For example, it became apparent in the research project that the interaction of identity and careers is typically dynamic and ongoing, as is identity development itself.

In addition, including both older and younger participants in the sample allowed for the detection of vast generational differences in experiences. Awareness of such differences, including the likelihood that younger LGBT individuals will begin to disclose their identity at a younger age, is likely to have a significant impact on the career experiences of those within this community. For example, this may impact levels of support that individuals have available to them at a young age (Bernal & Coolhart, 2005; Riley, 2010), and will reduce the generalisability of previous findings to older LGBT communities.

The career-related experiences of college students, and their perceptions of LGBT stereotypes, are unlikely to be the same as those of older LGBT individuals who may have experienced significant discrimination at the start of their career. For example, the current research identified that participants felt that university experiences were very different to employment experiences, where they felt more restricted in terms of their identity exploration and presentation. This may influence the extent to which career aspirations translate to actual career experiences. The lifespan approach provided the opportunity to account for such differences and their impact, and not assume homogeneity of experiences of those of different generations.

7.3.2   Practical Implications

In addition to contributions to theory, practical implications of the findings have also been identified. This section discusses contributions to vocational counselling and education, as well as how the findings may benefit organisations.

7.3.2.1 Careers Counselling

Whilst research investigating the career experiences of LGBT individuals has advanced in recent years, the context of career counselling has been paid relatively little attention (Dispenza, Brown, & Chastain, 2016), and the limited research that

does consider this context is predominantly focussed on samples in the US. A lack of understanding of the relationship between LGBT identity and career behaviours often results in a lack of LGBT specific interventions in the UK, including career guidance and counselling (Chen & Keats, 2016). Given the many career barriers that LGBT adolescents face, they may feel pressured to pursue stereotypical career options that are viable, yet not related to their interests or passion. The present study highlights that occupational stereotypes do impact the career behaviours of this population, and therefore this should be considered within the context of LGBT career guidance.

In order to fully understand and address the career challenges that LGBT individuals face, vocational counsellors should be aware of the unique experiences of LGBT identity development and how this interacts with perceptions of careers. The present research contributes to vocational counselling practice in the UK by highlighting the key stereotypes that are internalised by LGBT communities, and their significance within career development. The findings demonstrate how the internalisation of such assumptions may create a perceived career barrier for gay, transgender and non-binary people, and may lead to perceptions regarding unwelcoming work environments for lesbians and bisexual individuals, imposing a perceived limit on their ability to succeed within that career path. Further, these findings may assist counsellors in identifying their own biases towards the LGBT community, and challenge preconceptions regarding LGBT career interests and opportunities.

7.3.2.2 Education

Young LGBT individuals face many challenges during education as this is a crucial time for identity development, as suggested by the Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 2003) and the Bottleneck hypothesis (Hetherington, 1991). Attention paid to the importance of LGBT inclusive school curricula has increased, however this is largely focussed on relationships and sex education (e.g., Gegenfurtner & Gebhardt, 2017). Such research has recently been extended to include schools in England,

following government-issued guidance regarding the delivery of LGBT-inclusive relationships and sex education programmes at school (Formby & Donovan, 2020).

However, recent reports from the US show the importance of LGBT inclusive curricula outside of this specific topic. Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong (2018) examined the data from The 2017 National School Climate Survey, and identified that students who attended a school that included positive representations of LGBT topics in the curriculum reported being subject to less biased language, increased perceptions of safety, and demonstrate enhanced academic performance and clearer career aspirations. The findings of the present study further indicate the importance of LGBT inclusion in careers discussions, particularly with respect to identities of those working within employment sectors traditionally considered to be masculine or feminine. Such exposure could negate the gender stereotypic inferences that children might make (Hayes et al., 2018), thereby reducing some of the effects of stereotypes that have been discussed in this research. LGBT students who see themselves reflected in careers they had previously thought inaccessible may feel more motivated to engage with the subject; more encouraged to pursue such careers; and less likely to perceive career barriers. The SCCT model (Lent & Brown, 1996) supports this assertion, as it highlights the importance of learning experiences in predicting self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which in turn predict interests and performance outcomes.

Additionally, inclusive curricula could also address broader concerns of LGBT students, by improving intergroup relations and fostering a more welcoming school climate. Many interviewees described their experiences of learning LGBT stereotypes during school, through observation of peers and teaching materials, and also through reactions to their behaviours. LGBT students facing discrimination and harassment are more likely to develop negative school attitudes and achieve lower grades than non-LGBT students (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Russell, Seif, & Truong, 2001; Sue & Sue, 2003). As the present research shows, this has a lasting effect on attitudes towards—and perceptions of choice throughout— careers. Inclusive curricula may reduce the likelihood of negative reactions to

gender non-conforming behaviours, thereby reducing the likelihood of such negative perceptions throughout careers.

7.3.2.3 Workplace Implications

Existing organisational efforts to reduce gender inequalities typically focus on the experiences of women as the embodiment of the gendered subject, narrowing debates by overlooking additional influences such as sexual or gender identity (Marlow et al., 2018). By highlighting that LGBT individuals perceive career opportunities, career barriers, and work environments differently to non-LGBT individuals, the present research extends discussions of gender in the workplace, and responds to calls for a maturation of research that conducts gendered analyses (Marlow et al., 2018) by drawing on the experiences of people outside of the heteronormative binary. For example, many interventions that aim to improve the work experiences of women are designed within a heteronormative environment, and may therefore be overlooking the experiences of other women, such as lesbians, who internalise restrictive stereotypes that position them as distinct from those who conform to heteronormative expectations of women.

Furthermore, this research indicates that efforts to improve gender balance in organisations and industries that are still subject to occupational stereotypes may not be as inclusive as they are intended to be. For example, attempts to improve the representation of women in previously male-dominated occupations—such as management or roles within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)—may predominantly be attracting gender non-conforming women such as lesbians, and therefore may be reinforcing the masculine stereotype ascribed to such jobs. Organisations could utilise the findings from this research to consider how restrictive occupational stereotypes may be impacting their recruitment efforts, particularly with reference to those who do not conform to gender norms.

Findings further support the importance of understanding the different implications of stereotypes in the workplace for people within the LGBT community. One of the ways in which this impacts organisations is related to the

way in which they collect data regarding employee experiences in the workplace. For example, quantitative surveys that aggregate the workplace experiences of lesbians, gay men, bisexual men, bisexual women, and all of the transgender community may not fully capture the nuances in experiences that emerge within this population. Further, the techniques that people within this community use to manage their identity in the workplace are different, and therefore specific concerns that employees have may not be captured by binary questions about disclosure and concealment. LGBT employees may have disclosed their identity at work to some colleagues (Croteau, Anderson, & Vanderwal, 2008), but may still feel that they have to behave or dress in a particular way in order to remove identity signals to others who they have not disclosed to. Staff survey designs that do not acknowledge the importance of these differences may not be truly reflective of employee experiences.

Additionally, acknowledging that lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals are largely subject to different types of gendered stereotypes, and therefore impacted differently by them, would advance existing organisational diversity and inclusion training. By highlighting nuances in common stereotypes, and thereby increasing their awareness, inclusion interventions and unconscious bias training will be better targeted and able to reduce the prevalence of such assumptions. For example, instead of using general references to masculinity stereotypes for lesbians and femininity stereotypes for gay men, by focussing on the strongest stereotypes (e.g., appearance of lesbians and behaviours of gay men), strategies to reduce the impact of stereotypes can be targeted more effectively.

The findings from this study highlight the challenges associated with the invisibility of non-binary identities in the work environment. For example, those who identify outside the gender binary are often misrecognised as male or female. Bisexual individuals, and others who identify outside the heteronormative binary, are often misrecognised as heterosexual or gay/lesbian, based upon the perceived gender of their partner. Verbally disclosing one's bisexual identity has negative repercussions, such as conformity to negative stereotypes of seeking attention, or hiding a *"true"* sexual identity. Binary identity assumptions are pervasive, and

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acknowledging this impact within a work environment can assist organisations in overcoming the challenges often associated with them, such as discrimination and bullying.

7.3.3   Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

As with all empirical research, the study was not without limitations. This section outlines the challenges faced during participant and organisation recruitment, and the implications of this on the applicability of the findings. The identification of limitations is accompanied by recommendations for overcoming such issues in subsequent research.

7.3.3.1 Participant Recruitment

Sampling issues are commonplace in research investigating LGBT experiences, as there are many well documented challenges when recruiting LGBT participants for research purposes (Hart-Johnson, 2017). For example, LGBT employees may be concerned that participation in the research could risk disclosure of LGBT identity to colleagues who are unaware of their true identity, and therefore such individuals are less likely to volunteer to participate (McFadden, 2015). In order to overcome this challenge, existing LGBT networks within the three participating organisations were used to advertise the research and recruit the sample.

Members of such networks are more likely to have their sexual orientation or gender identity known in the workplace (Colgan et al., 2008), and therefore the risk of minority identity being disclosed inadvertently is minimised. It could be argued that use of the LGBT networks secured the relatively high number of participants within the sample, which is otherwise difficult to achieve. Using the existing communication channels that were implemented by the LGBT network (e.g., mailing lists) may have indicated to the prospective sample that the research was being conducted in a secure and confidential manner, and that it was supported by their organisation.

However, there are limitations of this recruitment method that must be acknowledged. Firstly, as members of networks are more likely to have disclosed

their identity at work, the sampling strategy does not target those who are not open about their identity at work, or are uncomfortable joining an LGBT employee network (Di Marco et al., 2015). This could mean that those who have been most severely affected by LGBT stereotypes and discrimination would not be exposed to the recruitment advertisement, and therefore their experiences would not be captured. Further, the self-selection sampling strategy may have created selection bias, as those who did volunteer may have done so because they have had specific experiences they wanted to discuss (Di Marco et al., 2015). In contrast, those who do not feel they have been disadvantaged by their identity may be less likely to participate in LGBT research, as they may have perceived themselves to be ineligible for the study (Roberson, 2006).

Further challenges arise with regards to the diversity of identities within LGBT networks. Whilst the sample is diverse in terms of career experience, age and job role, gay men are somewhat overrepresented in the sample. Though efforts were made to increase lesbian participation in the study—for example by also targeting Women's Networks—they remained underrepresented in comparison to gay males.

Furthermore, only two bisexual and four transgender participants volunteered to take part in the study, which could be deemed small samples. The findings of the research related to bisexual and transgender individuals can therefore be taken only as an indication of experiences, however further research is warranted to understand the extent to which such experiences apply to other members of bisexual and transgender communities. For example, the findings regarding transgender experiences are not generalisable to other members of the community, such as Female to Male transgender individuals who, unlike those in the current sample, may perceive enhanced opportunities due to conformity with the masculine stereotype.

Additional issues arose with regards to achieving ethnic diversity within the sample, with only five participants who self-identified as non-white. This further limits the applicability of the research, as it could be deemed non-representative of non-white LGBT communities. However, this represents a common limitation in

LGBT research, and a review of other research that has utilised LGBT networks has revealed a similar challenge as ethnic minority employees are less likely to disclose their gender or sexual identity at work (e.g., Colgan, Creegan, Mckearney, & Wright, 2007).

Further, it is possible that the findings may not be generalisable across different levels of class. Information pertaining to such aspects of identity was not collected in the research process, however it could be assumed that the organisations and occupations of those within the sample had attracted employees with a middle-class background. Further, almost all interviewees referred to their university experiences, and therefore it can be assumed that the applicability of findings is somewhat limited to those with a similar level of education.

In order to overcome the recruitment challenges identified, future research investigating LGBT experiences could utilise a range of complementary recruitment methods. For example, snowball sampling alongside the network advertisements may encourage those who are not part of the networks to engage. This is likely to create greater variance in the extent to which experiences have been impacted by identity and associated stereotypes. Advertising could also be conducted online through LGBT forums, where individuals who wish to maintain anonymity are more likely to be exposed to the recruitment information.

Future research could also build upon the findings of this study, and focus on the specific experiences of bisexual and transgender individuals. By recruiting only bisexual or transgender participants for the study, more targeted recruitment strategies might be employed.

7.3.3.2 Organisation Recruitment

Organisations involved in the present study were selected for the purpose of access, as the researcher had previously established professional relationships with leaders of LGBT networks within three large organisations. This provided the opportunity to recruit a large sample from multiple organisations within an appropriate timeframe for the study. Further, these organisations were deemed to be appropriate for the study as—in terms of occupational stereotypes—they are

not stereotyped as masculine or feminine, but are all considered to be stereotypically neutral. Using three organisations situated within different industries provided the opportunity to explore a significant variety of career histories, as most interviewees had experienced a varied career path before starting in their current role.

Alas, utilising stereotypically neutral organisations may have introduced skew to the sample, as the findings may not be representative of those who were successful in pursuing aspirations that are considered to be typical or atypical of LGBT individuals. For example, the organisation recruitment strategy did not allow for exploration of lesbian's perceptions of opportunities in male dominated jobs, or the barriers that they may have perceived when pursuing stereotypically feminine aspirations. Conducting similar research within typically masculine or feminine professions may highlight more extreme experiences of barriers or opportunities based upon stereotypes. Further, greater variance in the types of professions sampled may have led to the recruitment of members of "subgroups" of the LGBT community, as have been identified in previous research (Clausell & Fiske, 2005; McCutcheon & Morrison, 2019).

Future research could use the findings as rationale for exploring such experiences within stereotypically masculine and feminine industries and occupations. Findings from such research could then assist in furthering understanding of whether lesbians who aspire to work in traditionally masculine roles internalise different stereotypes, and whether they perceive career barriers in typically feminine professions.

7.3.3.3 Research Design

As previously identified, the application of the narrative interview and timeline methods offered great insight into the interaction of identity and career development, and has generated significant theoretical contributions. The timeline method was used solely as an interview prompt for participants, and was not used as a data collection tool. It could be argued that, as interviewees were aware that the timeline information would not be analysed or published, that they were more

likely to record particularly sensitive or personal information. In turn, this may have translated into a richer and more in-depth discussion of experiences in the interview.

However, it could also be argued that the utility of the timelines was limited, as they may have provided data that could have contributed to the analysis process. Additionally, the images could not be used to show key interactions and trends in the written thesis. The timeline could have been embedded further into the interview process and provided an additional source of data, as has been the case in previous studies (e.g., Duberley & Carmichael, 2016). Further research could consider the role of co-production of the timelines in order to enrich the data it produces, and could also employ analytical methods such as event history analysis or sequence analysis (Eerola & Helske, 2012). In the context of the current study, overlaying such data may have allowed for greater identification of the impact of external events and the context of the timing of participant's narratives.

Finally, though efforts were made throughout the research process to acknowledge intersecting identities in the sample, and utilise intersectionally-sensitive analyses, the lack of diversity within the sample limited the extent to which this could be done effectively. For example, as ethnic minorities were underrepresented in the sample, opportunities to consider the intersection of LGBT and ethnic identity were limited. As a result of this, the current study drew upon the aspects of identity that could be analysed in this way, such as gender, sexuality and age. Further research should consider the importance of maximising the diversity of the sample in order to examine the extent to which LGBT identity influences career experiences, and how this may differ for individuals with multiple or intersecting marginalised identities.

7.4   Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the key findings, implications and limitations of the current research study, and provided a basis for further exploration of LGBT stereotypes and their impact on career development. The outputs of this research have implications for theories and studies of LGBT stereotypes, as well as for

institutions with responsibility for assisting LGBT individuals with career development, as they demonstrate the subtle yet important differences between the types of stereotypes that members of this community are subject to and internalise. The chapter further demonstrates that this exploratory research provides rationale for studying the implications for theory in further empirical research, and also makes recommendations for how researchers should go about this undertaking.

Chapter 8   Conclusion

The aim of the current research was to explore the impact of internalised stereotypes on the career experiences of LGBT individuals, with a focus on perceptions of career barriers. Findings indicate that stereotypes based upon sexuality and gender do impact the careers of members of this community, particularly when they are deemed to be incongruent with occupational stereotypes. This perception of dissimilarity between personal and occupational stereotypes led to different career perceptions for individuals within the sample.

For lesbians, internalised stereotypes were based upon less femininity, particularly with regards to appearance. Participants reported pressure to conform to heterosexual presentation and appearance, and feeling that this was essential to be successful in a professional work environment. Gay men reported the internalisation of stereotypes relating to less masculinity, particularly in relation to behaviours and mannerisms. Gay male participants perceived many different forms of career barriers within masculine work environments, such as not fitting in, risk of bullying and discrimination, and barriers to progression.

Though internalised gender stereotypes were not reported by bisexual participants, they did feel they needed to craft their careers toward liberal work environments where colleagues are less likely to hold negative stereotypes based on their identity. For transgender individuals, stereotypes of gender non-conformity translated into abandonment of career aspirations and decisions to pursue careers in work environments that were not necessarily gendered.

This thesis has detailed how the types of career barriers perceived by participants depends upon the nature of the stereotypes they internalise, which the findings suggest are different for lesbians, gay men, bisexual men, bisexual women, transgender and non-binary individuals. Further, this research has highlighted that the extent to which actual career experiences reflect such perceptions is dependent upon the experience of identity development, as well as generational and locational differences. Such contextual factors may limit the degree to which individuals feel they can implement choice in their career trajectory, and navigate their careers in response to internalised stereotypes.

It is apparent that LGBT individuals currently feel restricted to career trajectories that are based on the perceptions of barriers based on their identity, and concerns for safety in work environments, and that these decisions are driven from societal norms and stereotypes. However, it is hoped that the future of LGBT careers represents an even landscape of equality. When achieved, those who do not identify as heterosexual or cisgender will be able to pursue careers that are based upon their competence and passion, and not restricted by societal norms and pressure.

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Organisation Research Summary

Career Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Individuals

I am writing to invite your organisation to participate in a PhD research project, investigating the career experiences of LGBT+ individuals. This research is being conducted by Ashley Williams and is supervised by Prof Anne McBride and Prof Helge Hoel at The University of Manchester's Alliance Manchester Business School.

What is the purpose of the research?
The proposed research aims to explore career experiences and their impact, and how LGBT+ individuals negotiate such experiences. The research aims to further understanding of career barriers, as well as the unique career experiences of LGBT+ individuals.

Who will conduct the research?
Ashley Williams (PhD student), Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, Booth St East, Manchester, M13 9SS

What will I be asked to do?
Should you wish for your organisation to take part, we will ask you to distribute information regarding the research to members of your LGBT+ network. Members will then be asked to contact the researcher directly to arrange the interview. We request that all interviews are conducted at the employee's work site to minimise disruption for them, and therefore would request that a suitable room can be provided in order to facilitate this interview.

What does the research involve?
The research will consist of face-to-face interviews, anticipated to last for 60-90 minutes, at a time that best suits the participant. Participants must be aged 18 or over and must identify as non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender. Interviews will be conducted between January 2019 and April 2019.

Will our participation be confidential?
We take confidentiality and anonymity very seriously. Should your organisation wish to take part, the organisation will never be named or identified in the dissemination of this research, as a pseudonym will be used throughout the write up of the research and subsequent publications.

Participant interview data will never be directly associated with their name. We will securely store the data that we collect, and will comply with the Data Protection Act in our dealings with the data. Any reporting of the data will be fully anonymised.

Who has reviewed the research project?
The project has been reviewed by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee.

What now?
If you have any questions about the research, or if you would like further information, please contact the researcher directly (ashley.williams-2@manchester.ac.uk).
If you would like for your organisation to participate in this research, please send written confirmation of this consent to the researcher directly (ashley.williams-2@manchester.ac.uk).

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Research Participant Information Sheet

Career Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Individuals

This PIS should be read in conjunction with The University privacy notice

I am writing to invite you to participate in a PhD research project, investigating the career experiences of LGBT+ individuals. This research is being conducted by Ashley Williams and is supervised by Prof Anne McBride and Prof Helge Hoel at The University of Manchester's Alliance Manchester Business School.

The research aims to explore career experiences and their impact, and how LGBT+ individuals negotiate such experiences. The research aims to further understanding of career barriers, as well as the unique career experiences of LGBT+ individuals. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Who will conduct the research?
Ashley Williams (PhD student), Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, Booth St East, Manchester, M13 9SS

What is the purpose of the research?
Research demonstrates that individuals belonging to minority groups experience difficulties in their careers which can lead to the experience of career barriers. Research further demonstrates that LGBT+ individuals are subject to many unique career experiences. The purpose of the research is to explore the career experiences of LGBT+ individuals.

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen as you are a member of your organisation's LGBT+ network, Women's network, or because you have registered your interest in participating in this research project. To participate, you must be aged 18 or over and must identify as non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender.

Interviews will be conducted between December 2018 and September 2019. It is anticipated that 30-50 individuals will participate in this research in total.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked to partake in a face-to-face interview, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. This interview will be based solely on your own experiences, and will be aided by the construction of timelines, produced by you in the interview, depicting aspects of your career and identity development.

Whilst the interview will be guided solely by your own experiences, the conversation may include some experiences which you may have found distressing. You will be free to terminate the interview and withdraw from the research at any point during the conversation.

What will happen to my personal information?

In order to undertake the research project we will need to collect the following personal information/data about you:

- Name
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Sex Assigned at Birth
- Gender Identity
- Ethnicity
- Occupation
- Contact Number
- Email Address
- Voice recordings will be obtained during the interview in order to transcribe the data

Only the research team will have access to this information.

We are collecting and storing this personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 which legislate to protect your personal information. The legal basis upon which we are using your personal information is "public interest task" and "for research purposes" if sensitive information is collected. For more information about the way we process your personal information and comply with data protection law please see our Privacy Notice for Research Participants.

The University of Manchester, as Data Controller for this project, takes responsibility for the protection of the personal information that this study is collecting about you.   In order to comply with the legal obligations to protect your personal data the University has safeguards in place such as policies and procedures. All researchers are appropriately trained and your data will be looked after in the following way:

We will ask you to write your name on the consent form, and will store these securely on the University of Manchester storage network, which is accessible only by the researcher and the supervision team. We will store the rest of your data separately against an ID code. The principal investigator and the research team will be the only people who knows the individual that each ID code corresponds to, allowing us to send you your transcript following the interview if you so desire. However, the information on the consent form will only be stored for 6 months following completion of the research project, after which time it will be destroyed. We will use the voice recording to transcribe the interview so that the data can be analysed. Once transcribed, the voice recording will be deleted. Name and personal

information will never be associated with the transcription. We will securely store the data that we collect on the University of Manchester storage network, which is accessible only by the researcher and supervisory team. Data collected, including anonymised transcriptions, will be stored for 5 years following completion of the research project, after which time they will be destroyed.

You have a number of rights under data protection law regarding your personal information. For example you can request a copy of the information we hold about you, including audio recordings. This is known as a Subject Access Request. If you would like to know more about your different rights, please consult our privacy notice for research and if you wish to contact us about your data protection rights, please email dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk or write to The Information Governance Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL. at the University and we will guide you through the process of exercising your rights.

You also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office, Tel 0303 123 1113

Will my participation in the study be confidential?

Your participation in the study will be kept confidential to the study team and those with access to your personal information as listed above.

Audio recordings will be used to create transcripts as soon as is practical following the interview, after which time they will be destroyed. Transcription will be completed solely by the principal researcher. Personal information will be redacted in the final transcript, and each transcript will be associated with a pseudonym. Transcripts will be stored securely on the University of Manchester storage network, which is accessible only by the researcher, for 5 years following completion of the research project.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. However, it will not be possible to remove your data from the project after one month from the date of the interview, as it will have been anonymised and will then form part of the dataset, which means we will not be able to identify your specific data. This does not affect your data protection rights.

Audio recording is an essential part of the research process, as it allows for accurate transcription and interpretation of the data. You should feel comfortable with the recording process at all times, however if you do not feel comfortable, you are free to stop recording at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. You will then be given the option to use the data already provided or to withdraw from the research entirely.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No. There should be no expenses incurred by participants during the research process, and therefore no reimbursement is necessary.

What is the duration of the research?

The interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes.

Where will the research be conducted?

The research will be conducted at a company office that is convenient for you.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The outcomes of the research will be compiled into a Thesis, which will be submitted to the University of Manchester in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the PhD project.

It is possible that the outcomes may be published in academic books, reports or journals following completion of the PhD project.

If you would like to obtain a summary of the findings of the research, please advise the researcher (Ashley Williams: Ashley.Williams-2@ manchester.ac.uk).

Who has reviewed the research project?

The project has been reviewed by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee.

What if I want to make a complaint?

Minor complaints

If you have a minor complaint then you need to contact the researcher(s) in the first instance.

Researcher:

Ashley Williams (Ashley.Williams-2@manchester.ac.uk)

Supervisors:

Prof Anne McBride (A.McBride@manchester.ac.uk; +44 (0) 161 306 5863)

Prof Helge Hoel (Helge.Hoel@manchester.ac.uk)

Formal Complaints

If you wish to make a formal complaint, or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance, then please contact The Research Governance and Integrity Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 275 2674.

What Do I Do Now?

If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part then please contact the researcher directly:

Ashley Williams (Ashley.Williams-2@manchester.ac.uk)

This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee [2018-4979-7277]

Participant Consent Form

Career Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Individuals

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

	Activities	Initials
1	I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet (Version 2.1; Date 09/10/2018) for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily	
2	I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw without giving a reason and without detriment to myself. I understand that it will not be possible to remove my data from the project after one month following the interview, as my data will have been analysed and anonymised. I agree to take part on this basis	
3	I agree to the interviews being audio recorded	
4	I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books, reports or journals	
5	I agree that the researchers may contact me in future about other research projects	
6	I agree that the researchers may retain my contact details in order to provide me with a summary of the findings for this study	

7	I understand that the interview discussion may elicit feelings of distress, and I understand that I am free to terminate the interview and withdraw from the research at any time during the conversation I agree to take part on this basis	
8	I agree to take part in this study	

Data Protection

The personal information we collect and use to conduct this research will be processed in accordance with data protection law as explained in the Participant Information Sheet and the Privacy Notice for Research Participants.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of the person taking consent   Signature   Date

One copy of the signed consent form will be sent back to you for your records, and the original copy will be stored securely by the research team.

Research Participant Debrief Sheet

Research demonstrates that individuals belonging to minority groups experience difficulties in their careers which can lead to the experience of career barriers. Research further demonstrates that LGBT+ individuals are subject to many unique career experiences and barriers. The current study aims to explore career experiences unique to the LGBT+ community, and the ways in which stereotypes impact such experiences. We will then be in a position to recommend interventions for organisations to remove identified career barriers.

If you would like to find out about the results, have any questions, would like to request a copy of your transcript or would like to withdraw your data from the project, please contact one of the following:

> **Researcher:**
> **Ashley Williams (Ashley.Williams-2@manchester.ac.uk)**
> **Supervisors:**
> **Prof Anne McBride (A.McBride@manchester.ac.uk; +44 (0) 161 306 5863)**
> **Prof Helge Hoel (Helge.Hoel@manchester.ac.uk)**

If you change your mind about taking part, and would like to withdraw from the study, please contact us as soon as possible. We will honour withdrawal requests where we can, but there may come a point, such as submission of the Thesis Research project to The University of Manchester, where it will no longer be possible to remove your anonymised data from the completed analysis, or to delete your anonymised data from the dataset.

We hope that you have enjoyed taking part in this research. However, if you would like to seek support or advice regarding any of the topics discussed today, please find below contact information for support groups.

> **Contacts within your organisation:**
> [REDACTED]
> **Contacts outside of your organisation:**
> Stonewall: https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice
> TransUnite**:** https://www.transunite.co.uk/about/
> LGBT Foundation: http://lgbt.foundation/
> LGBT Health: http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/

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Research Participant Distress Policy

Career Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Individuals

Distress Policy

Has research been curtailed because the participant became distressed?
     Yes/no

If yes: Report to supervisors, who will *report to the committee at the conclusion of the study*.

Ask: Comments or questions about the research? How is the participant feeling? Would the participant like to cease the interview? Does the participant want to continue the interview at another time?

Explain: Our policy is not to send participants away from an interview feeling unhappy.

Ask again how the participant is feeling.

(1) Give the participant the supervisor's contact information.

(2) Depending on the nature of the problem, provide the participant with the contact information of the relevant support. Listed below are the support options the researcher will recommend:

- **Acas** (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) – for employment related problems – **Telephone number: 0300 123 1100**

- **Equality Advisory and Support Service** (helpline for the Equality and Human Rights Commission) – for equality related issues – **Telephone number: 0808 800 0082**

- **Stonewall** – for LGBT related issues – https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice

- **TransUnite** - for Transgender-specific issues - https://www.transunite.co.uk/about/

- **LGBT Foundation** – for LGBT related issues – http://lgbt.foundation/

- **LGBT Health** – for LGBT related issues – http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/

(4) Contact the participant after five days. If they are in a low mood that they attribute to the research, suggest that they speak to the research supervisor. The outcomes of this will be reported to the ethics committee.

Appendix F: Participant Summary Table

ID	Pseudonym	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Sector
101	Emma	Cisgender female	Lesbian	Government
102	Matthew	Cisgender male	Bisexual	Government
103	Tracey	Transgender female	Bisexual	Government
104	Mark	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
105	Thomas	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
106	Jacob	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
107	Graham	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
108	Andrew	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
109	Leo	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
110	Tessa	Cisgender female	Bisexual	Government
111	Sean	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
112	Charlie	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
113	Paul	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
114	Kevin	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
115	Anthony	Cisgender male	Gay	Government
201	Tim	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
203	Carl	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
204	Robert	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
205	Steven	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
206	Ryan	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
207	Sarah	Cisgender female	Lesbian	Higher Education
208	Abbie	Cisgender female	Lesbian	Higher Education
209	Ruth	Cisgender female	Lesbian	Higher Education
210	James	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
211	Greg	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
212	Gary	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
215	Eddie	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
216	Jason	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
218	Dianne	Cisgender female	Lesbian	Higher Education
219	Beth	Transgender female	Lesbian	Higher Education
220	Alex	Cisgender male	Gay	Higher Education
221	Sam	Non-binary	Pansexual	Higher Education
222	Mary	Cisgender female	Lesbian	Higher Education
223	Janine	Cisgender female	Lesbian	Higher Education
301	David	Cisgender male	Gay	Awarding Body
302	Rachel	Cisgender female	Lesbian	Awarding Body
303	Gemma	Transgender female	Lesbian	Awarding Body
305	Christopher	Cisgender male	Gay	Awarding Body
306	Michael	Cisgender male	Gay	Awarding Body
307	George	Cisgender male	Gay	Awarding Body