Non-binary experiences of language: the effect of neologisms in the search for affirming self-description.

by

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A thesis submitted to The University of Birmingham for the Degree of

MASTER OF RESEARCH IN SEXUALITY AND GENDER STUDIES

Languages, Culture, Art History and Music

School of Modern Languages

College of Arts and Law

University of Birmingham

JULY 2022

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the effects of explanatory gaps in language and neologisms on non-binary individuals seeking affirming self-description. It explores trends within non-binary communities towards the use of neologisms and potential obstacles to wider inclusion of neologisms from binary trans and cisgender society. Few studies centre the lived experiences of non-binary people, and much research in Trans Studies primarily focuses on the medico-juridical experiences of trans folk as opposed to a fundamental question of language and power. This thesis takes a poststructuralist, Butlerian-Lacanian approach, with a focus on lived experiences, to establish the powerful effects of language on non-binary lives.

Through the use of an online survey with non-binary participants, this study gathered information from the communities to test its hypotheses. The results indicate that the use of neologisms is an effective way to affirm an individual's gender(s) and that the use of affirming language reduces the stress the individual is under. This suggests that, to encourage acceptance of non-binary genders and to decrease mental ill health among non-binary communities, affirming language should be adopted. This thesis concludes that greater efforts should be made across society to utilise affirming language for non-binary people, including neologisms.

DEDICATION

In memory of my Grandma Mary (1924-2017), without whom I may never have undertaken this

degree, and in memory of my Grandpa Len (1934-2022), who sadly passed earlier this year.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With thanks to my partner, Chris Greasley, for his support, encouragement, and patience over the years and for his assistance in proofreading this thesis.

Also, a heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Elliot Evans, for helping to sculpt and nurture my ideas into coherent theories and for their acceptance, understanding and support throughout my degree.

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1 INTRODUCTION

GOD having designed Man for a sociable Creature, made him not only with an inclination, and under a necessity to have fellowship with those of his own kind; but furnished him also with Language, which was to be the great Instrument, and common Tye of Society (Locke, 1690, p.185).

The idea that language is both an instrument required for society to function and a way to form community with others has long been established. As Locke continues, in 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding', language is also the mechanism by which to express and share ideas from within one's own mind with others (ibid.). While Locke comes from a philosophic tradition and the way he expressed his ideas can be considered outdated, the core concepts he presented are still relevant now. Within this thesis I will be discussing how non-binary people experience and use language when seeking affirming self-description. This is something that can be understood, in Locke's terms, of conveying one's thoughts and ideas to others – in this case, specifically, about one's experiences of gender. I will be looking into how non-binary people find intelligibility and ways of belonging using gender descriptors, how a lack of established words or language may affect that and whether neologisms can be used to fill such gaps. As Locke intimates, humankind without language would not exist as it does, as a society, with the sharing of complex ideas and because of this language will always hold a great deal of power.

Language is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation (Carter, 1983, p.77).

Much more recently, Angela Carter posited the dual nature of language, highlighting that language is power; it is powerful, and it is a tool to exact power over others as well as to free oneself from

such control. It follows that a dearth of language renders the individual powerless unless they can 'fill in the gap' and generate their own language, their own power. The purpose of this research project is to apply this idea to the experiences of non-binary individuals and investigate the significance of available, fitting language or words in the affirmation of their gender(s).

As a person who has struggled to understand their gender for over two decades, some of what inspired me to conduct this research has been my own experiences. As a teenager I did not realise transgender men were a possibility and the concept of 'non-binary' eluded me until my early twenties. In the last ten years I have been able to explore and refine my own understanding of myself with words and ideas as I encountered them. One summer, aged 13, I decided I would start calling myself 'Rai'. It was during a summer school programme, with people I had not met before, giving me the opportunity to introduce myself afresh to potential new friends. Nobody made any negative comment on it, so I kept using it with those friends and come the start of the school year, wrote it on all my exercise books. I recall, at the start of a French lesson, as books were being passed back to their rightful owners a girl saw my book and asked, aghast: 'Rai? What, do you want to be a boy or something?!' I said 'No', of course, and my brain surprised me by all but screaming 'yes', but it was never, and still isn't, that simple.

Over the years my self-described identity has fluctuated, from a queer tomboy to a questioning transman, to genderqueer, to non-binary, to gender-fluid, to trans-masculine, to demiboy and masculine-agender. Each new stage of understanding has been influenced by new words and concepts I learned that better described me than the previous set, and each time, I have felt a little more positive and confident in myself when I found something that fits. My experiences informed my hypothesis that language is of vital importance to queer lives, and I wanted to investigate this in

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relation to non-binary experience. As I began my background reading, I noticed a gap in the literature when it came to the experiences of non-binary people like me; most of the research still focussed on binary trans people. Outside of strictly academic literature, I found a striking comment in C.N. Lester's memoir *Trans Like Me*, that perfectly encapsulated my thoughts.

> Before I learnt that there were words for people like me, I knew what it was I was looking for. I just didn't know how to capture it in a way I could fit into my world and hold onto, to put my feelings into language. Without language, those feelings couldn't solidify (Lester, 2017, p.32).

Seeing proof that there were people like me with experiences like mine relating specifically to the language we learn and use to define ourselves solidified the importance of this research to me and brought me to where I am now and the research questions I have.

2 POSITIONALITY

I find it difficult to discuss the privileges that I hold, as they are something I am ashamed of, nevertheless I must acknowledge them here. As a white British person, I have white privilege that is unmistakably enmeshed with the privilege of being descended from imperial colonisers. It is something I am working to deconstruct in myself and those around me. Despite this, it will doubtless have an impact on my perspective and the resources available to me when conducting this research within the white, colonial academy.

I am a physically disabled, non-binary, first-generation (to be university educated), queer person with a neurodevelopmental disorder, namely ADHD, and a variety of co-occurring conditions that come along with that (such as depression, anxiety). These do not counteract my white privilege. They may go some way to explaining my misalignment with the patriarchal hegemony that I was born into.

As a non-binary adult living in the UK, my own struggles with gender identity have piqued my interest in the wider experiences of the communities. Every year I seem to discover new words and ways to describe myself to the extent that I have a list of terms that have resonated with me that I will add to whenever I encounter a new word. Much of this discovery has been made in adulthood, alone and online through a variety of resources, some of which were not easy to find. There are a great number of neologisms and concepts out there in order to describe gender being created within the community: a celestial system, a galactian system, spectra, wheels, grids and even terms taken and adapted from pop culture (e.g., the Mass Effect universe). This can all be overwhelming and confusing. I would like to understand how others have experienced this journey and what can be done to make it easier in the future. While I have come to this from a white, western

perspective, I have a genuine concern with educating myself and others about all journeys of gender discovery.

I was in my early teens by the time dial-up Internet access came to my home and with it the ability to search for and research questions that came to mind. As a Millennial, educated while Section 28[1] was in effect, the adults in my life could not answer these questions, and I was too afraid to ask. I used that access to the Internet in my first explorations of sexuality – searching for terms like 'bisexual' and 'pansexual' – and of gender. At first, I only searched for phrases like 'tomboy' or 'butch' and it was not until my early 20s that I started looking for information on acronyms like 'FAAB' or 'FTM' as well as terms such as 'genderqueer', 'non-binary' or 'genderfluid'. It has taken until my 30s to form a stable impression of my gender identity, something that, for the most part, remains undisclosed and undiscussed in my wider life.

Owing to this elongated experience, I am familiar with the feeling of not knowing how to describe something accurately that is, nevertheless, intrinsically important to your life and how you experience the world around you. My perspective is different to that of a cisgender academic, or a transgender academic who 'figured out' their gender identity much earlier and more successfully than I did. While different perspectives are not inherently better or worse than each other, they enable us to shed light on issues in different ways, allowing a deeper and well-rounded understanding of a topic. Epistemologically, this echoes the basis of Feminist Standpoint Theory,

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[1] Section 28 was a clause in the Local Government Act, 1988 in the UK that prohibited the "promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material". It was repealed on 18th November 2003 and was considered to have left teachers and young people isolated and afraid during its effect (Wakefield and Kelleher, 2022).

which champions '…the importance of perspectival differences stemming from social location' (Grasswick, 2018). This form of standpoint theory is an effective and productive methodology to apply to research within and of marginalised groups (Harding, 2009) and is why my personal investment herein is a useful tool when researching non-binary experiences of language.

In terms of my academic career, I graduated from the University of Birmingham with a BA in Hispanic Studies in 2011, where I particularly enjoyed the more sociological modules (linguistics, history, culture) and took a particular interest in linguistics, following on from an interest at A Level in the interactions between language, society, and the individual. These stem from a much earlier tendency towards an anti-authoritarian mindset and a rejection of a single truth; something I would later learn to describe as poststructuralism (Fox, 2014). As soon as I learned the term 'socially constructed', it resonated deeply with the way I perceived and questioned the world presented to me. This long-running insistence of a mind to question the grand narratives of power throughout the world is why I will be employing poststructuralist epistemologies throughout this research project.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The following literature review explores the research into the lived experiences of how non-binary and trans individuals use language to self-identify. This has been separated into three sections: 3.2 looks at the theoretical foundations of gender identity and the role of language in its formation; 3.3 explores the historical context of the discussion through the lived experiences of trans people; and 3.4 features recent empirical research and lived experiences of non-binary people.

3.2 THEORY

In this section, I will reflect on the various theories that have influenced my formulation of this research project, which come from different disciplines that may not automatically be considered towards a project in the field of Gender Studies.

A key theoretical consideration for this project is intersectionality. Rooted in social politics and antidiscrimination movements, intersectionality examines sameness, difference, and their dynamics. It highlights the undermining effect of single approach thinking to social justice and knowledge production while emphasising the important effects of differing axes of power (Cho et al., 2013). Although emerging in the late 1980s with Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality began as an unnamed concept in the work of Black feminists criticising the previously established work of white feminism for its inability to consider any woman who was not white, middle class (or above) and heterosexual. Most notably among these was Audre Lorde, who adeptly pointed out the ignorance of white feminists who refused to deal with the differences between women and the resultant differences in oppression, suggesting that 'The failure of academic feminists to recognize

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difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson' (Lorde, 1984). In difference, there is strength, and without accepting that and without examining those differences, we have little hope of overcoming the patriarchal oppression exerted upon us. As I am utilising feminist theories in my research and I am examining identities that lie beyond the white heterosexual woman, it is imperative to employ intersectional thought.

Much as white feminism ignores the different identities of poor or Black women, society tends to focus exclusively on the gender identity of transgender people. Historical examinations of global gender identities have been interpreted through a Western lens, based on the assumption that "the position of the Western observer-researcher was assumed as inherently 'true'", which has led to limited comprehension of these non-Western identities (Vincent and Manzano, 2017, p.12). Snorton (2017) argues that gender diversity should be couched in terms of 'transivity' as the compacting of all trans experience into a the single concept of 'transgender' has been a "racial narrative" (ibid., p.8). Similarly, binaohan highlights that 'transgender' was a political term adopted by white trans communities, who have since forced out the trans women of colour who coined it, and that transgender discourse is dictated by white hegemony (binaohan, 2014). They also argue that, given the implementation of a gender binary as a tool of colonial control, 'transgender' remains interwoven with this history of white supremacy and trying to forcibly include diverse global genders under the transgender umbrella is not strictly appropriate (ibid.). Speaking in an interview, Jule Gill-Peterson explains that one of the biggest differences in access to trans healthcare has been racial, with white trans children being afforded more readily available access, whereas black trans children have been "more likely to be arrested or institutionalized, put in the foster care system or juvenile detention… [or] to be diagnosed as delusional, schizophrenic or something else that blatantly ignores what they know about themselves." (Levin, 2021) On her

concept of bodily plasticity, Gill-Peterson also expounds that whiteness is seen as inherently more able to adapt and transform, whereas black bodies and other bodies of colour are viewed as rigid and unable to self-transform (Schuller and Gill-Peterson, 2020). Again, suggesting that white trans identities are more likely to be understood than trans people of colour.

Therefore, to ignore any different identity facets, such as race, leads to the erasure of intersecting identities (Robertson et al., 2019). Erasure results in additional emotional labour on the part of the individual (shuster and Lamont, 2020), and so it is expected that erasure or discrimination based on more than one identity facet will increase this cost. This is expanded by Winter et al. with the Stigma-Sickness slope that highlights minority stress caused by stigma, and discrimination leads to ill health and death. This is evidenced by a 56% rate of depression diagnoses among the transgender population in the US, which is four times the average rate (Winter et al., 2016). It is, therefore, important for this project to keep the intersectionality of participants in mind to ensure any examples of overlapping stressors on emotional labour are recorded. For this reason, I chose to collect data on other demographic and identity characteristics beyond gender.

We must also consider language, its importance, availability, and effects. Language is fundamental to human existence (Heidegger, 2010) and is the medium through which we understand and are understood (Gadamer, 1989). Philosopher and computer scientist Aaron Sloman, when thinking about the relationship between human and computational language interpretation, speaks of internal languages, which are used to interpret both internal and external information. We cannot learn or use an external language without first having an internal framework through which we represent the information available to us (Sloman, 2015). To apply this in our situation, I suggest that through our internal language framework, we each have the power to interpret our gender

identity internally. An issue arises when there is no readily available external language with which to represent that idea adequately or equivalently. This creates a dissonance between the internal and external systems because these representations of the self don't match. Additionally, it is highly likely that the external language equivalents to our internal representations are more difficult to identify and use because we exist in a society that works against the idea of non-binary gender systems and that cultural cisgenderism makes these words and language scarcer. Trans scholars speak of the stress caused by explanatory gaps on the individual (Stryker, 1994; Lester, 2017; shuster and Lamont, 2020), and this research intends to show the deficit caused to non-binary people specifically through this dearth of external language, how the community is adapting with neologisms and the positive effects this has.

As I will explore in the Methodology section, poststructuralism is another key epistemology to this research project as I approach gender from the point of reasoning that rejects the idea of a single 'truth' and any system that claims to uncover such truth (Fox, 2014). In respect of gender, I specifically reject the notion of a universal truth stipulating that male and female are both discrete categories and are the only categories available. If 'transgender explodes' (Monro, 2005), this idea then non-binary identities must go even further. The existence of trans and non-binary people stands firmly opposed to structuralist and essentialist theories of sex, gender, and the body, so it is natural that poststructuralism lends us a useful framework through which to analyse them. Monro's poststructuralist theory of transgender separates the differing concepts of sex and gender and illustrates both as constructed elements of identity, as we must also do in order to understand the lives lived outside of such rigid roles (Monro, 2005).

In order to talk about poststructuralist theory, it is necessary to reflect on essentialism too. Essentialism assumes that people or things have 'natural' characteristics in common that are inherent, innate, and unchanging (Şahin, 2018). This is behind much of the societal status quo regarding sex, gender, bodies, and roles – suggesting that there are inherent and immutable features that make one male or female, man, or woman, and thereby reinforcing the concept of the binary gender system. Like a structuralist point of view, essentialism is in stark opposition to the experiences of non-binary individuals, and as such, this research takes an anti-essentialist standpoint on gender. Poststructuralist theories, however, in general, tend to ignore lived experiences of the body and ignore the everyday lives of trans individuals, preferring to leave them as the object of investigation and failing to integrate their experiences into the production of knowledge about themselves, effectively erasing trans people from the institution (Namaste, 2000). It is, therefore, not possible to rely on poststructuralist theories to formulate a comprehensive framework of gender (Monro, 2005). This project deviates from poststructuralist thought as it focuses on lived experiences and, importantly, does not try to create such praxis as a framework of gender.

Considering the anti-essentialist standpoint towards gender that this project is taking, it is important to reflect on the essentialist nature of some linguistic theory employed herein. To speak of language as 'fundamental' and intrinsic to our ability to interpret the world around us is to see it as an 'essential' element of human experience, much as Locke suggested (Locke, 1690, p.185). It may seem contradictory to reference Sloman (2015) while maintaining anti-essentialist views on the concept of gender, but this is not so. The concept of gender as a binary has been constructed using external language and not with our internal understandings of ourselves. To assert that the ability to communicate is innate does not invalidate the argument that binary gender is not:

humans are not able to interpret gender until after they have learned to communicate externally, as this is where the concepts are given voice. By this time, the individual will already have been exposed to the social construct of binary gender, which limits their ability to linguistically represent themselves beyond that concept. Therefore, this thesis investigates whether neologisms, which arise as a response to these external limits, help affirm the internal understanding of the self.

In a similar vein, Foucault rejected the idea of all-encompassing theories that claim to offer an ultimate and objective truth by ways of 'scientific' evidence and, instead, invested in deconstructive thought that aimed to show the 'discursive practice' that lies behind that which has been presumed 'natural' (King, 2004, p.32). Asserting that there is no essential, 'natural' body of the human that has not been 'altered by our social order', Foucault explains that the individual is created by and within society 'according to a whole technique of forces' (Foucault, 1977, p217 in King, 2004, p.32). The essentialist view of a 'natural' body or phenomenon is a construct that is seated in power, and it is this that allows such notions to continue to pervade our society.

Foucault's discussions on the mechanisms of power that exert themselves over a body rely on discourse, which is intrinsically linked to language and its use (or misuse) and, from this, we can expand the idea that 'language is power' as it is the discourses – the language – surrounding the body that exert, give, or remove power. It is this concept that is particularly relevant to this research project. To the trans and non-binary individual, the power of language is often located

with the cisnormative[2] societal forces that attempt to dictate gender and the language surrounding it as a form of social control. It is, therefore, an act of reclaiming power by using language for one's own ends and subverting the social norm (in this case, cisgenderism). This project asserts that the use of language by the subjugated to their own benefit is a powerful act in the individual's formation of identity.

Thankfully, Foucault did not doom us all to an immovable fate of subjugation but wrote of the ability to resist the powers that are at play upon us. To self-define gender with one's own language is an act of regaining power and one form that Foucault's 'plurality of resistances' can take. This can bring about positive interpretations of the self and have beneficial effects on the individual's health. This is echoed in the concepts of *identity achievement* and *identity affirmation*, as modelled by Ghavami et al., being strong indicators of improved psychological well-being among minority individuals (Ghavami et al., 2011).

While Foucault's framework provides us with a comprehensive interpretation of power and discourse for this project, he did not reflect specifically on gender in his own writings. This is a key criticism of his work within feminist scholarship: that, without exploring the significance and the extent to which gender affects the discourses around and the power exerted on the individual, he has overlooked a fundamental ingredient in his framework. Moreover, he has also failed to account for gender as another construction of power and discourse that, in turn, is utilised as a form of

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[2] A normative society assumes certain persons, or their attributes, are 'normal' or expected and all others are 'abnormal'. Cisnormativity assumes that to be cisgender is expected and any other way of being is not.

control (King, 2004, pp.29–30). Foucault's lack of discussion on gender denies the reality that we live in a society that holds gender as an intrinsic factor to our being and is constantly attempting to force a two-sex-two-gender dichotomy upon us. Furthermore, many feminists have interpreted his absence of gender commentary as androcentric; that when speaking of the body he is really speaking of the body of man. (2004, p.33) While this is a glaring omission, it remains possible to speak of gender within Foucault's framework - as I have done above - given that it still offers useful insight when applied to the topic.

Many feminists have expanded on the historical discursive construction of opposite sex and gender that has been formed by those in power (men) to exact control over others (women). Man has been cast as the one 'essential human subject', making woman the opposite in order to compare himself in his best light, and to every 'one' there must be an 'other' therefore it is woman's role to perform as this 'other' (King, 2004, p.32). Where Foucault and many other feminist commentators interpret this on a binary, I would extend this to stipulate that all genders beyond the cisnormative man are considered 'other' to greater or lesser degrees; anything that is 'not-man' must therefore be 'other'. The tendency of theorists to default to a binary system of gender lends an even greater 'otherness' to those outside of the 'man or woman' dichotomy, which in turn will be joined by a greater amount of stress, exclusion, and violence.

My research hinges on how language is a medium through which we establish the world, and the world establishes us, which is reminiscent of Lacanian theory. *Gender Trouble* ([1990] 2006) is, therefore, a natural choice for a project centring on language as a medium within a queer realm owing to Butler's interpretations of Lacan within the text. Butler interprets dense psychoanalytic

theory through both a queer and feminist lens. Butler's influential text, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (2006 [1990]), serves as an in-depth philosophical and metaphysical inquiry into the concepts of sex, sexuality, and gender, calling on a considerable breadth of precursor work and examining a variety of theoretical standpoints and methodologies. Chief among these, for my purposes, are Lacan and Foucault. Lacan and the interpretations of his work surrounding language and identity are particularly relevant to my research: it is important to note that 'The Lacanian Model… includes both the ethical dynamics of human relations and the cultural symbol systems that structure them in the constitution and development of the individual' (DiCenso, 1994, p.46). That is to say; it looks at human interactions and methods of communication – like language – and the ways these impact the establishment of a human being as a person with discrete identifying factors.

Some of the important points surrounding Lacan and language that Butler pulls out include their (Butler's) echoing the Post-Lacanian philosopher Irigaray's notion of a masculinist signifying economy (or language) that restricts the way in which gender and identities can be understood and that without the advent of 'another language or signifying economy' we have little chance 'at escaping the 'mark' of gender…' as it has been laid out by the language we find ourselves burdened with (Butler, 2006, p.36). I would expand on this to highlight the importance of neologisms coming out of the trans and non-binary communities as a mode to challenge the masculinist language of power in order to escape that prohibitive 'mark' of gender.

Vitally, Butler also continues to extrapolate from Lacan that '…sexual difference is not a simple binary…' (2006, p.38), however, there remains work to be done in order to have genders outside of that binary recognised. 'Both masculine and feminine positions are… instituted through prohibitive

laws that produce culturally intelligible genders…' (2006, p.38) and through the disruption of this intelligibility we see that identity is constructed and '…the prohibition that constructs identity… ought to be understood not as a deterministic divine will…' (2006, p.39), suggesting that there is space beyond a binarist understanding of sex and gender in which we may construct our identities.

Butler goes on to stipulate that normative identities, such as heteronormative or cisnormative, become such by force of repetition and, by extension, that 'Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts… that congeal over time…' (2006, pp.44–45). If we turn back to Lacan and assume that '…the gender identity of a subject is fashioned by the function of the semblance and not by its fate-given anatomy' (Alfandary, 2019, p.37), then we see opportunity in the theory to account for the validity of trans and non-binary genders.

Turning to Foucault, Butler suggests using his theories in criticism of the Lacanian idea of the 'cultural unintelligibility' of marginalised sexualities, which we can expand here to encompass culturally marginal forms of gender and asserts that sexuality is infused with power (Butler, 2006, p.127). Butler pulls out Foucault's thinking on the misunderstandings between 'sex' and 'sexuality' insofar that the former has been constructed as a form of social control over the latter and in doing so it conceals differing sexual functions and supposes that one's 'sex' *causes* one's 'sexuality'. The concept of 'sex' in this way inverted '…the representation of the relationships of power to sexuality…' (Butler, 2006, p.129) and is therefore an effect of power relations as opposed to an innate category of being.

In establishing this, Butler expands into Foucault's issue with certain forms of feminism: that they have taken this constructed category of sex and, by extension binary gender and the sexed body, as their starting point without viewing it as requiring of deconstruction, and they cannot conduct

emancipatory work as they remain shackled to social constructions of control and power (2006, p.130). This sentiment is echoed by Butler in their desire to use *Gender Trouble* as a way to criticize heteronormative feminisms and their limits and restrictions placed on gender, stating that '…any feminist theory that restricts the meaning of gender… sets up exclusionary gender norms… often with homophobic consequences' (Ibid., viii). It is this opposition to 'regimes of truth' that would invalidate some genders based on presuppositions of accepted notions of masculine or feminine that speaks keenly to my research. It is key to remember that many forms of feminism do not account for trans or non-binary experiences of gender, or the body and it is within this realm of Gender Studies, following Butler's 'intervention', that my research lies.

While Butler's interpretations of Lacan and Foucault are both seminal to the field of feminist and Gender Studies, one criticism of *Gender Trouble* is its impenetrability. This causes issues with intelligibility of the text, making it easier to misinterpret, misunderstand or for it to be misappropriated. Some trans scholars criticise Butler's work for only speaking about trans identities in direct relation to cis gay drag performers and that in doing so Butler does not 'do justice' to transgender people (O'Shea, 2018). Another concern over impenetrability is that it is important to ensure that impactful research is accessible to all and not simply to an elite academy, in order to break down classist ideas that keep such research out of reach of the 'layperson'. As the research in this case requires examples of lived experiences, it would seem inappropriate to keep any conclusions from the people involved and affected. 'Lacan expands our understanding of the dimensions of self-hood…' (DiCenso, 1994, p.45) is the core Lacanian message that I want to remain accessible throughout this project.

3.3 HISTORY & CONTEXT

Stryker's seminal text, *My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix* (1994), focuses on the experience of transgender rage as a response to the myriad violences enacted on or towards the trans community and its constituent members. The text offers some historical context to the field of Trans Studies and contains some crucial, thought-provoking content around language use and the absence of voice, as well as touching on incomprehensibility and invisibility. Originally a performative piece, Stryker begins her monologue by explaining a 'deep affinity' to the monster of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* – a comparison previously drawn by staunch anti-trans figureheads, Daly and Raymond, between 'Frankenstein's monster and the transsexual body'. Stryker, however, moves to take the language used against her and repurposes it for the trans experience to demonstrate the parallels of suffering and rage between herself and the monster (Stryker, 1994, p.238).

The allegory is a potent one and the reclamation of a monstrous identity by trans people is something that abides to this day, as can be seen in '*The many-voiced monster*' (Pearce et al., 2020). This reclaiming of language used against the trans community is an important act of linguistic and social rebellion. Where cisnormative society tries to punish through the use of ugly or unfavourable labels and language, the reclamation of words takes back some of the power they hold. This a good example of how language matters and how it can affect people positively or negatively depending on use, context or meaning, which I plan to explore within my research.

While much of the text does not focus on language, the following stanza from the poem section is significant:

No sound

exists

in this place without language

my rage is a silent raving (Stryker, 1994, p.248)

These few lines perfectly express the feeling trans and non-binary people experience as they grapple to find the words and the voice with which to self-define and, often, come away wanting. It is this voiceless position and the discovery of suitable language that I am investigating: how does the building of a new language and voice improve upon this stark image of a *'silent raving'*?

Under the 'Theory' section that follows the poem, Stryker again highlights the mismatch between trans identities and language's difficulty in adequately describing them: '…the subject's situation in a field governed by the unstable but indissoluble relationshp [sic] between language and materiality, a situation in which language organizes and brings into signification matter that simultaneously eludes definitive representation and demands its own perpetual rearticulation in symbolic terms' (1994, p.248).

In this extract, Stryker touches on the idea of trans incomprehensibility and positioning of the individual with a seemingly impossible task: to define the indefinable using the same tools that have already been proven not to work. It is here that we must consider the creation of new tools to fill the gap left by existing ones. For my research, this means looking at queer and trans neologisms to understand if and how they ease this incomprehensibility.

Speaking about *cultural cisgenderism* at a keynote address at the 2012 POWS Annual Conference, Natacha Kennedy's talk was later reproduced for the *Psychology of Women Section Review* (Kennedy, 2013). This text offers an understanding of how language may not be equipped to benefit non-binary and trans voices, given the socio-cultural situation of that language.

As an introduction, Kennedy posits the film *I Was A Male War Bride* (1949) as the closest example of 'the nature of cultural cisgenderism' (2013, p.3) and argues that it goes some way to illustrating 'the difficulties faced by transgender people in a culture simply not constituted to account for our existence.' She goes on to counter that the comparison with the film remains inadequate as it does not cover the full extent of the trans experience, nor is it 'even remotely comparable with the very serious, and sometimes deadly, consequences of cultural cisgenderism' (2013, p.3). I would expand these points specifically into my research's setting to elaborate that language is an integral part of culture, and a language that is not equipped to account for trans experiences or existence can lead to some of the difficulties that are faced by transgender people.

Kennedy goes on to draw on the definition of cisgenderism from Ansara and Hegarty (2012) as '…a prejudicial ideology, rather than an individual attitude, that is systemic, multilevel and reflected in authoritative cultural discourses', and begins to expand it from their limited context (as psychology researchers) out to society as a whole in order to define cultural cisgenderism (Kennedy, 2013, p.3).

Kennedy expands that cisgenderist culture relies on these key features:

- The systematic erasure and problematising of trans people;

- The essentialising of gender;

- The gender binary;

- The immutability of gender;

- The external imposition of gender.

Here she also explains the external imposition of gender as placing '…the responsibility for determining gender on the observer rather than the individual. In other words, in the culture of cisgenderism, gender is something we do to other people, not something people do for themselves.' Kennedy rightly points out that, when looking at these key features, the results of both cultural cisgenderism and transphobia will often be the same (2013, p.4).

Later in the essay, when discussing the concept of coming out, Kennedy observes that the process is likely more difficult for trans children because 'cisgenderism… results in a lack of vocabulary being available for them to understand and communicate their experiences' (2013, p.7). This idea, that an absence of suitable language causes additional hurdles to trans people, is one that I intend to explore further within this research project. Kennedy also touches on the detrimental effects on trans wellbeing that cultural cisgenderism and the upholding of such an ideology has, naming it as 'a threat to the well-being of most trans children' (2013, p.7). While I agree with her analysis here, I would go further to say it represents a threat to the well-being of trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people of all ages.

Serving as the introduction text in *The Emergence of Trans* (2020a), '*The many-voiced monster*' is co-authored by Pearce, Gupta and Moon and provides a good overview of the position of trans experiences and the associated research from three UK-based scholars. It introduces the idea of a trans incomprehensibility that is either resistant to definition by language or that language cannot begin to define. Starting with a quote referring to 'a language incomprehensible' (Pearce et al., 2020b, p.1), the text goes on to give some crucial insight into the ideas of vulnerability vs visibility,

which briefly touches on the importance of language, and later focusses more directly on the use of language and its impact on Trans Studies and lived experience.

A key theme running through the text is that language is either failing to adequately express trans experiences, often referred to as explanatory gaps, or that the created language within the trans community is mismatched to that of the wider population – that the concepts of 'trans' and 'transgender' are 'categories that defy the categorical' and that seem incomprehensible to those on the outside looking in. The authors attribute some of this to the historical attempts to define sex along binary lines by Western medicine and the failure of the resultant models '…to capture the complications, the fuzzy boundaries and open borders of gendered experience…' (2020b, p.1).

In turn, they suggest that the umbrella term 'Trans' '…embraces this incomprehensibility…' and that it offers '…an overarching but open-ended means to describe bodies, identities and experiences that defy normative notions…' (2020b, pp.1–2). With this, it is worth noting that the authors here are grappling with the broader idea of 'trans' and transness, and while I intend to focus more specifically on non-binary experiences, I feel that what the authors are exploring in *'The many-voiced monster'* is doubly applicable to non-binary people who are often rendered incomprehensible to cisnormative society and the binary trans community.

Following in the footsteps of Stryker (1994), Pearce, Gupta and Moon argue for reclaiming the idea of trans 'monstrosity' as a point of personal strength, as an expression of trans possibilities as well as a defence mechanism from antagonists who would call trans people monsters. They suggest that 'Trans feelings are monstrous because they have so often and for so long existed beyond the capacity of language and identifiable emotion, in a context where there is no acceptable way to

make sense of them' (Pearce et al., 2020b, p.7). In this, we can see, again, the theme of language presenting a barrier to trans experiences being understood and recognised.

The authors frame embracing monstrosity as a positive endeavour that we can undertake together in order to '…queer categories, break binaries, create entirely new discursive and material realities…' with our collective strength (2020b, p.6). It is with these trans and non-binary led activities that more inclusive languages will be formed, which will have a wide-reaching impact: '…trans languages challenge our fundamental understandings of sex and gender…' (2020b, p.7). It is with these challenges and changes that subordinated groups can realise safer and fuller lives without the constant pressure of incomprehensibility bearing down on them.

3.4 RECENT STUDIES

shuster and Lamont's 'Sticks and stones break our bones, and words are damaging: How language erases non-binary people' (2020) touches on trans incomprehensibility and language, then further explores this through qualitative interview-based research with non-binary individuals specifically, something that is not particularly common and therefore of great benefit to my research.

As a recent piece of scholarship focussing on the experiences of non-binary people and the difficulties they encounter while using a binarist language system in order to accurately describe, portray and express themselves, *'Sticks and stones'* is one of the only texts I have encountered that looks at these interactions closely. shuster and Lamont's study states that '…how non-binary people negotiate gender in social interactions is a complex process that involves the intertwining relationship between cultural norms and an Anglophone linguistic system built upon the assumption of a two-and-two-only gender system (Lucal, 1999)' (shuster and Lamont, 2020, pp.103–4).

Importantly, they also acknowledge that despite the growth of the body of work at large on trans people, there remains a lack of data that specifically looks at the experiences of non-binary people (2020, p.104). To this end, they have undertaken a study with 15 self-identified non-binary individuals and, using semi-structured interviews, have investigated the difficulties that non-binary people face with social interactions caused by the lack of nuance in language to adequately express themselves. This is an example of how explanatory gaps can contribute to an insecure identity formation and cause negative effects to the individual's wellbeing.

Key themes that shuster and Lamont draw out of their interviews include that the binarist language system disadvantages non-binary people, which results in them having to expend extra emotional labour in order to fight against erasure (2020, p.112), and that there is a dearth of community for non-binary people where they feel understood and accepted (2020, p.111). They point out that non-binary identities are a seen as a stepping stone to binary trans identities and not a viable permanent identity in their own right, furthering erasure (2020, pp.110–112). In the conclusions of the study, the authors explain that their findings align with those of Kennedy's observations of cultural cisgenderism (regarding the concept that gender is something we do to others, as observers, not something we control for ourselves) that I have mentioned above (Kennedy, 2013).

The authors further argue that non-binary people are forced into a situation where they are faced with trying to change an entire language and linguistic system that has been built around the assumption of only two genders simply to enable them to be heard, recognised, and understood as having valid identities. The struggle they face is quite neatly summarised: 'Without an existing language to make sense of non-binary people's identities, many people cannot cognitively hold the

possibility of those who might exist beyond dichotomous categories' (shuster and Lamont, 2020, p.113).

One primary criticism of this study is its narrow scope; with only 15 participants all from a small geographical area in the United States, it is easy to fathom that experiences there will be affected by very specific cultural phenomena. The authors acknowledge this in their ending paragraph by issuing a call for future research to '…clarify how and to what extent non-binary people are erased… through the intertwining of language and cultural norms, and in linguistic systems that are not bound by the same gendered assumptions as English' (2020, p.114). I have explored this area in my research project and expanded upon shuster and Lamont's work here by seeking a broader participant demographic with more varied geographical profiles while focusing on specific elements of speech and language in use within the non-binary communities (e.g., pronouns) to ensure the study did not outgrow the boundaries of my project timescale.

Fiani and Han (2019) investigated identity formation for trans and non-binary people and the challenges and help they encountered during the process. While not obviously about language, the study echoes some similar lived experiences to other literature and provides useful background information on compounding factors that disadvantage trans and non-binary people in both forming and articulating their identities.

A qualitative study of both binary trans and non-binary narratives and experiences, albeit with a small US-centric sample size, *'Navigating identity'* explores factors that negatively affect the mental health and quality of life of trans and gender non-conforming (TGNC) individuals (Fiani and Han, 2019, p.183). While not a study exclusively of non-binary people, the comparison of findings

between the binary trans participants and those non-binary participants goes to demonstrate that the experiences of gender-diverse people are not universal, as is generally assumed (2019, p.182).

Fiani and Han highlight that 'Historically, the 'T' in 'LGBTQ' has often been rendered silent. These results indicate that non-binary narratives have been rendered doubly silent' (2019, p.181); this idea of overlapping incomprehensibility appears common among emergent non-binary inclusive research (Bradford et al., 2019; shuster and Lamont, 2020) and is important to factor in when considering the wellbeing of affected communities.

Among the 15 participants, Fiani and Han observed nine distinct gender identities, with just over half of the participants (9 out of 15) specifying a non-binary identity (Fiani and Han, 2019, pp.183–4), which is skewed slightly higher than the observed averages among trans communities cited earlier in the text, as *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey* showed 35% of respondents identified as non-binary or genderqueer (James et al., 2016, p.45). This higher-than-average rate of non-binary people does offer a greater weight to their voices and experiences in areas where they differ from the binary trans participants, making it less likely that those differences are put down to anomaly.

Following semi-structured gender identity interviews with the participants, the authors picked out certain themes and sub-themes and categorised the frequency of these, along with including some sample quotes or summaries to illustrate each theme. Under the 'Challenges/Risk Factors' theme, there are a number of subthemes and examples that resonate with the direction of my research, in particular: 'Lack of information/resources', 'Exclusion from binary trans* spaces' and 'Systematic [challenges]' (2019, p.186). I have chosen to pick out these three as the quotes from participants are especially poignant.

In the first instance, the two quotes picked out by Fiani and Han were: 'no frame of reference for what I'm going through' and 'I didn't really know that there were other options' (2019, p.186). These struck me as good examples to illustrate the obstacles encountered by gender-diverse people when attempting to navigate and describe their identities to their own satisfaction, as well as implying an absence of suitable descriptors or language available to undertake such a task.

The subtheme of 'Exclusion from binary trans* spaces' is echoed in the findings of shuster and Lamont (2020) of a lack of non-binary inclusive community spaces. The exemplar quote brings this into sharp regard, 'I just feel like we stopped when it comes to the 'T'…we have the 'T', but like our 'T' is still binary', and hints again at the twofold silencing of non-binary voices (Fiani and Han, 2019, p.186).

Finally, systematic challenges, typified as 'trying to deal with a cisnormative society', are of interest to me as they demonstrate the wider reach of language failure in society and how that, in turn, affects the individual (2019, p.187). In this theme, Fiani and Han also noted that, among the systematic challenges of non-binary participants, 'invisibility and boxism (i.e., implicit binarism) were more common [than with binary trans participants]' (Fiani and Han, 2019, p.188).

These challenges, when viewed in contrast with the three themes identified by participants 'which positively impacted their identity development: 1) social support, 2) resources, and 3) validating experiences' (2019, p.188), illustrate some of the areas I have investigated with a view to establishing how important appropriate language is in these positive experiences.

Moving to examine Thorne et al.'s systematic review of '*The terminology of identities between, outside and beyond the gender binary'* (2019), there has been a clear narrative shift in the research focussing on trans people. The review looked at articles published between 1960 and October 2018 and demonstrates a number of shifts that have changed the field of study, which reflect the changes in lived experiences of trans people (ibid.).

This began with a moving away from the discourse that focussed on a male vs. female understanding of gender that was a feature of the earlier texts discovered. Beginning in the 1980's, the review describes another shift "…away from "masculine" and "feminine" traits being seen as unidimensional model (Bockting, 2008; Diamond & Butterworth, 2008; Robinson & Green, 1981 in Thorne et al., 2019, p.141)"; and, in later shifts, away from "gender as dichotomous" and "away from strict binary sex role categories within transgender healthcare settings (Koehler, Eyssel & Nieder, 2018 in Thorne et al., 2019, p.142)".

The review also highlights the relative recency with which 'non-binary' has been observed in scholarly works (Richards et al., 2016, 2017 in Thorne et al., 2019), with 'genderqueer' preceding it by around a decade. Both of these terms can be considered neologisms – new words – that have come into being to describe identities that do not align to a strict binary understanding of gender. The review identifies a number of other neologisms from papers analysed and makes an important observation that 'non-binary' is used as an umbrella term as well as an identity term (Ibid.).

Thorne et al. also touch on language changing, commenting that "Language is not rigid or static and the etymology of a word can act as a small time-capsule, revealing the changing narratives and ideas relating to the object or action it describes (2019, p.148)." As language changes, neologisms form and can offer insight into the circumstances of their creation when looked back on. Although I

am focussed on the effects of neologisms and language availability, the origins of such words allow us to see the shifts in narratives surrounding them.

Another significant shift has been the spread of the internet, that has afforded people to engage with the exploration of their identity and that has seen "the production of new, diverse 'labels' or 'categories' of sexuality and gender identity (Cover, 2018, p.1)." Thorne et al.'s review identifies texts that credit the emergence of neologisms to online spaces designed for and by those with gender identities beyond the binary (Thorne et al., 2019). Transgender people prior to the internet's ubiquity had to rely on "niche media on the margins of society" (Cavalcante, 2016, p.111), whereas the change in communication, technology and information has created online spaces that afford a sense of community where neologisms emerge through collective discussion (Plummer, 2002 in Thorne et al., 2019, p.148).

3.5 CONCLUSIONS

Considered together, these texts provide a useful overview of the existing work surrounding identity, language and the precarity between the two. It is notable that, while the literature suggests a shift in societal views on gender has enabled further research into non-binary identities, this is still dragging behind within the wider field of Trans Studies. This thesis would therefore be well situated to occupy this space.

The wealth of research that I have explored reinforces the key concept that language is empowering when it has the capacity to describe accurately, through neologisms, and alienating when that capacity is lacking via explanatory gaps. It is evident from these texts that the current climate, in respect of non-binary individuals, is one with a dearth of suitable language that is, in turn, creating an exclusionary environment. Another commonality is the erasure of non-binary lives

by language(s) ill-equipped to function to their benefit in tandem with the effects of 'implicit binarism' or 'cultural cisgenderism'. These issues contribute to a negative impact on the wellbeing of non-binary individuals.

Through the exploration of the available literature the notion of overlapping incomprehensibility, or double silencing, emerged as a new concept as it was not something that I had considered investigating until I observed the prevalence of the issue across these texts; this provides an additional lens through which to critically assess the effects of language use in non-binary experiences.

4 DEFINING THE RESEARCH

4.1 DEFINING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given what I have determined from the literature, these are the questions that are not currently answered:

1) To what extent, and how, do explanatory gaps in gender language affect non-binary individuals seeking affirming self-description?

2) How do neologisms affect the individual faced with explanatory gaps?

   a) Are there any trends in attitudes towards the uptake and use of neologisms within the non-binary community?

   b) Are there obstacles to asking binary trans and cis-gender people to adopt neologisms in support of non-binary people?

Here I would like to clarify some of the terms I have used in my research questions. Using terminology from the WPATH Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8[3]:

- "Nonbinary refers to those with gender identities outside the gender binary."

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[3] It is important to note that the WPATH and its Standards of Care have been devised based on a white, western, colonial history and perspective that has limitations when considering genders of Indigenous and/or People of Colour (binaohan, 2014).

- "Transgender or trans are umbrella terms used to describe people whose gender identities and/or gender expressions are not what is typically expected for the sex to which they were assigned at birth."

- "Cisgender refers to people whose current gender identity corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth." (Coleman et al., 2022)

The term 'explanatory gap' originates from the field of philosophy of the mind, where it indicates a disconnect between mental and physical life (Harman, 2007). For the purposes of this study, 'explanatory gaps' are gaps in a language where a suitable word does not exist (or is not known) to accurately describe something that is known to exist or be experienced. For example, a hard, round fruit with a short stalk and pips inside that can be red or green would only be an apple if the word 'apple' exists, and you know this vocabulary. In relation to my research, non-binary people are more likely to encounter these gaps because they are seeking self-description outside of the cisnormative vocabulary of gender that they are immersed in. 'Cisnormative' is the normalised framework of a society that assumes being cisgender (i.e., not trans) is the standard or default state of being. I can relate this to my experience with the example of transgender men: transmen certainly existed twenty years ago but because I did not know the word existed, I did not know that transmen existed either. Similarly, I could not know I would later identify as a 'demiboy' when I was 13 years old because the word was not there; it subsequently became a term that non-binary people used, I learned it and only then did I understand more clearly that aspect of myself. Finally, a 'neologism' is simply a newly created word, much like 'glamping' (only added to the Oxford dictionary in 2005) or 'mansplaining' (added in 2008) (Ayto, 2019).

Though 'non-binary' already explains a certain experience of existing somehow in contradiction to the cisnormative gender binary there remains a great deal of variation among individual experiences. Returning to the apple example, like non-binary, it is an umbrella term. If we did not have the word 'apple' then an attempt to describe the object may be rendered fruitless by the variation of such an object. The apple could be red; pink; green; for dessert; for cooking; completely inedible; a wide variety of sizes; and may be an entirely different variety than the tree from which it was grown. We not only need to know the word 'apple' to begin to make sense of the object, but we also need its more specific name and variety to truly know what it is. It is in this gap where many non-binary people find themselves, without a specific name for their experience, and this is where neologisms are likely to form in order to name and describe specific experiences. My interest is to explore how these new words impact upon the individual by investigating which words are being used within the community and the community's appetite for the formation of neologisms in the face of explanatory gaps.

4.1.1 Hypotheses

I have also formed two key hypotheses:

1. There will be an effect on non-binary individuals from explanatory gaps.
2. There will be a relationship between non-binary individuals and gender-focussed neologisms.

4.2 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

While the field of Trans Studies has been expanding over the last two decades, it remains primarily focussed on the medico-juridical experiences of binary trans people. Non-binary people need to be centred more given this 'dearth of empirical data explicitly focusing on non-binary people's experiences…', as is asserted by shuster and Lamont (2020, p.104) and something that I explored in

Section 3.4. In addition, UK society has been full of voracious anti-trans rhetoric in recent years (McLean, 2021) that is reflected in year-on-year rises in reports of transphobic hate crimes, including a staggering 37% rise in the year to March 2019 (Home Office, 2019). This period covers the public consultation of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA), of which there was considerable media attention, and this likely had a significant impact on these statistics. Subsequent years have continued to see increases in reported hate crimes towards transgender people, though not at the same level: 2019-20 saw a 16% increase (Home Office, 2020), and 2020-21 saw a 3% increase (Home Office, 2021). The lower statistics in more recent years reinforces the impact of the consultation on the GRA. Other factors that may be impacting on a rise in hate crime include the growing visibility of trans movements, the increasingly central role of social media and the prominence of many anti-trans feminists antagonising hostilities towards trans communities (Hines, 2019). Research like this project aim to bring more understanding of the experiences of trans and non-binary people to those outside of these communities in the hope that this will engender more compassion and empathy among wider society. My hope is that this will help reduce the prevalence of toxic rhetoric across society and reduce risk of harm to trans and non-binary people.

The impact of this research is wide-reaching and will be felt inside and outside the LGBTQ+ community. It can inform institutional policy, influence legal and government policy as well as provide the groundwork for further academic or independent research. The research will highlight the stresses that non-binary people must go through to define themselves with language that is not always suitable, which is something the majority of society do not have to suffer and as such are unlikely to truly understand. It is with mutual understanding that non-binary identities can be respected and protected; with my research conclusions available to them, policymakers will be better informed as to the best ways to protect our non-binary communities.

5 METHODOLOGY

In this section I will expand upon the specific methodology employed in this research project and some of the influences in those decisions.

5.1 DESIGN

In designing this study, I have opted for a mixed-methods approach to combine quantitative and qualitative research so that the overall results offer a more comprehensive account of the use of neologisms among non-binary communities. As this is a piece of research into an area of enquiry lacking in pre-existing data, a broader study would allow me to better establish and understand the current situation. Bryman would describe this as a need for completeness (Bryman, 2016). In addition, using mixed-methods would provide a contextual understanding and employing both approaches lends a greater internal integrity to the results, which will contribute to greater credibility of the study (ibid.).

I will be using descriptive statistics as a first step in my analysis of the study's data to summarise and organise the information into manageable and easily interpreted forms (Kaur et al., 2018). Descriptive statistics can be used to "estimate characteristics of a population" and excel in displaying data in a succinct manner (Nick, 2007). Given the restrictions on the word count for this thesis, clear and concise interpretation of the data is paramount. I will be using indicative quotations from the qualitative elements of the study to illustrate my analysis process and findings (Eldh et al., 2020). Qualitative data will be processed using thematic analysis to identify and explore themes present in the survey responses (Bryman, 2016).

In respect of sampling, I have used a snowball sampling method in order to disseminate my survey among non-binary communities given the lack of an accessible sampling frame for such participants (Bryman, 2016). This sampling method does have limitations, chief of which is that the sample will not be fully representative of the population and so extrapolations to that scale are not possible (ibid.). Similarly, descriptive statistics faces the same limitation, meaning the findings cannot be generalised to reflect an entire population (Nick, 2007). Further study into the area may be able to produce such findings in the future.

The data collection method is an online survey targeting UK residents that is fully anonymised with an emphasis on free text response boxes and multiple choices. My first consideration to choose an online survey was the ease of access and the ease of managing a survey: I wanted to ensure that as many people as possible could access this research project in order to contribute and an online survey – given the ubiquitous nature of the internet – is the best way to avoid any physical accessibility issues that may arise with in person interviews or focus groups. I needed a data collection method that was easy for me to manage while studying part-time and working full-time in an unrelated industry without the research project suffering as a result and it was unlikely for me to find dedicated time for in-person or individual interactions with participants. Online surveys provide a flexible, time- and cost-efficient option for researchers (Evans and Mathur, 2005; Braun et al., 2021).

I wanted a format that could provide a 'wide-angle lens' given my target demographic was large, diverse, and geographically spread-out. It also contained different demographic groups within the overall set. Online surveys allow for flexible, multi-perspective designs that help to achieve 'maximum heterogeneity', which can offer revealing and unexpected results (Braun et al., 2021).

Another consideration towards the online survey as my method was that I planned to utilise data gathered by the independent research project Gender Census, which is an annual online survey aimed at gathering information on terms and phrases used by people who feel they do not fit into the gender binary. By using an online survey, it would be easier to compare my data on similar questions and topics with Gender Census data. Finally, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and varying local lockdowns globally meant that in-person methods were no longer considered safe, and it was not clear when they might become safe. Using an online survey meant no one involved needed to meet or go anywhere that could put them at risk of exposure to the virus.

While I considered the possibility of small focus groups or one-to-one interviews online, I felt these were too time intensive, impractical and would not provide the breadth of data that I was seeking. Online surveys are superior to focussed interviews in gathering wider, more diverse sets of data, (Braun et al., 2021) which is what I sought to achieve.

5.2 PARTICIPANTS

While I was aware that those with non-binary identities are of higher prevalence among younger people (Monro, 2019), I did not restrict survey eligibility based on age as I wanted to have as wide a variety of participant ages as possible. Similarly, I did not impose any geographic or language restrictions on participants to allow for the 'wide-angle lens' effect (Braun et al., 2021) to come through in the resultant data. I have included those with trans* or transgender identities as it is widely acknowledged that "non-binary people still exist within the broader umbrella definition of trans*" (Nicolazzo, 2016), a view supported by many scholars (Koehler et al., 2018; Bradford and Catalpa, 2019; Monro, 2005) and by the recent update to SOC 8, which states "Some nonbinary

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people consider themselves to be transgender or trans; some do not because they consider transgender to be part of the gender binary." (Coleman et al., 2022)

5.3 MATERIALS

A blank copy of the survey is available in Appendix 2.

The survey was composed in English and while a limitation considered was linguistic and cultural translatability, which could have caused international participants difficulties in understanding the questions, there was no evidence to suggest this occurred.

In the survey I have leant heavily in favour of open text boxes as opposed to multiple choice or tick boxes owing to the complexity of the topic that I am asking questions about. Coming from a poststructuralist standpoint, it is important to allow my participants the ability to phrase their answers in their own way to generate an accurate impression of their identity through self-description. To ask participants how they self-describe without giving them the ability to provide an answer in their own terms would be counter-intuitive to the aims and ethos of this research project. I expected that this decision would make data analysis a little more difficult but considered it a worthwhile sacrifice to ensure my participants felt their responses mattered and were understood to be more complex than a tick-box exercise.

Questions 6 and 7 were designed to be double-barrelled, in order to cover both the option of undertaking an action and the appetite towards the potential of undertaking the same action. In doing so, this groups the two together as insight into the attitude towards the action can be gained from both options. One limitation of using a double-barrelled question, however, is that it is not possible to say with complete confidence to which option each respondent is replying. If I were to

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repeat the study, I would break these questions down so that they were separate. The insights that they provide, as is, remain valuable within the scope of this project as they speak to participant attitudes towards neologisms.

I have also included a section asking for demographic data, which is optional for participants, to capture information on the intersectional identity facets of my participants. As non-binary identities can be found across the spectrum of society it is important to consider the intersectional factors at work on participants and, with this data, I can examine whether there are any intersecting axes that may lead to greater or lesser stress on the individual.

5.4 PROCEDURE

After receiving ethical approval for the study from the University of Birmingham's internal review process, including the survey itself, in February 2021, I was able to make the survey 'live' and begin data collection. I hosted the survey on Microsoft Forms, which saves responses into a private cloud storage area that only I could access. As the survey does not gather any personal information, responses are saved as anonymous numbered entries. The data is physically held within the UK (University of Birmingham, 2018), meaning that it is protected by UK and EU data laws. They will remain securely stored at the University for a minimum of five years after my degree is complete.

In distributing the survey, I sent information to internal staff and students' networks at the University of Birmingham by email – the Rainbow Network and LGBTQIA+ Association respectively. I sent information to interested parties at other institutions through the JISC mailing list, Critical Sexology. I had been in contact with the individual running the Gender Census independent research project to ask if they would be happy to distribute my study to their mailing list and Twitter followers. They agreed and retweeted a recruitment tweet I composed with a link to the

survey a few days after it opened. The survey remained open for the entire month of March 2021, though I had initially planned to leave it open until the end of April.

I had expected a low uptake of participants and hoped with two months open the survey would garner enough responses to provide sufficient data to analyse. My original target for responses was 30, I was then advised to aim for 100 by my academic supervisor for the project. To begin with, uptake was slow until the retweet from Gender Census, at which point I began getting a steady flow of new responses that overtook my aims and estimates swiftly, which led me to close the survey after only one month as I had 759 participants by that time.

Finally, it is worth discussing the potential requirement for data sanitising after the survey was completed and before data analysis began. One draw-back to an online survey is that the link will be open to anyone and given the topic of the research it could be targeted by anti-trans individuals or groups to obfuscate any findings by providing false or abusive responses. Despite this I decided to keep the link open so that genuine respondents do not have to identify themselves to me in any way in order to access the survey. I sought advice from Cassian Lodge, behind the Gender Census project, on examples of abuses to their survey in the past. To sanitise my data, I looked for any obvious similarities to those examples in my responses that demonstrated anti-trans rhetoric. No responses were identified or removed in this way, leaving my total number of participants at 759. After this review of results and with consideration to the chosen texts within my Literature Review, I developed four key areas for thematic analysis that I will be exploring in my study: Demographic Trends, Gender Terms, Neologisms and Emotional Responses.

6 DATA ANALYSIS

6.1 IDENTIFYING THEMES

All figures have been generated based on the responses to my survey undertaken in March 2021, this includes word frequency clouds, bar and pie charts created through three different software packages: Microsoft Forms, Microsoft Excel and NVivo 20. To aid in the analysis of this data I have grouped the information from certain questions together to form four themes. These are:

1. Demographic Trends: This section contains the demographic information obtained in the survey that could be used to identify trends within different groups of participants and provides some interesting insights into the makeup of participants in the study.

2. Gender Terms: Under this theme I have grouped the responses to questions that deal specifically with gender terms: words and phrases participants use to describe their gender; and pronoun usage to represent their gender.

3. Neologisms: This theme related to the idea of new words, or neologisms, and participants willingness to use or create them. Questions 6-8, detailed in this section, looked at the willingness to use an existing neologism, confidence in creating one and reasons participants would not create one.

4. Emotional Responses: This theme focusses on emotional responses and reactions, whether positive or negative, in different situations where gender language or descriptors are used/misused or accepted/ignored.

6.2 THEME: DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Despite most of the demographic questions being entirely optional in the survey, they had a high rate of completion (e.g., 753 responses to Question 17: How would you describe your ethnic background?), which is very useful when trying to spot any trends within the participant pool as it more accurately represents the audience. The first trend would be that a large majority of respondents (84%) stated that English was their first language (see Figure 1, below). While the research was intended to look at explanatory gaps and neologisms in the English language, it was interesting to see responses from those who do not use it as their first language but nevertheless use the terms and phrases related to gender from English. It would be worth further research considering whether English is acting as some form of *lingua franca* in queer linguistics and whether this requires decolonising efforts.

4. What is your first (most used) language for communicating?

More Details   Insights

760
Responses

Latest Responses
"English "
"German"
"english"

642 respondents (**84%**) answered **English** for this question.

norwegian offline   spanish with family
English or Dutch   Romanian German and English   Canada
Sign Language   British English   **English**   French   English/German
American Dialect   Swedish   Spanish   Finnish and English
American English   Norwegian   Australian English
French/Swedish   english and cantonese

Figure 1: Question 4 with 'Insights' analysis from Microsoft Forms (including word frequency cloud)

Based on the dissemination methods I used for the survey I was expecting most of the respondents to be between 16 and 24, which was held up by the data gathered. 18-24 was the largest age group with 344 respondents (45%) indicating this range; the second largest group was 25-34 with 238 responses (31%); then there were 101 participants who were 16 or 17 years old, and respondents over 35 years old only totalled 77 people.

16. What age range do you fall into?

More Details   Insights

- 16-18   101
- 18-24   344
- 25-34   238
- 35-44   62
- 45+   15

Figure 2: Question 16 pie chart generated by Microsoft Forms

I was surprised but pleased that the 25-34 years old group was the second largest as this demonstrates that non-binary identities are being expressed by those beyond what could be described as 'young people' (typically under 24 years old). Many studies tend to look only at the

younger age brackets[4], leaving adult trans and non-binary people out when research, care and support should be considering queer folk of all ages. Furthermore, a common criticism levelled at the non-binary community is that only teenagers have these identities and that this makes them somehow less valid, as if it is a 'phase' or a 'fad'. Healthcare focusses support on young people as that is where research focusses, leaving older adults at a disadvantage. Similarly, there are many more charities that support young people and not older generations (e.g., Mermaids, The Trevor Project). As my data shows plenty of respondents who are 25 years old and above, this demonstrates the older adult demographic exists but may not be supported. I am glad my data goes some way to disproving this faulty assumption although further research can still be undertaken to ascertain why there seem to be fewer non-binary individuals over the age of 35. Was this an issue with the dissemination of my survey, or are they genuinely fewer in number? If so, why is this?

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[4] For example, at the Centre for Transforming Sexuality and Gender, two currently open projects – 'Gender diverse youth and citizen equality' and 'Resourcing Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) trans young people in the UK' – are both firmly aimed at researching young trans people's experiences as opposed to a wider spectrum of ages.

Figure 3: Question 17 with 'Insights' from Microsoft Forms (including word frequency cloud)

Under Question 17, participants described their ethnicity in their own words and as you can see

from Figure 3 the most common word was 'White'. This was often combined with other descriptors

to form a more specific identity, e.g., 'White British', 'White Dutch', 'White European', 'White

American', as well as some where white was listed as part of a list, e.g., 'White/Cherokee',

'White/Latino', 'mixed race white and japanese American', which would have added to the total

prevalence of the word. While most responses featured the word 'white' there were also those

who used 'Caucasian' instead, which is sometimes used as a synonym for 'white'. It is difficult to

determine whether those using 'Caucasian' meant it this way or whether they used it in the

historical sense of including West Asian, North African, and Indian inhabitants. In either case, the

proportion of white respondents remains high. Interrogating other responses shows that there

were other ethnicities described, such as:

- Asian, Southeast Asian, Asian-American, Japanese, Pakistani American, Chinese, Filipino

- Latine, Latinx, Latino, Hispanic, Latin American, Mexican, Costa Rican,

- Amazigh, North African, Black/African, African-American, Black American, Black

- Persian-Turkish, Turkish, Serbian, Slavic, Sami, Romani

- Middle Eastern, Arab, Iranian

- Pākehā New Zealander, Paakehaa [alternative spelling], Cook Island Maori, Māori, Pacific

  Islander, Indigenous (First Nations), Native American

- Ashkenazi Jew, Jewish, Jew

The above is a broad sample of ethnicities mentioned, an expanded list is available in Appendix 1

(Figure 30). It is interesting to see quite a variety of backgrounds in the responses and that white

was such a majority. It would be a valuable task to investigate several things from this data in

further research; first, to ascertain what reasons may be behind the significant white majority –

could this be owing to the survey's design and dissemination, is it related to the research

specifically looking at English language, is there a genuine trend towards white people identifying as

non-binary or do people of other backgrounds use other words where they exist outside of the

Westernised gender binary? Existing literature suggests the terms 'transgender' and 'non-binary'

are of white origins owing to their enmeshing with the Western gender binary, itself a tool of

colonial control (binaohan, 2014), and queer people of colour may resist such terms because they

interpret concepts of gender in different ways (Valentine, 2007). Others argue that "the

condensation of transness into the category of transgender is a racial narrative" (Snorton, 2017,

p.8) and that Western terms do not easily translate to the experiences of globally gender diverse people (Ravine, 2014). While there are many examples of non-Western gender identities that are comparable to, or fall under a non-binary category, Vincent and Manzano highlight historical European iterations of gender beyond or pre-existing of the binary. They state that "…there is no reason to believe such articulations cannot be found in any and all nations and contexts" (Vincent and Manzano, 2017, p.25). Non-binary as a sociopolitical and academic category may assume membership of non-Western interpretations of gender, though it must be remembered that the lived experiences of individuals may not align with the term when it comes to self-description. My study also shows that some people of colour do recognise themselves in the term 'non-binary' as they have indicated as much in their responses.

I would be keen to conduct further research with QTIPOC (Queer, Trans, Intersex People of Colour) and others from smaller cultural groups to see how differing language, life and culture interacts with their gender identities. Exploring as many perspectives of gender and gender diversity as possible will be key to bringing greater understanding to all.

18. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

More Details   💡 Insights

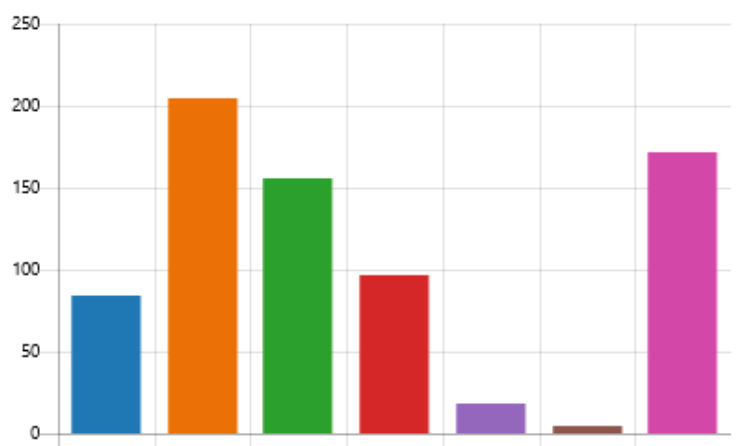|	
🔵 Post-14 (GCSE, GNVQ)	84
🟠 Post-16 (A Level, Foundation …)	204
🟢 Post-18 (Bachelor's degree or …)	156
🔴 Master's degree	97
🟣 Doctorate/PhD	18
🟤 Post-Doctorate	5
🟣 Other	172

Figure 4: Question 18 bar chart generated by Microsoft Forms

The highest level of education completed by respondents is largely consistent with the age ranges reported, with Post-16 and Post-18 comprising the majority of responses. While the 'Other' option was chosen slightly more than Post-18, upon inspection of these free text answers this seems to have been where the respondent has not been sure where their education fits in the other categories. I had initially listed 'Other' in case anyone responded who had not achieved any of the other educational levels however this seems to have confused matters. I had hoped that listing options by their age category as opposed to specific qualifications would help to avoid this and rewording this question in any future research will be needed to clarify results.

19. What is your employment status? (please tick all that apply)
More Details

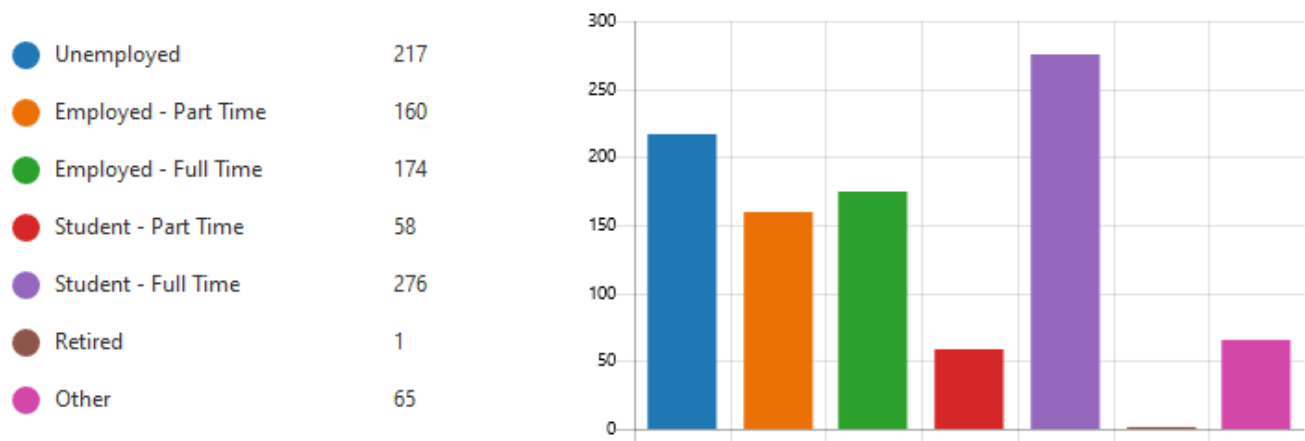|		
● Unemployed	217	
● Employed - Part Time	160	
● Employed - Full Time	174	
● Student - Part Time	58	
● Student - Full Time	276	
● Retired	1	
● Other	65	

Figure 5: Question 19 bar chart generated by Microsoft Forms

The employment data is also consistent with the age and education data given that the most frequently reported status was 'Student – Full Time'. The second most frequent was 'Unemployed'

and this was often paired with a report of studenthood as this question allowed multiple options. Curiously there are equal numbers who are employed or a student in some capacity (334 in both cases). A deeper analysis of responses that included both 'Student' and an employment status can be found in Appendix 1 (Figure 23). Under 'Other' the responses are mostly offering extra qualifying information as opposed to a status that isn't already listed, for example 'Disabled', 'Volunteering', 'unable to work for health reasons' and, while it is interesting to see participants feeling the need to offer these clarifications, this also obfuscated the true totals for the other categories.
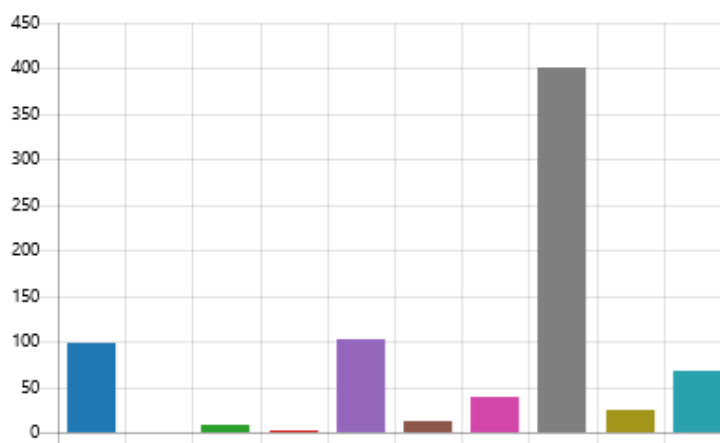

Figure 6: Question 20 bar chart generated by Microsoft Forms

As can be seen in Figure 6, the location of participants is heavily skewed towards the USA with over 400 people being based there, a significant number in itself considering the anti-trans politics of the USA in recent years. For example, federal legislature in many states that infringes upon the rights of trans people, such as: FL S0254, which grants courts of Florida "…temporary emergency jurisdiction

over a child present in this state if the child has been subjected to or is threatened with being

subjected to sex-reassignment prescriptions or procedures" (Treatments for Sex Reassignment) or

HB 1521 that requires individuals to use toilets according to their sex assigned at birth, regardless

of any later transition (Facility Requirements Based on Sex). After the USA, West Europe and

England are the most common locations for respondents and then Canada. Within the 'Other'

category some people have added places that would constitute 'Rest of the World' answers (e.g.,

Australia, Singapore, Brazil) and some have added explanations that differentiate where they're

living currently versus where they're from (e.g., 'From UK, studying in N. Europe.'). Regardless of

specific location the data from Question 20 shows a very heavy Western bias in respondents. It is

difficult to discern, with the data available, whether the Western bias in participants to this study is

because of restrictions in the scope of the study or because non-binary is a Western cultural

product, not employed elsewhere. It is owing to the restriction of the research to examining

Anglophone non-binary terms, being distributed through British universities and via Twitter with

recruiting information written in English that this study cannot be representative of the entire

international non-binary community, nor do I claim it to be. It would require a much larger scale

project to investigate whether non-binary can be considered purely a Western phenomenon or a

global one.

21. How would you describe your social class?
More Details   Insights

● Working class	278
● Middle class	388
● Upper class	33
● Other	53

50

For Question 21, I asked how respondents would describe their social class and the majority

answered with 'Middle class' (388), followed by 'Working class' (278) and 'Upper class' being the

least popular by some distance (33). While a Middle-class majority was largely what I had expected

I was surprised by how few people considered themselves to be Upper class. It would be interesting

to explore the reasons behind this, whether there is some reticence in claiming an Upper-class

status or if there is a genuine lack of gender variance among the Upper classes. Alternatively,

whether the dissemination of the survey somehow failed to reach those demographic circles. The

high rates of Working- and Middle-class participants however indicates that non-binarism is not

restricted to a single class or demographic group and is a much wider societal concern. Figures are

available in Appendix 1 that look closer at the responses to this question and expand on the 'Other'

category (Figures 24 and 25).

22. How would you describe your sexuality?
More Details

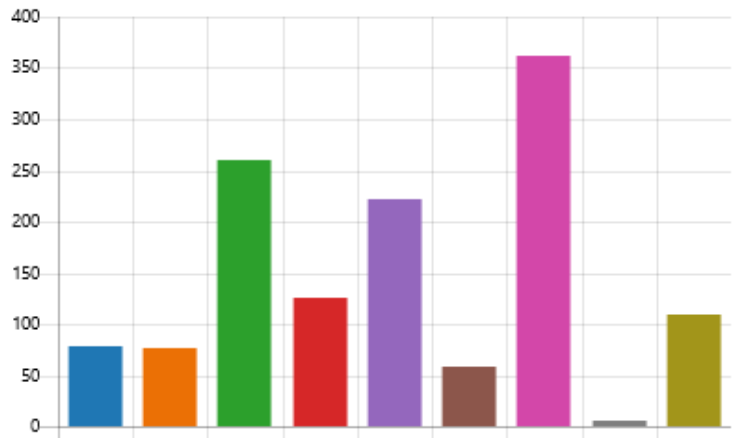|		
Gay	79	
Lesbian	77	
Bisexual	260	
Pansexual	126	
Asexual or 'A-spec'	221	
Demisexual	59	
Queer	361	
Straight	6	
Other	109	

Figure 8: Question 22 bar chart generated by Microsoft Forms

51

The final piece of demographic data that I collected was related to the sexuality of the participants. The most popular choice was 'Queer' (361), then 'Bisexual' (260), 'Asexual or 'A-spec'' (221), 'Pansexual' (126) and 'Other' (109). After this the responses drop below 100 each. Under 'Other' saw people listing more than one of the other given options as well as adding other terms (including some neologisms) that they use for their sexuality, for example:

'…plysexual, plurisexual, non-monosexual…'

'Omnigay'

'queer, ace, and bi'

'Graysexual bisensual demiromantic'

'Androphilic gray ace'

'Pan, grey-ace, queer'

A number of respondents who used the 'Other' field also mentioned the question should have allowed multiple answers to record the complexities of sexualities more accurately. This will be something to consider in further research. Despite this, the use of multiple categories and neologisms within the responses for this question demonstrate a positive inclination towards using new words to try and attain affirming self-description. It would be interesting to examine further into the 'Other' field to see if the same respondents seeking multiple options and using neologisms for their sexuality were also those who preferred to use just the umbrella terms when it came to gender. The prevalence of m-spec sexualities (those which are attracted to more than one gender in their partners) over single-gender sexualities like 'gay' or 'lesbian' is also something worth considering for further research. Is there a non-binary tendency toward m-spec sexualities? Are

'gay' or 'lesbian' problematised for non-binary individuals as there is no obvious 'same' or

'opposite' gender to be attracted to? It would be interesting to follow up with the six individuals

who described themselves as 'Straight' to ask how this manifests for them as non-binary people.

6.3 THEME: GENDER TERMS

Question 5 ('Which of the following terms do you feel describe your identity?') provided interesting

data for this theme; looking at Figure 9 (below) we can see the most popular choices that were

picked by participants that they felt described their identity.

5. Which of the following terms do you feel describe your identity? (Please tick all that apply)
More Details

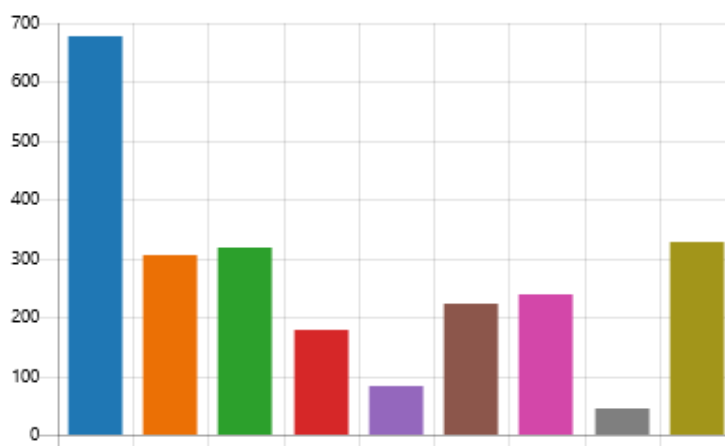|		
● Non-binary, or 'enby'	677	
● Trans*, or transgender	304	
● Genderqueer	317	
● Genderfluid	177	
● Demigender (e.g. demiboy or ...	83	
● Agender	224	
● Gender Non-Conforming	238	
● Xenogender	44	
● Other	328	

Figure 9: bar chart showing responses to Question 5, automatically generated by Microsoft Forms.

This was a multiple options question so respondents could pick all that applied. While the graph

doesn't show the free text entries under the 'Other' option, I have analysed these and provide a

Top 20 chart and pivot table in the appendices (Figures 26 and 27 in Appendix 1). While participant-

provided terms from the free text entries offers interesting opportunities for analysis, no single

term was suggested more than any of the pre-written options I provided and therefore were not statistically significant to this project.

Figure 10 shows a word cloud that was generated in NVivo without adding any extra parameters and has just taken the frequency of words used in both the multiple-choice and free text responses to Question 5.

Figure 10: Word cloud generated with NVivo from responses to Question 5, including free text 'Other' field

There are some words here that do not necessarily relate to gender (e.g., 'one', 'another', 'term', 'definitely') or that form part of a term or phrase (e.g., 'non' and 'binary' are separate words in Figure 10 but are used together to form 'non binary'); this is owing to the free text box where respondents could write anything they wished and NVivo has simply collated all words in all responses to that question. The most popular terms ('transgender', 'enby', 'non' 'binary', 'trans', 'genderqueer') can been seen highlighted in orange in Figure 10. The next level of frequency are in bold black, with further terms that come under the non-binary umbrella (e.g., 'nonbinary', 'demiboy', 'demigirl', 'agender', 'genderflux', 'genderfluid'), then less popular terms are all in grey.

While there are still a lot of pertinent words in the grey section, there are also more generic words (e.g., 'dislike', 'line', 'describe', 'addition', 'sense') that don't imply any particular identity.

References to 'cisgendered' or 'cis' that appear in the word cloud did concern me upon first generating it, as I thought perhaps the survey had been misused. Upon investigating the instances where these words were being used, in both Question 5 and Question 11, the responses showed that this was being done in two ways. Firstly, in forming an oppositional definition, e.g., 'I usually go for non binary or not-cis', 'Not cisgendered', 'I know I'm not a cis woman'. Grouping commonalities of experience together under 'not-cis' allows for an umbrella that unifies the experiences of people living within a cisnormative society while they are excluded from that normative realm. 'Not-cis' also offers a less intimidating term to use than transgender, which has a lot of negative connotations attached to it that may dissuade some people from claiming the identity out of fear of stigma and discrimination. Some prefer terms such as genderqueer over non-binary as they dislike the notion of being framed in opposition to something else, of having an identity of a negative nature, using a term that affirms the gender binary's existence, or of limiting your freedom of gender expression:

> 'I would use the language gender queer… I don't like the term non-binary. I find it really problematic that people are starting their description of their gender freedom with a negative. I've found it difficult that that they are also defining themselves as not being normative. So, in a way the term non-binary reinforces that there is a binary and I don't think it gives creative and spiritual freedom, enough freedom, to people that are actually in this incredibly vast space that is the breadth of the spectrum, you know, at their fingertips.'
> EJ Scott (NB: My non-binary life, 2019, no.1)

The idea of 'not-cis' as an identifier is also reminiscent of materialist feminism's claim that 'one is not born a woman', which we see in de Beauvoir ([1949] 2011) and later in the essays of Wittig. This position asserts that 'woman' is not a natural category and is instead something one becomes through the application of socio-political forces of oppression (Wittig, 1981). Wittig explains that to be a lesbian means a rejection of being, or becoming, a woman and the oppressive political constraint that is associated with the category. She goes on to highlight that 'to refuse to be a woman… does not mean that one has to become a man' and establishes that a lesbian cannot become a man because she is not able to assume man's consciousness as a master, an oppressor, that lays claim to women as belonging to him (Wittig, 1981, p.105). In this way, Wittig's lesbian is neither woman nor man. Participants using 'not-cis' have rejected one 'natural category' (to be cisgender) and have not claimed its supposed natural opposite (to be transgender) for whatever reason. They have instead opted for an identity of opposition, much like Wittig's lesbian is 'not a woman'.

There could be several reasons that one may reject 'cisgender' as an identifying category without then claiming transgender in its place. This could be a resistance to the idea of transition that is so intricately linked with *trans*gender: that not everyone who is 'not-cis' will have a transition and they are not required to either, regardless of outside pressures to do so within a binarist society. This rejects the essentialist notion that you must be one *or* the other (man or woman) and nothing else. Conversely, 'not-cis' could be masking a fear of transgender identity and what that may signify for the individual. To embrace 'transgender' as an identifying category means, sadly, that life may not be easy. It means putting oneself into a highly vilified and marginalised group that is often the target of physical, emotional, and political violence. While this is not the choice of the trans individual, it is nevertheless a stark reality at present. To be 'not-cis' offers the ability to

differentiate oneself from the cisnormative in society without automatically assuming an identity that carries considerable history and risks. To be transgender is not solely an existence of struggle as it also represents hope, strength, bravery, and the ability to know yourself better than anyone who has never had to interrogate their own gendered feelings. Trans joy is a wonderful feeling and phenomenon that can be observed widely in trans positive spaces online and it is imperative to remember this in the face of more negative trends in society. What might be worth considering for further research is whether this notion of being 'not-cis' has any roots in internalised transphobia or whether it is a positive attempt to define oneself as being outside of the existing gender system.

Returning to the mentions of 'cis' in the word cloud, a second set of respondents used the term in describing situations referring to cis people, e.g., 'to any cishet who ask I say trans masculine non-binary person', 'nonbinary to my cis friends', 'lesbian to cis people and trans to trans people'. The latter of these two uses proved interesting as it highlighted how non-binary people are having to maintain more than one set of self-descriptive language to ensure having at least one set that is easily understood by cisgender individuals. This evidence correlates with the theme I identified in *The Many Voiced Monster* in Section 3.3 that trans language is often misunderstood within wider society. It also echoes work from shuster and Lamont (Section 3.4) that discusses the additional emotional labour put upon trans people to make themselves understood to non-trans audiences. Here, the emotional labour has been doubled (at least) by having to find a set of words that provides an affirming self-description and another set to translate that identity to an audience who does not understand the first set. A question that could be explored in further research is whether that second set of language was required because of an unwillingness of the cis audience, perceived or otherwise, to undertake the work to understand the first, more affirming set. A further

element to explore would be how much cisgenderism and transphobia have influenced non-binary people in how they describe themselves to cis audiences and are these two things linked.

In Figure 9, respondents had a clear preference for the use of 'Non-binary, or 'enby'' as a descriptor with 88.49% of participants choosing this. The next two most prevalent choices were 'Genderqueer' and 'Trans*, or transgender' with 41.43% and 39.73% of responses respectively. While transgender is a term that has entered mainstream parlance and can no longer be considered a neologism; both non-binary (as a gender descriptor) and genderqueer are neologisms of a similar age.

The two terms were seen in print media for the first time in 1995, however genderqueer is perceived to be an older, more established, term and is often used as an alternative to non-binary by older members of the community. This could be because many examples of the use of genderqueer are found before examples of non-binary; giving it an earlier body of printed media to provide proof of usage. In the Oxford English Dictionary, examples of genderqueer usage range from 1995-2010[5], where non-binary examples range from 2013-2017[6]. This is echoed by the findings of Thorne et al. (2019) who found the prevalence of each term in research papers was separated by a distinct period of time – with genderqueer appearing first (Thorne et al., 2019). I would classify them both as 'established neologisms' owing to their recency, compared to transgender, their written history and because they have not entered common parlance as

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[5] https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/77468?redirectedFrom=genderqueer#eid237081402 accessed on 20th September 2021
[6] https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74216458?redirectedFrom=non-binary#eid accessed on 20th September 2021

transgender has. The other terms that have not been selected as frequently; I would describe simply as neologisms.

It is interesting that non-binary is a clear preference among participants. This could be owing to the age range of respondents, the popularity of the term across new media and recency bias, which would indicate participants are leaning towards non-binary because it is what they are hearing the most frequently and most recently. Transgender, on the other hand, was first recorded in 1974[7] and, while it still has a significant number of responses against it is in third position behind two much newer words. In contrast, the two least selected options, 'Demigender' and 'Xenogender', have not yet been added to the dictionary. While this could simply be because those identities are more infrequent among the community, it could also be that they are disadvantaged by being perceived as less 'legitimate' for not being as established. This is reinforced by the data in Section 6.4, in which I explore participants' desire for community and the use of established neologisms as umbrella terms to locate it. One recommendation to counteract the lack of visibility and perceived legitimacy of these newer words would be to include more variety of gender terms in popular culture and entertainment, for example in films, television programming, books, and other print media.

Another consideration is that the more popular words in Question 5 are also umbrella terms that cover a variety of identities underneath them, as opposed to demi- and xenogender, which are both much more specific terms and are considered micro labels under the broader umbrella

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[7] https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/247649?redirectedFrom=transgender#eid accessed on 20th September 2021

phrases. This could be because there are simply not as many people identifying with the more specific terms, or people prefer the privacy offered by a broad term as it does not reveal too much about their gender identity, or some may prefer these umbrella terms as they are more readily recognised politically within wider society. Alternatively, as I will show later, some participants find micro labels to be divisive and damaging to the wider LGBTQ+ community. This may also explain why the broader terms are more popular. In general, the responses to Question 5 suggest that the participants prefer established neologisms, such as non-binary, that also function as umbrella terms over more specific and less well-established neologisms.

In terms of implications for practice, the above would suggest that established neologisms should be adopted alongside the term transgender in order to include non-binary individuals in official documentation, such as institutional policy and governmental legislature. Although the participants showed a preference towards the established terms (non-binary, genderqueer) there was also evidence of a variety of other terms in use, which may affect implications for practice. This is explored in later analysis that shows deeper nuance and complexity to the usage of self-descriptive terms than Question 5 allows.

The last thing I would like to include under this theme is the spread of pronoun usage seen in responses to Question 10 ('What pronouns do you use?').

10. What pronouns do you use? (please tick all that apply)

More Details

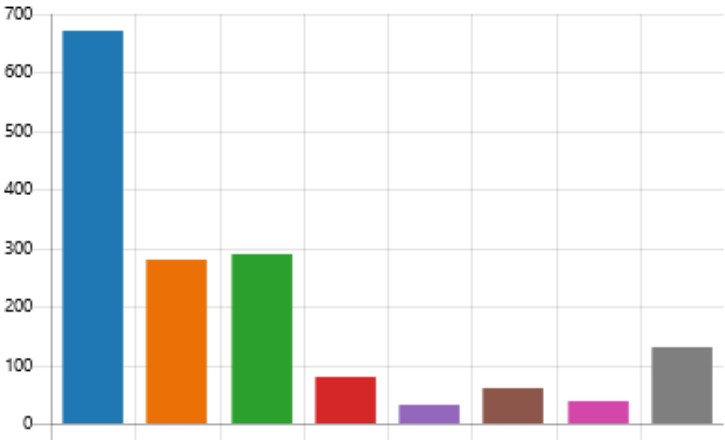|		
● they/them	671	
● he/him	280	
● she/her	290	
● it/its	78	
● Spivak (e/em/eir)	32	
● xe/xir or xe/xyr	59	
● ze/zir or ze/hir	37	
● Other	129	

Figure 11: bar chart of respondent pronoun usage under Question 10, automatically generated by Microsoft Forms.

The neopronouns that I included as options for Question 10 were informed by the three most popular sets seen in the results from the 2020 Gender Census, as seen in Figure 12 (Lodge, 2020). After excluding gendered pronouns (she, he), singular they and responses that were not specific pronoun sets the top three included were 'Xe - xe/xem/xyr/xyrs/xemself', 'Spivak – e/em/eir/eirs/emself' and 'Ze – ze/hir/hir/hirs/hirself' as seen in Lodge's chart below:

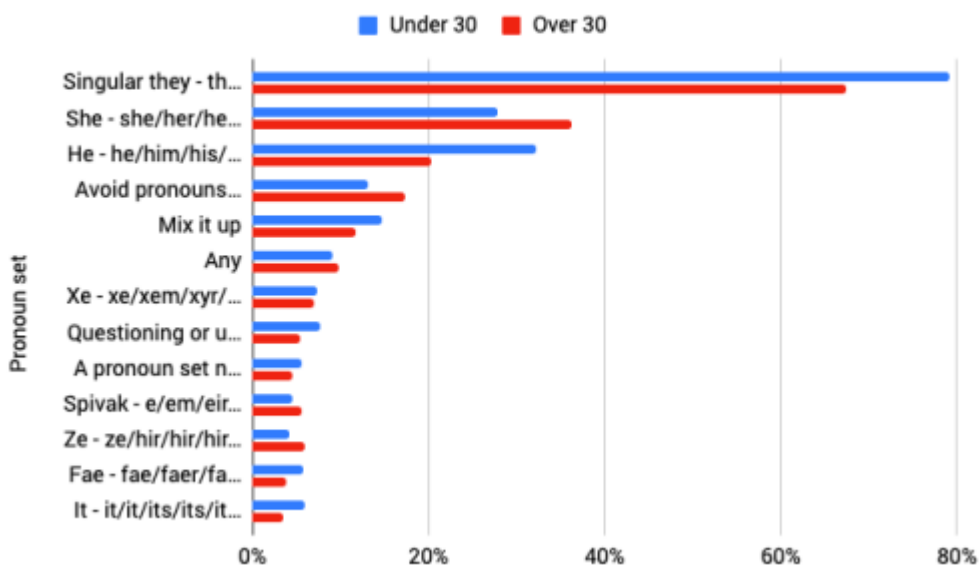## Popularity of provided pronoun sets split by age

Figure 12: popularity of provided pronoun sets split by age from Gender Census 2020 Full Report (Lodge, 2020)

I used the most recent data available, from the 2020 survey. In my own survey I reordered these three sets, arbitrarily, and offered alternatives for the xe and ze sets based on common spelling variations I had encountered organically online. I chose the Gender Census data because they have successfully increased their number of respondents year-on-year since beginning and had a total of 24,576 worldwide responses in 2020. This is an independent research project and seeks participation from 'humans worldwide whose genders or lack thereof are not fully described by the gender binary' (ibid.), much like my study.

Question 10 allowed for multiple selections to be made from the choices available, plus there was an 'Other' option with a free text field. The top three selections were for 'they/them', 'she/her' and 'he/him', with 'they/them' being a clear preference overall with 671 instances where 'she/her' and 'he/him' both received fewer than 300 (290 and 280 respectively). Thereafter, 'it/its' was the next highest set with 78 instances and the included neopronouns all had fewer than 60. Within the free text for 'Other' were a variety of alternative neopronoun sets as well as pronouns sets from

languages other than English and, some comments indicating the individual avoided using

pronouns. Below is a table including some examples:

Table 1: Examples of 'Other' responses from Question 10

Neopronouns	'Fae/Faer'
	'ev/evs/eve'
	'ze/zer/zers'
	'ze/zem'
	've/vir'
	'Vhey/vhem'
	'thon/thons'
	'e/en/es'
	'faun/faun/fauns/fauns/faunself'
	'ze/per'
	'xe/xem'
	'ne/nem/neir/neirs/nemself'
	'Elverson (essentially Spivak but replaces e with ey)'
Pronouns in languages other than English	'die/diens and hen/hun (Dutch)'
	'U (Persian)'
	'sie (German for she/her, but ONLY in German, I do not want to be referred to as she in English)'

	'In French, I use elle (she), because not gendering anything is very difficult' 'elle' 'hán/hán/háni/háns in Icelandic (which I note because that *is* a neopronoun, whereas in English I don't identify with neopronouns at all. Possibly just because Icelandic doesn't already have a reasonably-chill gender-neutral pronoun for people already, maybe also because I have a less instinctual connection to Icelandic, which I learnt as an adult.)' 'Den (in Swedish)' 'In my native language the third person pronoun is not gendered.' 'in Spanish I have a preference for masculine pronouns simply because of the lack of gender neutral ones' 'in French I use mostly \"elle\" but I like \"iel\" with feminine accord' 'other pronouns in other languages' 'ono/jenu (in polish)'

	'ta (Chinese pronoun; in Chinese, all pronouns sound the same)'
No pronouns	'no pronouns' 'none' 'my first name' 'avoid pronouns altogether' 'none (whenever possible)' 'name only' 'prefer to avoid pronouns' 'I prefer people to simply use my name which is a shortened version of my birth name.' 'I wish I didn't have to use pronouns, I'd rather be referred to using my name only.' 'I I use pronouns' [sic] 'None or name as placeholder'
Any pronouns	'any pronouns' 'I use all pronouns and have no preferences for any' 'any/all' 'Any pronouns are fine'
Neopronouns (no specific example given)	'I made up my own'

	'lots and lots of others, including a good amount of emoji pronouns'
	'lots of neopronouns'
	'neopronouns'
	'noun pronouns'

The 'Other' option had 129 entries, of which 13 respondents had added non-English pronouns (listed above), leaving 116 entries that explored other pronoun options that weren't listed in the main question. I have divided the table above into broad categories of what these responses fell into. In some cases, I have included all examples that I found, such as with the pronouns in other languages, and in other cases it was not possible to list every example and only a selection are included (as in the 'Neopronouns' category). Figures showing the distribution of pronouns from all responses can be found in Appendix 1 (Figures 28 and 29).

If we take all 116 responses under 'Other' and combine them with the Spivak, xe/xir and ze/zir responses to create a general group of 'neopronoun or other alternative', which I will refer to as Neo+ users, the total reaches 244. The Neo+ group, counted together, does not seem so small as it far exceeds 'it/its' and there is only a 13.74% difference between Neo+ and 'he/him' and a 17.23% difference with 'she/her'. As a combined group, Neo+ users represent a significant number of responses demonstrating that there is appetite among non-binary people to use ways of being referred to in third person beyond 'they/them' or the binary options including the ability to employ sets of pronouns created by oneself or others in the community. This indicates a positive trend

toward the use of neologisms as a form of affirming self-expression as the uptake by Neo+ users is

statistically significant. The implication of this is that practitioners should not assume that non-

binary individuals will all use 'they/them' pronouns and that there is a variance in pronoun usage

that includes a sizeable proportion of neopronoun use. With this in mind, practitioners should

consider allowing non-binary service users the option to provide pronouns beyond 'they/them',

'she/her' or 'he/him' to ensure inclusivity.

Figure 13, below, shows a word cloud generated using NVivo with the responses to Question 11

('How do you describe your gender?'), which was a free text box in the survey to allow for

participants to use their own words to garner the most genuine responses possible. I allowed

participants a free text box here to avoid any author bias from suggesting certain terms (as in

Question 5). I worded it in a similar way to Question 5 to check for internal integrity and consensus
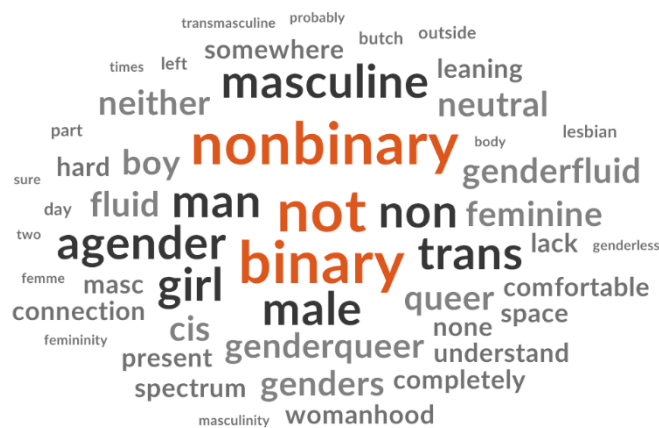
of answers.

Figure 13: word cloud generated from responses to Question 11

The word cloud has been created using a list of 'stop words' to ignore common but unrelated

words, such as 'the', 'and', 'or', and similar. This was to keep the word cloud relevant and to ensure

that as many gender-related terms could be displayed at once. NVivo ignores hyphens and

separates such words so 'non-binary' was displayed as 'non' and 'binary'. The most frequently used words are those shown in orange and in bold grey, in a larger font size, and were: 'nonbinary', 'not', 'binary', 'non', 'trans', 'agender', 'masculine', 'girl', 'man', and 'male'.

These popular terms echo a similar theme of an identity of opposition that we explored in earlier in this section with 'not-cis', in so far that the most common way of describing one's gender was by defining it as being outside of the gender binary with the use of 'non-binary', 'nonbinary' and 'not'. Non-binary can also be considered as its own concept given the popularity of the term and that many will not see it as an identity of opposition. It serves as an easy umbrella term and provides a shorthand for those who do not identify in a binary manner, which we have already seen in this section in relation to Question 5. Some individuals are content with using this shorthand as their entire gender identity, whereas others find the need to define themselves more specifically, for example using terms such as 'agender'.

'Trans' was also a frequently used term, which would suggest a large proportion of the participants view themselves as part of the 'trans' community as well as being non-binary. While non-binary does typically sit under the 'trans' umbrella, as one is not usually assigned a non-binary gender at birth, not all who sit beneath it use the term to define themselves. The indication from these participants however is that they are mostly content to keep that association. Interesting by its absence is the word 'transgender', as it does not appear in the word cloud, instead there is 'trans' and, much less frequently, 'transmasculine'. Because of this obvious omission, it may be pertinent to classify 'trans' as its own neologism, separate to 'transgender', as it appears to be a widely accepted and understood alternative. This corroborated earlier analysis that suggested a positive inclination towards the use of neologisms among participants.

Other notable gender terms within the word cloud include: 'genderqueer', 'genderfluid', 'neutral', 'neither', 'cis', 'queer', 'spectrum', 'genders', 'fluid', 'boy', and 'feminine'. Again, 'cis' was being used as a marker of difference and as an example of something the respondent was not. Overall, the responses to Question 11 do show use of neologisms as modes of self-description with a leaning towards those that have already been established within the community, corroborating the analysis and findings for Question 5. Beyond that, participants were using existing binary-centric language to describe their gender, with terms such as boy/girl, masculine/feminine, butch/femme, and trying to make the best of the tools available to them.

The implications here support the inclusion of neologisms in practice alongside widely accepted terms like transgender to promote inclusion of non-binary individuals. It also highlights the variety of identity terms in use by the participants of this study that implies the use of commonplace, 'tick-box' style gender terms is inappropriate when striving for inclusivity. As a recommendation, allowing people a free text answer to the question "What is your gender?" on forms, such as application forms, census or data collection forms, medical forms, would be ideal. Within established institutions (e.g., healthcare) this may not be immediately practicable, as such a compromise would be to have additional umbrella terms to choose from with the option to include a self-descriptive field.

Reflecting on this theme as whole, participants showed an inclination towards the use of neologisms and especially towards the use of more 'established' neologisms that could be used as umbrella terms. This was supported by participants use of more widely known terms when speaking to a cis audience in an effort to be understood; the impact of being understood and accepted on the individual's wellbeing will be discussed in Section 6.5. The data also showed a

range of pronoun usage beyond the binary he/she and the neutral they; the use of neopronouns corroborating the inclination towards neologisms. The participants have demonstrated they use a wide variety of gender terms, highlighting the complexity of self-description and the continuing pressure to be intelligible in wider society, which affects the choice of language used. The implications of this being that policymakers must be mindful of the fact that while there is a preference towards umbrella terms, like non-binary, there are many other words that could fit the individual better and that these should be included where possible.

6.4   THEME: NEOLOGISMS

This theme looks at the survey questions that directly address the use of neologisms to the participant and their opinions on the use of new words and phrases. In Questions 6 ('If an accurate term for your identity didn't exist, would you consider using a neologism (a newly created word) or have you?') and 7 ('Would you feel confident in creating your own new word(s) to describe your experiences or have you?'), I asked about *using* neologisms and then about *creating* neologisms. In the first instance, 72% of respondents indicated that 'Yes', they would consider using or have used a neologism to describe their gender.

Figure 14: pie chart showing responses to Question 6, automatically generated by Microsoft Forms.

70

This was largely as I had expected as the survey was looking for 'non-binary' individuals and 'non-binary' is itself a neologism. What I had not anticipated was the response to Question 7, which was almost a mirror opposite to 6.

7. **Would you feel confident in creating your own new word(s) to describe your experiences or have you?**

More Details   Insights

● Yes	267
● No	491

Figure 15: pie chart showing responses to Question 7, automatically generated by Microsoft Forms.

Here, 65% of respondents indicated 'No', they would not feel confident creating a neologism and/or had not done so previously. When designing the survey, I had expected that there would be some form of concordance with these two questions and that both would tend towards the positive. I imagined that people within the non-binary community would be confident in creating new words when faced with explanatory gaps to affirming self-description and given the existence of many neologisms among the community already that this would be a commonplace practice.

The responses to Question 7 were somewhat unexpected and prompted reflection. If the community is content to use neologisms but not to create them, is that a contradiction? Is the

negative impact of explanatory gaps not as severe as I believed? It is through these reflections that I saw some of my assumptions confirmed and others disrupted.

Under Question 8, I asked for those who had responded 'No' to Question 7 to explain what factors would prevent them from creating new words. This used a free text box and generated 500 responses, which was curiously 9 more than had said 'No' in Question 7. These responses required coding in a way that accurately categorised the different reasons and feelings behind the unwillingness to form neologisms in the face of explanatory gaps. I established ten codes based on the varying sentiments that were found among the responses, these codes, and a brief explanation of the type of responses they apply to can be found in the table below.

Table 2: List of codes for Question 8 and explanations of their application

Code	Explanation
Too isolating, lack of community	The respondent indicated that creating a neologism themselves would not have a sense of community surrounding it and that this would feel isolating.
The task is too large or difficult	The respondent felt the task of creating a new word was too expansive and that they were not capable of such a task.
Not confident enough	The respondent simply indicated they were not confident enough in themselves or their ability to form a neologism.

Non-acceptance	The respondent was concerned that any neologism they formed would not be accepted by others.
No need to create one	The respondent felt there was no need to form neologisms, sufficient words or language already exist.
Lack of motivation	The respondent did not have the motivation to undertake the task.
Intelligibility and emotional labour	The respondent was concerned that any neologism would not be understood by others and/or they did not want to expend the emotional labour in explaining it to others.
Inconvenience to others	The respondent felt creating a new word would inconvenience others around and close to them.
Fears, anxieties & harassment	The respondent expressed fear or anxiety, particularly in relation to possible harassment, bullying or hate-crime that would be directed at them as a result of forming/using a neologism.

Anti-neologism & micro-labels	The respondent demonstrated an attitude that was strongly against the use of neologisms and micro-labels.

I did not use these codes exclusively as many comments were multi-faceted and fell under more than one. After coding the responses within NVivo, I created Figures 16-18 in Excel in order to demonstrate the frequency of applications of each code. In Figure 16, the percentage of total responses for each of these codes is highlighted in a shade of green (darker green for the highest number, lighter green for the lower), and the codes with a percentage under 10% are highlighted in shades of red (darkest for the lowest, lighter for higher numbers), and all in between have no highlighting. This is to emphasise, at a glance, the most and least prevalent codes. 'Intelligibility and emotional labour' was the most frequently expressed concern by respondents, followed by 'Fears, anxieties, and harassment'.

Code	Prevalence	Percentage of Total Responses
Too isolating, lack of community	34	6.80%
The task is too large or difficult	69	13.80%
Not confident enough	76	15.20%
Non-acceptance	72	14.40%
No need to create one	82	16.40%
Lack of motivation	12	2.40%
Intelligibility and emotional labour	180	36.00%
Inconvenience to others	6	1.20%
Fears, anxieties & harrassment	116	23.20%
Anti-neologism & micro-labels	23	4.60%

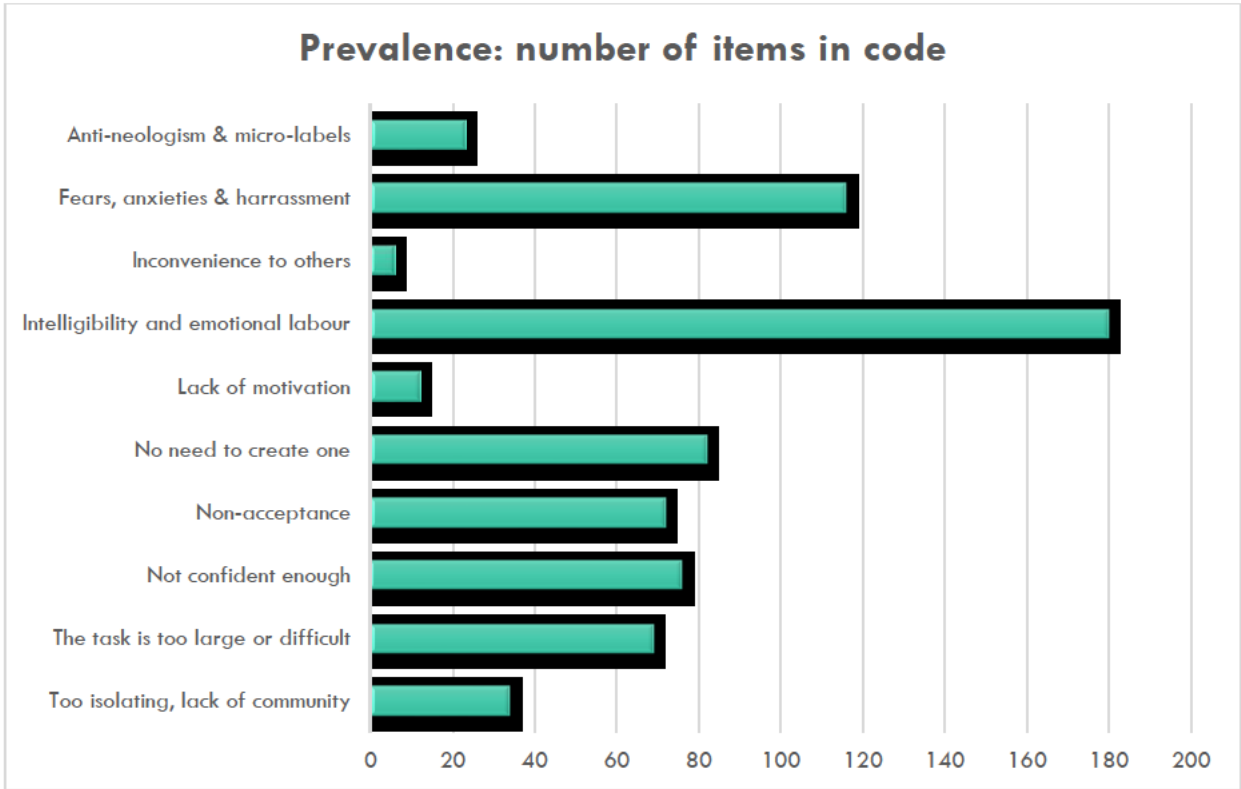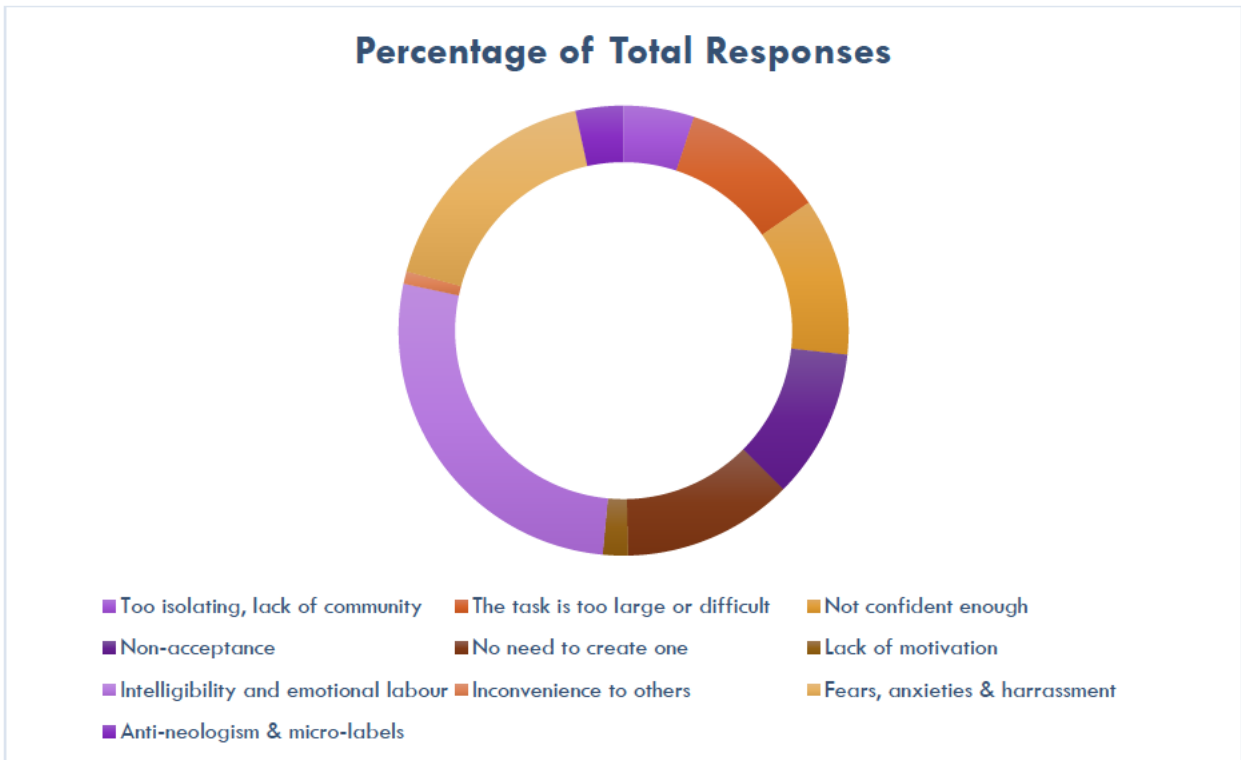*Figure 16: Results of coding Question 8 free-text responses*

Prevalence: number of items in code

Figure 17: Prevalence of items under each code

Percentage of Total Responses

- Too isolating, lack of community
- The task is too large or difficult
- Not confident enough
- Non-acceptance
- No need to create one
- Lack of motivation
- Intelligibility and emotional labour
- Inconvenience to others
- Fears, anxieties & harrassment
- Anti-neologism & micro-labels

Intelligibility and emotional labour were by far the most common of concerns expressed by participants and I coded these together owing to the intrinsic link presented in the comments between the idea of not being understood and therefore having to explain oneself to others. Some examples:

'Explaining myself every time seems like a hassle'

'The burden of having to explain'

'New words may be more specific in describing my gender but that comes at the cost of having to explain them to others'

'Not feeling quickly understood'

'I don't have the energy to explain the meaning to everyone…'

'Having to explain the meaning every single time…'

'I wouldn't want to explain what it meant to others. I would want to use a word someone else created that others would recognize and understand.'

'I don't like the idea of having to walk around like a human dictionary ready to provide definitions and grammar clarifications whenever someone asks.'

The concern of participants that creating or using a neologism presents obstacles in their outward intelligibility (i.e. being understood by others) closely echoes the issue of incomprehensibility seen in the literature, particularly in Pearce et al. (2020b) and Stryker (1994). Similarly, concerns over

the expenditure of emotional labour on outward intelligibility are consistent with the findings

shuster and Lamont presented (2020) and Kennedy's concept of cultural cisgenderism (2013). It is

significant to see these consistencies within a much larger dataset with a broader demographic

reach as it demonstrates findings in smaller studies are scalable and that their findings can be

extrapolated and applied to a wider community. While shuster and Lamont had a sample size of 15

interviewees, my findings align with theirs over a considerably larger sample size, offering further

validity to the non-binary concerns of intelligibility and emotional labour they found.

Under the 'fears, anxieties, and harassment' code there was a concerning theme of participants

being afraid of experiencing some form of mockery, harassment, or bigotry:

'Fear of being called a snowflake.'

'Ridicule from others'

'Judgement from others'

'people are cruel'

'The transphobic arguments against self definition'

'I would expect to be disbelieved/ignored at best and mocked/harassed at worst.'

'I would fear not being taken seriously, as well as being attacked by exclusionists and/or those who

attack "microlabeling."'

'Potential bigotry'

This fear of harassment is preventing non-binary individuals from communicating their experiences

of gender in their own terms, which contributes to non-binary erasure by leaving a dearth of

accurate non-binary representation. The fear of harassment has a negative effect on the uptake of neologisms within the non-binary community and a knock-on effect that contributes to extra emotional labour if one were to use a new word as one would have the emotional fortitude to resist potential discrimination. Both erasure and emotional labour were drawn out as detriments to the non-binary community by the binarist language structure and associated culture by shuster and Lamont (2020).

Reflecting on my own research questions, the high prevalence seen in the 'intelligibility and emotional labour', and 'fear, anxieties, and harassment' codes suggests that 'yes' there are obstacles in asking others to adopt neologisms (research question 2b). One obstacle is that the understanding of new words is not universal or automatic and non-binary individuals are expected to expend extra emotional labour explaining such words to others, however, they are reticent to do so because of the extra stress this places on them. The second major obstacle is experience and fear of discrimination for the use of neologisms. This discrimination is largely coming from outside of the non-binary community and puts its members at a disadvantage as they do not want to ask for others to adopt new words for fear or expectation of harassment.

Coding these responses was an emotionally arduous task in itself because, as an insider researcher, I could relate closely to many of the comments, and some directly described my own experiences. Empathising with my participants, I found it dismaying to see the number of fellow non-binary individuals who expressed fear of harassment in some way. It was particularly challenging to read comments that were strongly against the use of neologisms and micro-labels when I use some of these terms myself. One response was especially difficult:

'I think it is extremely narcissistic and self-centered to expect people to cater to your specific idea of who you are… no, I would not simply invent a word to describe my gender; that would be a very entitled thing to do.' (Respondent #224)

I was unaware that other queer people felt so diametrically opposed to the idea of neologisms, micro-labels, and the concept of finding and expressing your own 'specific idea of who you are', so this comment was shocking to come across. It was the first I found that warranted the creating of the 'Anti-neologism' code and left me feeling, as an individual, a great amount of self-doubt and distress that other non-binary people could consider me to be 'narcissistic', 'self-centered' or 'entitled'. As a researcher, on the other hand, I knew this was an interesting piece of information to consider alongside some similar sentiments I went on to find:

'the queer obsession with microlabels is harmful' (Respondent #636)

'The sanctity of the Human Tongue' (Respondent #678)

While the second of those examples is heavily sarcastic in the way the sentiment is put across, it still demonstrates a staunch opposition to the creation of new words or phrases that borders on the rhetoric of the so-called 'gender critical' movement. This was concerning and I felt compelled to look through these respondent's answers to all questions to double-check for any other indications they might be abusing the survey as part of that movement. From their overall responses, I believe these were genuine participants who identify as non-binary and met my other criteria. Curiously, respondent #224 selected multiple options for Question 5 including 'Non-binary', 'Trans*', 'Genderqueer' and 'Gender Non-conforming'; #636 selected 'Agender' and 'Genderqueer' under Question 5, and #678 used 'Genderfluid' in both Question 5 and 11, all of which can be classified as neologisms. This shows both a lack of understanding as to what a neologism really is and that there

is a preference towards using neologisms that have been previously established, to the extent that some people are not aware they *are* neologisms. After a word has been established in the community it becomes acceptable to use it, however, it seems some people believe the creation of new words shouldn't be pursued, which would lead to a paradox. How can new words be established and become acceptable if we shouldn't create new words? Furthermore, it is important to remember that neologisms are not an inherently queer preoccupation, as respondent #636 seems to suggest, moreover the creation of new words is a part of all language evolution and can come from any sector of a society that uses that language, as we saw in Section 4.1 with words like 'glamping' or 'mansplaining'. What these responses also highlight is that some individuals seem happy to use neologisms that have been already created and as such are shifting the emotional burden of creating neologisms onto others, perhaps as a way of avoiding additional emotional labour themselves.

While it might be easy to label these responses as outliers, they may offer some insight into what the community considers a neologism to be. If I were to coin a term to describe a specific experience - as an example, *drusgender*: a gendered feeling of being linked to trees or woodland areas that is somewhat masculine – it would be considered a neologism by the community because it is very new and very limited in the spread of its use, based on the responses in the survey. Whereas non-binary is widespread and has existed in a collective consciousness for a number of years therefore seems to be considered by the community to no longer constitute a neologism. Regardless of the technical definition of a neologism, the community appears to have its own interpretation on this, which may be worth remembering in future research conducted in this area.

Finally, these anti-neologism responses also hint at a discord among the community when taken in contrast with comments from other participants, for example:

'I would be deterred by pressure inside the community to not create new "silly" identities.' (Respondent 48)

Although this doesn't explicitly say whether the community in question is just that of non-binary peoples or the wider LGBTQ+ communities, it does highlight how some people do not feel supported to be themselves within these communities, which would lead to a higher rate of people 'making do' with existing language, not addressing explanatory gaps, and continuing to feel discomfort much like shuster and Lamont's participants (2020). Interestingly, there were also participants who gave their reason for avoiding neologisms as having a 'lack of community' behind them, which may interact with the above anti-neologism sentiment. Respondents seem to value a sense of community behind their identity even if the wider queer or LGBTQ+ communities are not always supportive of non-binary people.

Overall, this theme offers some answers to the research questions I have asked, primarily in relation to 2a and 2b: 'Are there any trends in the attitudes towards the uptake and use of neologisms within the non-binary community?' and 'Are there obstacles present in asking binary trans and cis-gender people to adopt these new words in support of non-binary people?'. The non-binary community appears to have a complex attitude towards the use and uptake of neologisms; participants showed willingness to use established neologisms but shied away from newer terms that were not as widely known. Respondents also demonstrated that there are obstacles to gaining outsider adoption of neologisms, and these are: intelligibility, emotional labour, and fear of harassment.

6.5 THEME: EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

Under this theme I am looking at Question 9 and Questions 12-14, which cover the emotional impact of encountering an explanatory gap, that of having one's gender terms and pronouns respected and then the rate of resistance to gender terms respondents have encountered and the rate of microaggressions they have experienced. For Questions 9 and 12, I generated word clouds within NVivo to illustrate the sentiments commonly expressed by participants. These were generated with 'stop words' enabled to avoid oversaturating the word cloud with irrelevant or filler words.
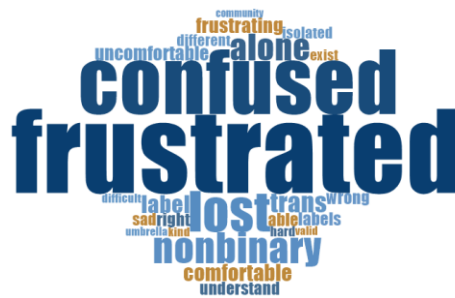
Figure 19: Question 9 word frequency cloud (NVivo)

Question 9 asked, 'How have you felt when you couldn't find a word that described your experiences of gender?' and offered a free text box for responses. This question gained 633 responses and the most common words used were negative in sentiment, e.g., 'confused', 'frustrated', 'lost', 'alone', 'uncomfortable', as can be seen in Figure 19 above. This is supported by looking at individual responses, for example:

'Like I don't exist'

'Erased and oppressed'

'Lonely. Isolated. Misunderstand.'

'I felt wrong, like being forced to wear a sweater that's a bit too tight, and broken.'

'Frustrated, and like no one would ever truly know me.'

While there were some respondents who did not indicate a clearly negative sentiment (e.g., 'fine' or 'apathetic') the majority expressed feelings of loneliness, isolation, frustration and a sense that they were somehow 'wrong' or 'broken'.

Question 12 sought to illuminate the opposite effect, asking, 'How do you feel when your pronouns and gender are respected, and you are referred to correctly?'. This used a free text box again and a greater proportion of participants answered with 748 responses. As can be seen in Figures 20 and 21, below, the overall sentiment is a positive one with commonly used words such as 'happy', 'respected', 'good', 'seen', 'euphoric' and 'comfortable'.

Figure 20: Question 12 word frequency cloud (NVivo)

Figure 21: Question 12 with 'Insights' analysis from Microsoft Forms (including word frequency cloud)

Looking at specific examples, many people used the word 'happy' or equivalents, such as:

'Giddy, like I won 20 bucks on a scratchcard'

'I honestly feel surprised, but it makes me happy and excited.'

'It's a warm feeling of something being in its place'

'It feels nice, I feel seen'

Some participants expanded further and there were some who expressed that they would be

'surprised' or 'suspicious' if they were gendered correctly because it currently happens so rarely.

Others alluded to a very low expectation of effort from others because of how rarely they are referred to correctly:

'I rarely have had anyone ever really refer to me correctly, so having the bare minimum and being referred to as "he" means the world to me.'

'…when people use the correct pronouns, I feel it's just basic decency.'

While the majority sentiment under Question 12 was positive, the responses highlight that not everyone has experienced being 'correctly gendered' and those that have do not experience it particularly frequently, which would suggest a limited amount of these positive experiences. This may mean the negative impact of explanatory gaps are felt more strongly owing to it being the more commonplace experience.

In Questions 13 and 14, there is a worryingly high rate of participants experiencing negative 'pushback' from others in the use of correct gender terms/pronouns (72%, Figure 22) and an even higher rate of experiencing microaggressions because of their gender (81%, Figure 23).

13. Have you ever experienced any 'push-back' from others to using your pronouns and other gendered descriptors?

More Details   Insights

| | Yes | 541 |
| | No | 213 |

Figure 22: Question 13 pie chart generated by Microsoft Forms

14. Have you ever experienced any microaggressions because of your gender?

More Details   💡 Insights

● Yes   614
● No   141

Figure 23: Question 14 pie chart generated by Microsoft Forms

Such a large majority of respondents going through these negative experiences supports and legitimises the fear of harassment that non-binary people feel prevents them from using neologisms. A lack of affirming language and a high rate of discrimination echoes the themes of incomprehensibility, erasure, emotional labour, and struggling with cultural cisgenderism we have seen evidenced elsewhere in this study.

With the high prevalence in responses to Questions 13 and 14, it is worth considering how these negative experiences and feelings may affect the individual. The Stigma-Sickness slope is especially relevant here as it demonstrates how stigma and discrimination can lead to physical and mental illness (Winter et al., 2016), combined with Question 9's responses reporting feelings of isolation, sadness, and wrongness this has the potential to cause great harm to non-binary individuals. When viewed in contrast with the positive responses to Question 12, an intervention into the Stigma-Sickness slope in the non-binary community would be to actively practice affirming language and gendering individuals correctly and according to their own self-descriptions. Given the difficultly

non-binary people face in accessing medical interventions, it would be much easier and more cost-efficient to have the support of others through appropriate language usage.

In respect of the above, it would be advantageous to lower the stigma faced by non-binary people. This could be done through education of others on non-binary experiences and language; starting with charities who support non-binary, or wider LGBTQ+ communities, including a greater variety of terms and examples of their usage, alongside information about the positive impact of this. These charities could then use these materials to educate more widely, to disseminate the information and make recommendations up to government. In turn, governmental adoption of affirming non-binary language would increase the tolerance and understanding among wider society, thereby impacting the everyday experiences of non-binary people in social and professional settings, and as service users (e.g., medical services). The lowering of stigma in this way would improve the lives of non-binary people and lessen demand for medical services that are currently required owing to the sickness caused by intolerance.

7 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

After opening my survey on 1st March 2021, I had direct feedback from participants (via Twitter, primarily) and encountered questions that I had not previously considered. I have divided these into two categories below, the first of which addresses the extra information I found I needed to seek out and the second speak to participant feedback and how that changed some parts of the survey.

7.1 DISTRIBUTION & POPULARITY

When deciding to distribute the survey over the social media platform Twitter, my primary concern was with gathering a suitable number of responses for the project. Upon reflecting on some of the data in 6.2, Demographic Trends, it struck me that there were significantly fewer participants over the age of 24 than under. It may be that utilising social media to distribute the survey had the unforeseen effect of not reaching older audiences. This is something that could be investigated and addressed in further research.

7.2 FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

Some questions and feedback received from participants while the survey was open:

- Suggestion to separate 'Non-binary' and 'enby' because these are felt to be different and not mutually inclusive.

- Suggestion to add 'transgender' in addition to 'trans*' and then separate them out.

- Highlighting that 'Are you over 16 years old?' contradicted the subtitle in Q3 which mentioned being 16 as the minimum age – to remedy this I changed the wording to 'Are you 16 years old or over?' for clarity.

- Asked for reasoning as to why some of the demographic questions were 'pick one' answers where 'tick all' would be better given the overlapping nature of some identities (specifically referring to the Sexuality question). This is something to keep in mind for future research.

- Asked about the Education question as it was not clear to a non-UK participant what their equivalent of the 'Post-16' choices were. Added 'High School Diploma' as an extra example for 'Post-16' and enabled the 'Other' option as I realised that some people may have dropped out of schooling and have other non-traditional routes through education. As mentioned above in 6.5, this may have confused participants further.

- Some people reached out to check if I was still interested in their responses if they don't use English as their primary language – I replied to say 'yes' and explained that while the survey is in English to feel free to use the 'Other' boxes to enter answers in other languages and that Q4 asks what your primary language is.

8 CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to investigate non-binary individuals' experiences of language in their search for affirming self-description, how this might be affected by gaps in language and whether neologisms could fill those gaps suitably. I formulated my research questions to investigate these ideas through the real-world lived experiences of non-binary individuals with both qualitative and quantitative data. I designed my survey to maximise the freedom of the participant to provide their own words and information, while balancing a need for some quantitative data to analyse. I took advantage of social media to boost my survey's distribution and participant numbers in order to gain a larger and wider sample to analyse to limit potential criticisms of localised phenomena. Even then, the number of responses I received took me by surprise and made me reprioritise during my data analysis phase. I have aimed to answer the research questions I established in Section 1.1 through the data gathered from the research survey and the themes that were present within.

My first theme, Demographic Trends, looked at the information shared by participants to the demographic questions within the survey. This revealed participants were, in the majority, white, Western, anglophone young people (aged 24 or under) living in the USA, who placed themselves in the working or middle classes. All but 6 respondents identified with a sexuality under the LGBTQ+ umbrella and the highest education level correlating with the age ranges, showing most participants having completed Post-14 and Post-16 education as their highest level. Similarly, a large number of respondents indicated that they were students of some level.

As discussed in Section 6.2, there were a number of factors that could have contributed to the demographic spread that emerged across the data. It was intentional to focus on anglophone participants and as such this would have led to a more westernised response pool. The age range of

the pool could be attributed to the distribution techniques I employed when seeking participants: social media has a higher uptake among younger people. The bias towards white Americans was not something I expected to be so stark, though could also be attributed to the distribution of the survey – being tweeted by the Gender Census account, which has a high number of US-based followers.

In the theme Gender Terms, the study showed a definite inclination among participants to use neologisms that have a pre-existing history behind them both in terms of pronouns and gender descriptive words. The data showed that Neo+ pronoun usage was higher than usage of it/its pronouns, though not quite as high as the binary options of she or he and the most used pronouns were they/them. There was a further indication that umbrella terms were generally preferred over more specific phrases, or micro-labels, which could also account for they/them being the most prolific pronoun choice. While responses from different questions in the survey internally supported the finding that umbrella and established neologisms were preferred, one consideration for further research would be to investigate the reasons behind this trend.

Unexpectedly, there was evidence of the use of 'cis' in the form of an identity of opposition style label - 'not-cis' – that we can consider as a neologism used to group gendered experiences together of those that defy other categorisation in a cisnormative society. This idea of 'not-cis' echoed Wittig's idea of the lesbian as 'not-woman' in denying binarist 'natural category' (1981), though it remains unclear whether this had formed out of concerns for using the terms 'trans' and 'transgender'. Within this theme, the research also found that non-binary participants needed to maintain more than one set of gendered language to define themselves with dependent on their

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audience, which supported the findings of both Pearce et al. (2020b) and shushter and Lamont (2020).

Over the course of this research study, I have been both surprised and had my expectations met by the information shared by my participants. Under the third theme, of Neologisms, this was most apparent when reviewing the split between questions 6 and 7, where the first indicated a 72% majority would consider or have used a neologism and, conversely a 65% majority indicated that they would not feel confident creating one themselves. As mentioned in Section 6.4, I had expected these two questions to have similar results and, while this did not necessarily support my hypothesis, it is nevertheless an interesting piece of data that represents the general attitude of the community towards neologisms in different settings. The reasons participants gave for not wanting to create neologisms supports the theory that extra emotional labour and questions of intelligibility put additional stress on non-binary individuals, and a fear of harassment is contributing to non-binary erasure.

Alongside this there was some question as to whether there was a lack, or range, of understanding as to what constituted a neologism, with some people indicating they did not like neologism use or creation but elsewhere in the survey used neologisms themselves. This suggested that some people may be using words that they do not realise are neologisms and would be something to keep in mind for further research in this area. Within this theme, I also saw evidence of pressure from within the wider LGBTQ+ communities on non-binary people to avoid neologisms because they are seen as 'silly'. This likely has a negative effect given that the survey also showed participants desire the feeling of community around themselves, so they are likely to forego one desire (using affirming self-descriptors) for another (feeling at home in a community). All of this demonstrated a

complex set of attitudes towards neologisms among participants, who were willing to consider established terms over newer ones while also trying to juggle the obstacles inherent with neologism usage.

To recap the final theme, Emotional Responses, there was a clear and expected split between Questions 9 and 12, where the former generated a lot of negative sentiment, and the latter was largely positive. These two questions sought to investigate the experiences of being misgendered versus being gendered correctly, to demonstrate that the use by others of one's correct gendered terms is much more beneficial to the individual. What these questions also illuminated were the participants who have never had an experience of being gendered correctly, reminding us that not everyone who is non-binary is 'out of the closet' and that their experiences may therefore be restricted.

In this section, I also looked at whether participants had received 'pushback' and microaggressions related to their gender, which elicited concerningly high results for both. The results here legitimise the fear of harassment seen repeatedly across the study and support my theory that a fear of harassment affects the non-binary person's likelihood to use or create neologisms in a negative way. Lastly, under this theme I touched upon the potential for harm that harassment causes, citing Winter et al.'s Stigma-Sickness slope that discusses stigma and discrimination can lead to physical and mental illness in the victim (Winter et al., 2016).

Returning to the research questions I posed at the start of this project the extent to which explanatory gaps affect non-binary individuals can be seen most readily in the results from Questions 6 and 9. With a large majority of responses to Question 9 being negative in nature we can see that the extent is significant, particularly when considering the number of responses to the

question was high (693 responses). This significance is echoed with Question 6, seeing 549 out of 759 respondents stating that if faced with an explanatory gap they would, or have, use a neologism. This suggests that the effect of the explanatory gap is major enough to force respondents to seek out alternatives. Both these questions, combined with the contrasting sentiments in Question 12 demonstrate how explanatory gaps affect this community, which is one of negative feeling and excess stress.

The use of neologisms offers a way to define oneself in a concise and affirming way and the high usage statistics I have gathered demonstrate that this is a popular recourse for non-binary people. The effect neologisms have on the individual faces with explanatory gaps is largely a positive one, as it offers an alternative manner of self-description, which – when used correctly – is an affirming experience. There were however some trends within the community that showed a divide in the attitudes towards neologisms with different levels of history behind them: more established neologisms were favoured over newer ones. This effects the uptake of some words if they haven't been perceived to be legitimate enough.

A number of obstacles were identified for non-binary people asking binary trans or cisgender people to adopt neologisms, which included a high level of microaggressions, concerns of intelligibility and non-acceptance by others. Respondents were worried about being harassed or discriminated against for using neologisms and some expressed concern that the wider LGBTQ+ would not accept them community or view them as 'silly'. These concerns and experiences will continue to present obstacles to the non-binary community as long as their remains a lack of understanding of non-binary experience in society.

8.1 Suggestions for further research

Building upon the groundwork done here, I would suggest a few key areas in which further research could be undertaken to build up a more varied image of the experiences of non-binary people and language. I would highly recommend expanding the research to focus more on the experiences of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) non-binary individuals. As I have discussed there are differences in the language used across racial boundaries, which can reflect on the gender system they originate in. Further study should consider a deeper exploration of such terms and their varied nuances.

Given that colonialism enforced a two-and-only-two gender system onto many cultures across the world as a form of control (Lugones, 2016; binaohan, 2014), a consideration for further study would be to investigate how non-binary is a reaction to that colonial gender system and whether it has problematic roots in colonialism. This may be a reason for a lower uptake of usage of the term among BIPOC and non-Western, or non-Anglophone, communities.

I would also suggest investigating the difference in non-binary experiences between young people and older generations. For example, examining what socio-cultural factors have influenced younger people to be more open or aware of gender identities beyond man/woman. A research project focussing specifically on older respondents may help to identify if there is a trend in this older age range to keep within the gender binary or whether there a dearth of knowledge of other, non-binary, identities.

Finally, there are areas to explore in both sexuality and social class. It would be worthwhile to consider the formation of sexual and romantic attraction identities while non-binary; how people reconcile their gender identity with other facets of themselves. The language of sexual and

romantic attraction we have now, in Western societies, doesn't account for people outside of the gender binary, so it an investigation into this element of identity formation may provide further nuance and insight. In terms of social class, study into the representation of the class mix of non-binary people may elucidate reasons for to the lower self-description rate of the 'upper class' by participants. It would also reveal if upper class non-binary people exist and whether there are pressures on this demographic group that prevent self-exploration and acceptance.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

> I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode (Carter, 1983, p.69).

Based on the discoveries of this research project, I would strongly recommend a move towards supporting non-binary people through the validation and inclusion of their chosen gender terms. As previously identified, this should include expanding the variety of gender terms used in entertainment; providing additional terms and self-description opportunities in forms; including these terms in institutional policy and governmental legislature; and a schema to increase the tolerance of our society that would improve the everyday interactions non-binary people experience.

The use of neologisms, or new words, offers the non-binary individual some respite from the stress of trying to self-define in a language that often does not account for them. To prevent and curtail stigma, discrimination, and the subsequent illness that this causes in non-binary people, the adoption of neologisms outside of the non-binary community is key to building understanding and

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inclusion of these people in wider society. To this end I plan to share the findings of my study with a variety of interested parties, to include individuals and scholars who have specifically expressed a desire to see the final thesis; charities that aim to support transgender and non-binary people in the UK, such as Gendered Intelligence, Spectra and Mermaids; as well as the LGBTQ+ Staff and Student networks at the University of Birmingham and the equivalent network at my workplace. As Carter's quote above perfectly alludes to, we should encourage the use of new words within old systems and understandings of gender with the hope that these neologisms bring about a greater change.

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APPENDICES

Please see separate documents 'Appendix 1 – Data and Figures.docx' and 'Appendix 2 – Blank

Survey.pdf'.

Appendix 1

Figure 1: Word cloud generated with NVivo from responses to Question 5, including free text 'Other' field.

5. Which of the following terms do you feel describe your identity? (Please tick all that apply)

More Details

●	Non-binary, or 'enby'	677
●	Trans*, or transgender	304
●	Genderqueer	317
●	Genderfluid	177
●	Demigender (e.g. demiboy or ...	83
●	Agender	224
●	Gender Non-Conforming	238
●	Xenogender	44
●	Other	328

Figure 2: bar chart showing responses to Question 5, automatically generated by Microsoft Forms.

10. What pronouns do you use? (please tick all that apply)

More Details

● they/them	671	
● he/him	280	
● she/her	290	
● it/its	78	
● Spivak (e/em/eir)	32	
● xe/xir or xe/xyr	59	
● ze/zir or ze/hir	37	
● Other	129	

Figure 3: bar chart of respondent pronoun usage under Question 10, automatically generated by Microsoft Forms.

Figure 4: word cloud generated from responses to Question 11

6. If an accurate term for your identity didn't exist, would you consider using a neologism (a newly created word) or have you?

More Details   💡 Insights

● Yes	549
● No	210

Figure 5: pie chart showing responses to Question 6, automatically generated by Microsoft Forms.

7. Would you feel confident in creating your own new word(s) to describe your experiences or have you?

More Details   Insights

- Yes   267
- No   491

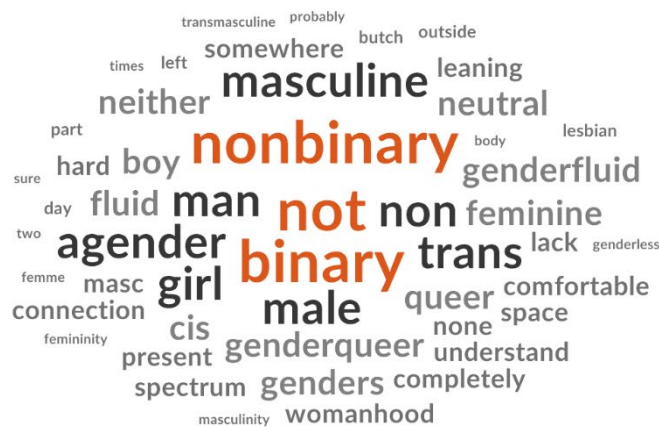*Figure 6: pie chart showing responses to Question 7, automatically generated by Microsoft Forms.*

Code	Prevalence	Percentage of Total Responses
Too isolating, lack of community	34	6.80%
The task is too large or difficult	69	13.80%
Not confident enough	76	15.20%
Non-acceptance	72	14.40%
No need to create one	82	16.40%
Lack of motivation	12	2.40%
Intelligibility and emotional labour	180	36.00%
Inconvenience to others	6	1.20%
Fears, anxieties & harrassment	116	23.20%
Anti-neologism & micro-labels	23	4.60%

Figure 7: Results of coding Question 8 free-text responses
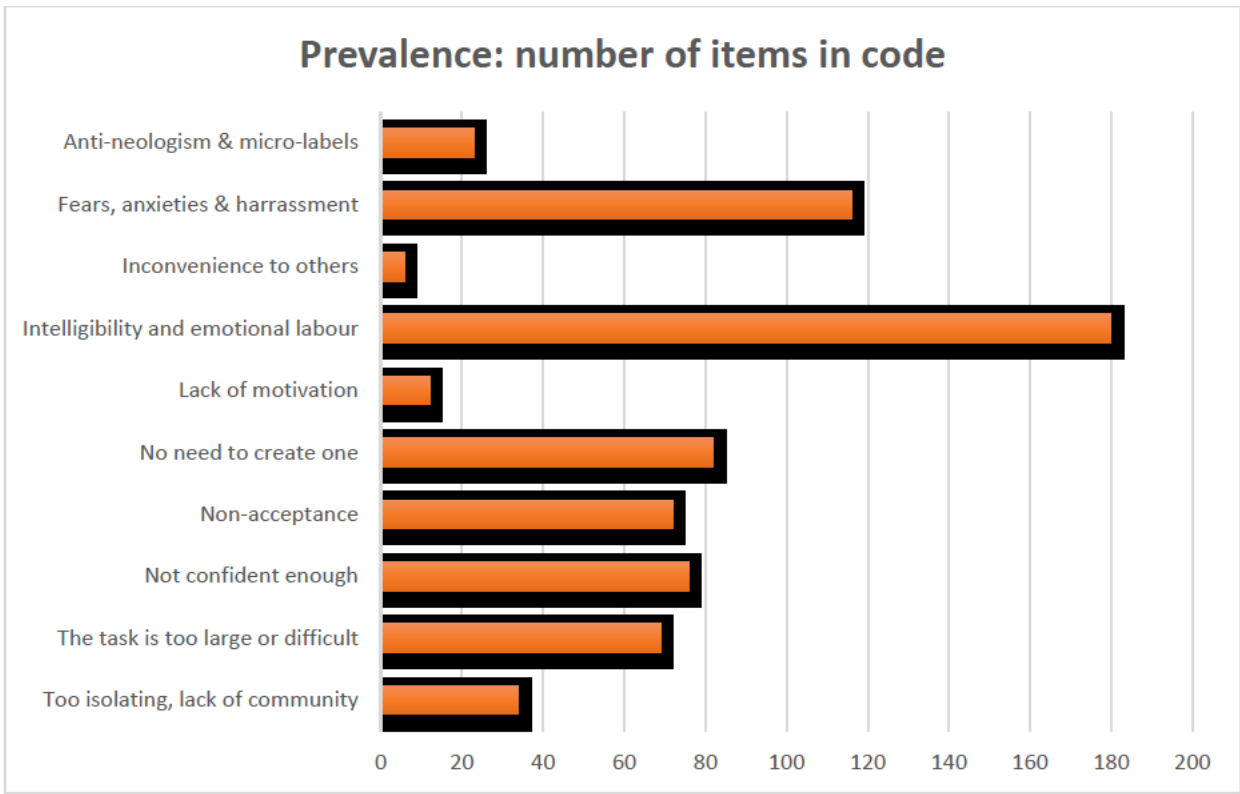
Figure 8: Prevalence of items under each code
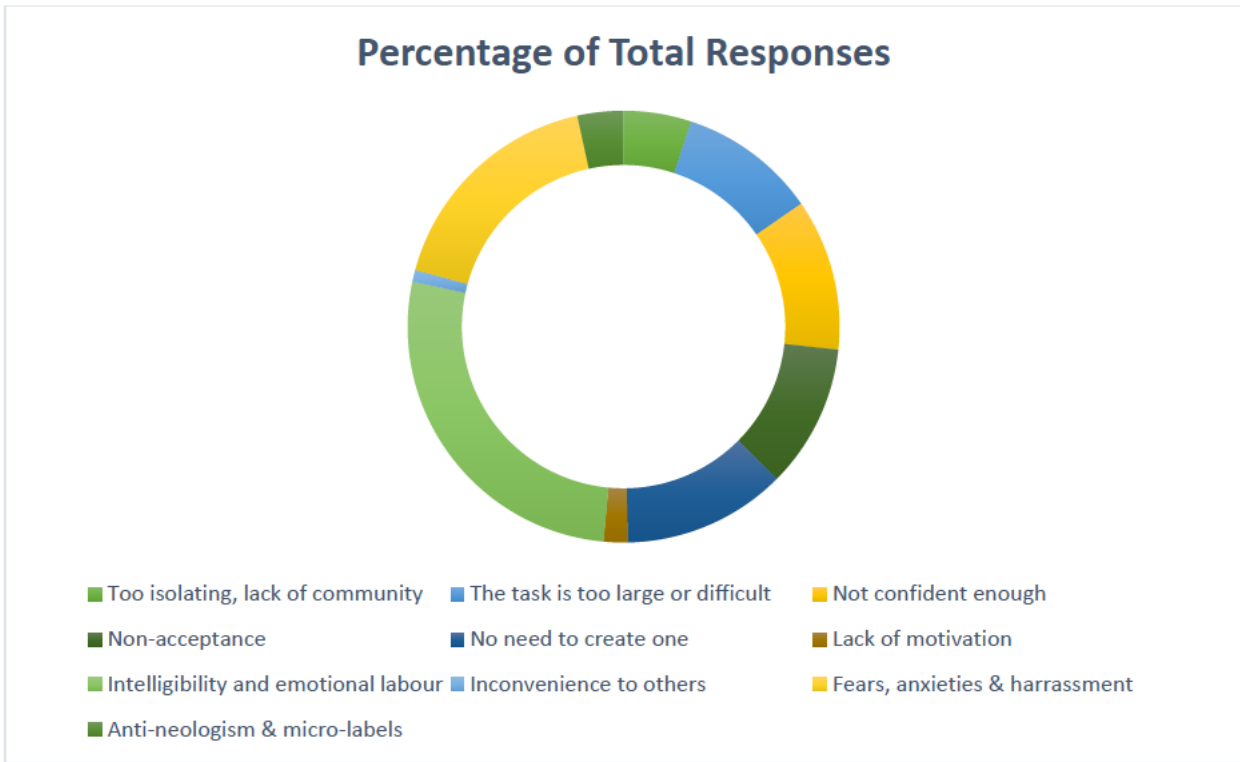
Figure 9: Percentage of total responses under each code
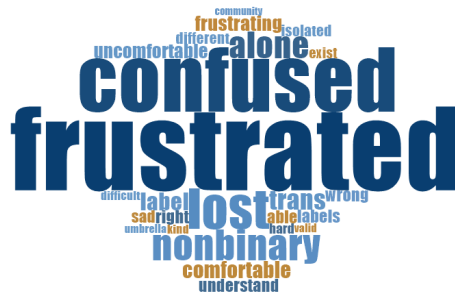
Figure 10: Question 9 word frequency cloud (NVivo)

Figure 11: Question 12 word frequency cloud (NVivo)

12. How do you feel when your pronouns and gender are respected and you are referred to correctly?

More Details   💡 Insights

748
Responses

Latest Responses

"This is still so new to me! But it's exciting "

"It has never happened because German is such a gendered langua..."

"It feels normal to me now (I have been out since late 2019) so it's j..."

172 respondents (**23**%) answered **happy** for this question.
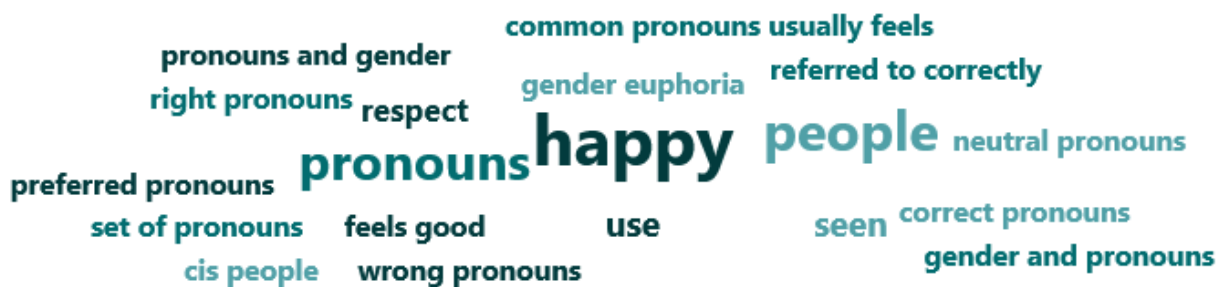
Figure 12: Question 12 with 'Insights' analysis from Microsoft Forms (including word frequency cloud)

13. Have you ever experienced any 'push-back' from others to using your pronouns and other gendered descriptors?

More Details   Insights

● Yes   541
● No   213

Figure 13: Question 13 pie chart generated by Microsoft Forms

14. Have you ever experienced any microaggressions because of your gender?

More Details   Insights

● Yes   614
● No   141
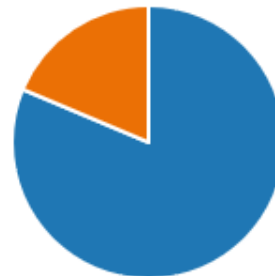
Figure 14: Question 14 pie chart generated by Microsoft Forms

4. What is your first (most used) language for communicating?

More Details   💡 Insights

760
Responses

642 respondents (**84%**) answered **English** for this question.

English or Dutch   norwegian offline   spanish with family
Sign Language   British English   Romanian   German and English   Canada
American Dialect   Swedish   **English**   French   English/German
Spanish   Finnish and English
American English   Norwegian   Australian English
French/Swedish   english and cantonese

Figure 15: Question 4 with 'Insights' analysis from Microsoft Forms (including word frequency cloud)

16. What age range do you fall into?

More Details   💡 Insights

🔵 16-18	101
🟠 18-24	344
🟢 25-34	238
🔴 35-44	62
🟣 45+	15

Figure 16: Question 16 pie chart generated by Microsoft Forms

17. How do you describe your ethnic background?

More Details   💡 Insights

753
Responses

Latest Responses
"White British "
"White German"
"White British"

132 respondents (**18%**) answered **White American** for this question.

White Norwegian White Latine   White Spanish   White Anglo
White German White European White Scottish   White French
white Latinx
White Canadian **White American** White Jewish
White Dutch
White English White Australian   White Irish   White British
White Polish
White Italian   White Hispanic

Figure 17: Question 17 with 'Insights' from Microsoft Forms (including word frequency cloud)

18. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

More Details   💡 Insights

🔵 Post-14 (GCSE, GNVQ)	84
🟠 Post-16 (A Level, Foundation ...	204
🟢 Post-18 (Bachelor's degree or ...	156
🔴 Master's degree	97
🟣 Doctorate/PhD	18
🟤 Post-Doctorate	5
🟣 Other	172
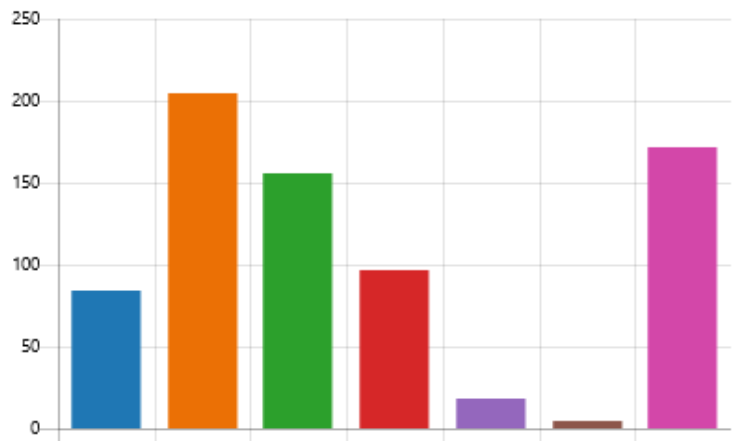
Figure 18: Question 18 bar chart generated by Microsoft Forms

19. What is your employment status? (please tick all that apply)

More Details

🔵 Unemployed	217	
🟠 Employed - Part Time	160	
🟢 Employed - Full Time	174	
🔴 Student - Part Time	58	
🟣 Student - Full Time	276	
🟤 Retired	1	
🌸 Other	65	

Figure 19: Question 19 bar chart generated by Microsoft Forms

20. Where do you live?

More Details   💡 Insights

🔵 UK - England	99
🟠 UK - Northern Ireland	0
🟢 UK - Scotland	9
🔴 UK - Wales	3
🟣 Europe - West	103
🟤 Europe - East	12
🌸 North America - Canada	39
⚫ North America - USA	401
🟡 Rest of the World	25
🔵 Other	68
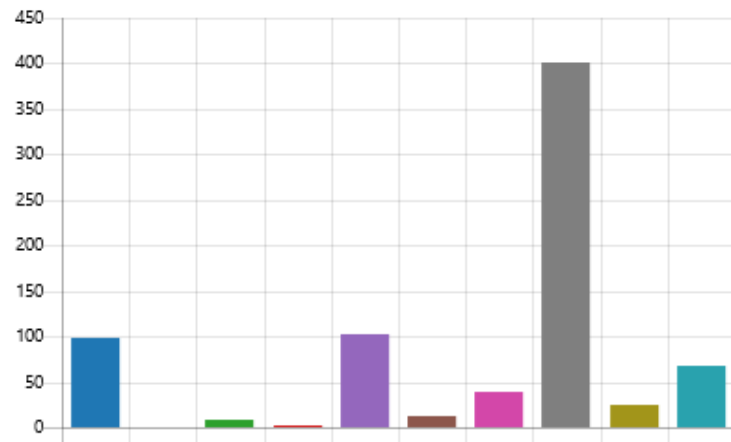
Figure 20: Question 20 bar chart generated by Microsoft Forms

21. How would you describe your social class?

Insights

- Working class — 278
- Middle class — 388
- Upper class — 33
- Other — 53

Figure 21: Question 21 pie chart generated by Microsoft Forms

22. How would you describe your sexuality?

- Gay — 79
- Lesbian — 77
- Bisexual — 260
- Pansexual — 126
- Asexual or 'A-spec' — 221
- Demisexual — 59
- Queer — 361
- Straight — 6
- Other — 109
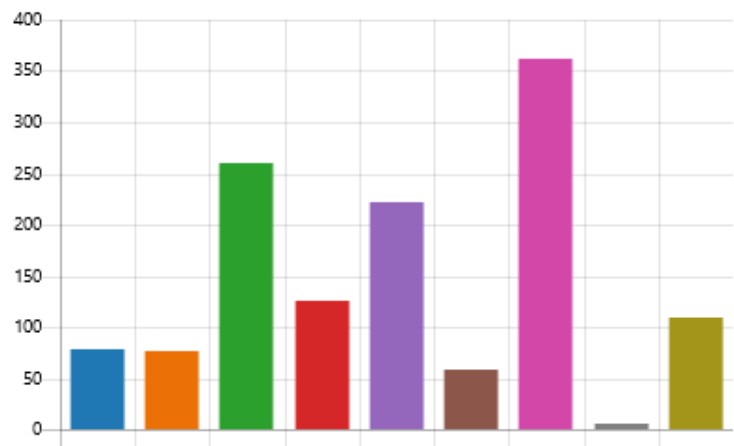
Figure 22: Question 22 bar chart generated by Microsoft Forms

STUDENT & EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Status	Count
SF/U	55
SF/EP	51
SP/U	24
SP/EP	14
SF/EF	11
SP/EF	6
SF/E	1

COUNT
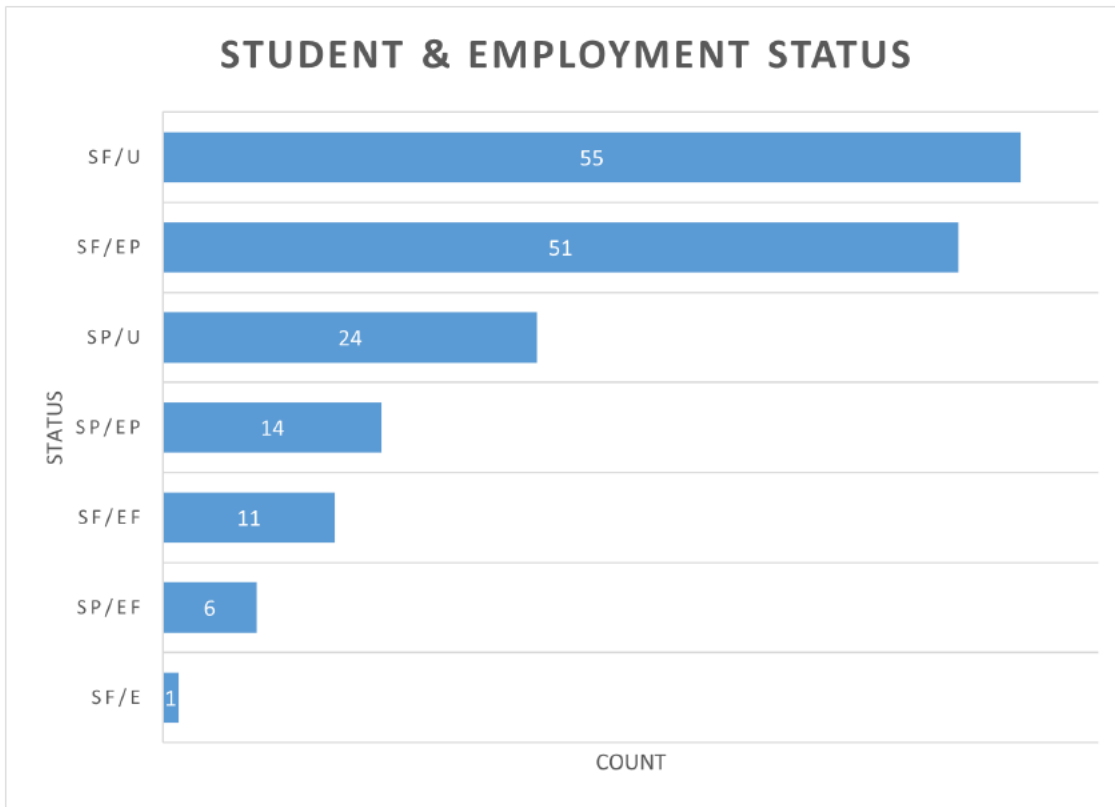
Figure 23: graph to show the student and employment status of participants who selected both, key below.

Code	Meaning
SF/U	Student – Full Time & Unemployed
SP/U	Student – Part Time & Unemployed
SF/EF	Student – Full Time & Employed – Full Time
SF/EP	Student – Full Time & Employed – Part Time
SP/EF	Student – Part Time & Employed – Full Time
SP/EP	Student – Part Time & Employed – Part Time
SF/E	Student – Full Time & Employed (it was not possible to determine full/part time status from the response)

Class	Count
Middle class	394
Working class	285
Upper class	33
Poor or in poverty	8
Unsure	7
Other	6
Upper middle class	6
Lower middle class	6
Working/Middle class	5
I do not agree with the class system	1
Middle upper class	1
Grand Total	**752**

Figure 24: Table showing standardised responses to Question 21, "How would you describe your social class?"
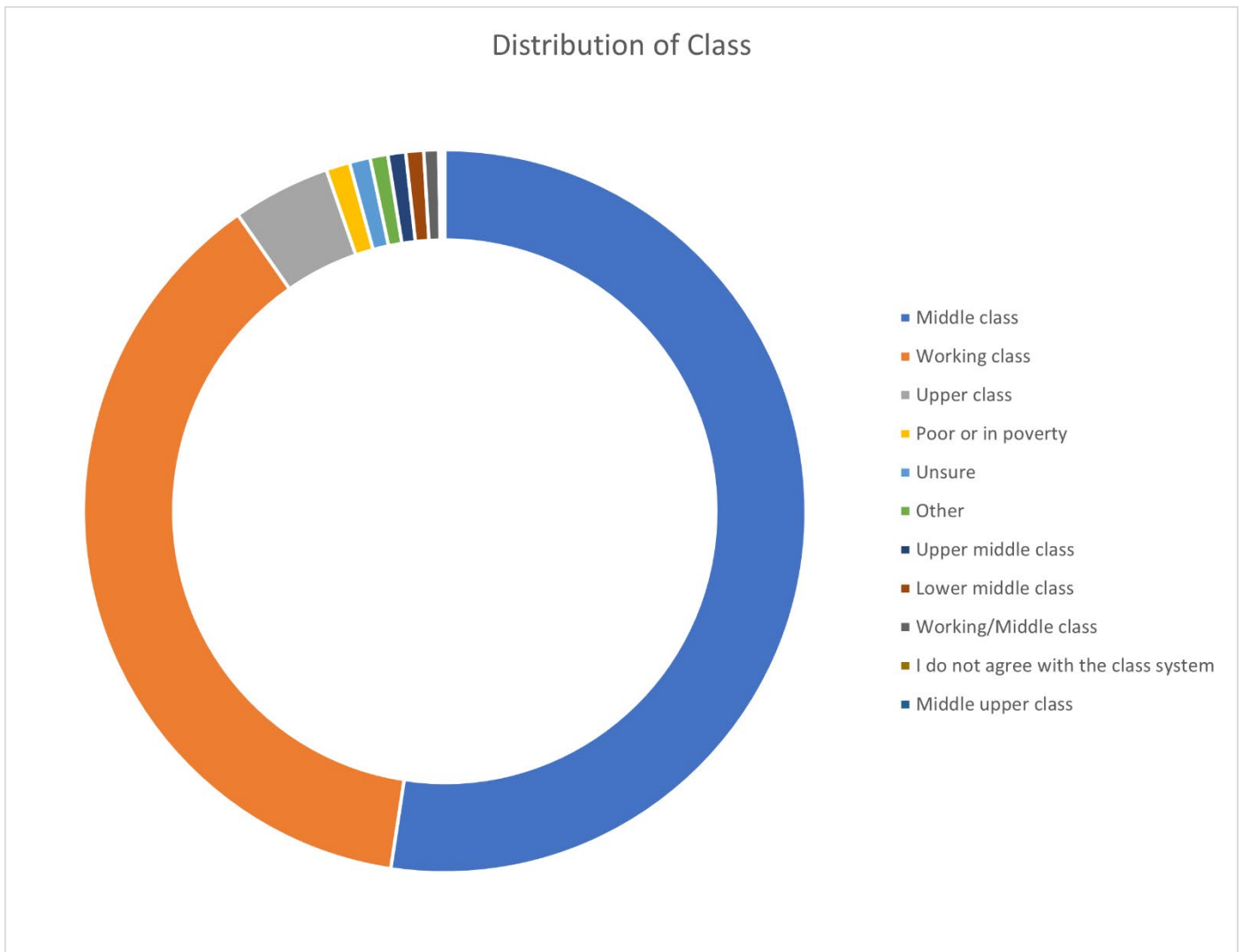
Figure 25: pie chart showing the distribution of class among participants.

The above two figures show responses that have been standardised to allow for data analysis. This process involved removing extra explanatory notes that participants added. 'Other' denotes responses that did not fall into the Working-Middle-Upper understanding of class; this included the terms 'Prekariat', 'Proletarian', 'Student', and 'Disabled'.
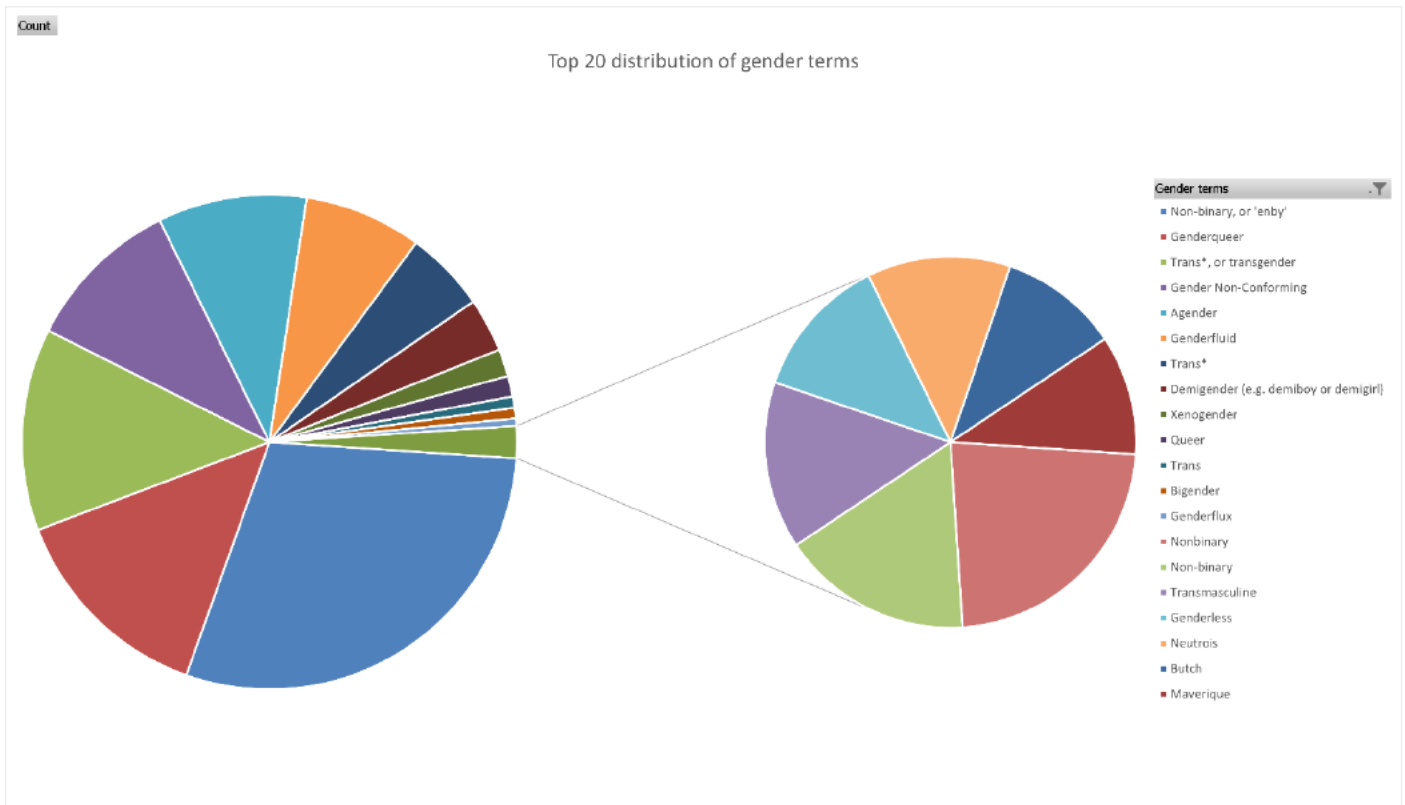
Figure 26: pie chart depicting distribution of Top 20 selected gender terms from Question 5.

Gender terms	Count
Non-binary, or 'enby'	677
Genderqueer	317
Trans*, or transgender	304
Gender Non-Conforming	236
Agender	224
Genderfluid	177
Trans*	122
Demigender (e.g. demiboy or demigirl)	81
Xenogender	41
Queer	31
Trans	17
Bigender	16
Genderflux	11
Nonbinary	11
Non-binary	8
Transmasculine	7
Genderless	6
Neutrois	6
Butch	5
Maverique	5
Grand Total	**2302**

Figure 27: table showing count of Top 20 gender terms from Question 5.
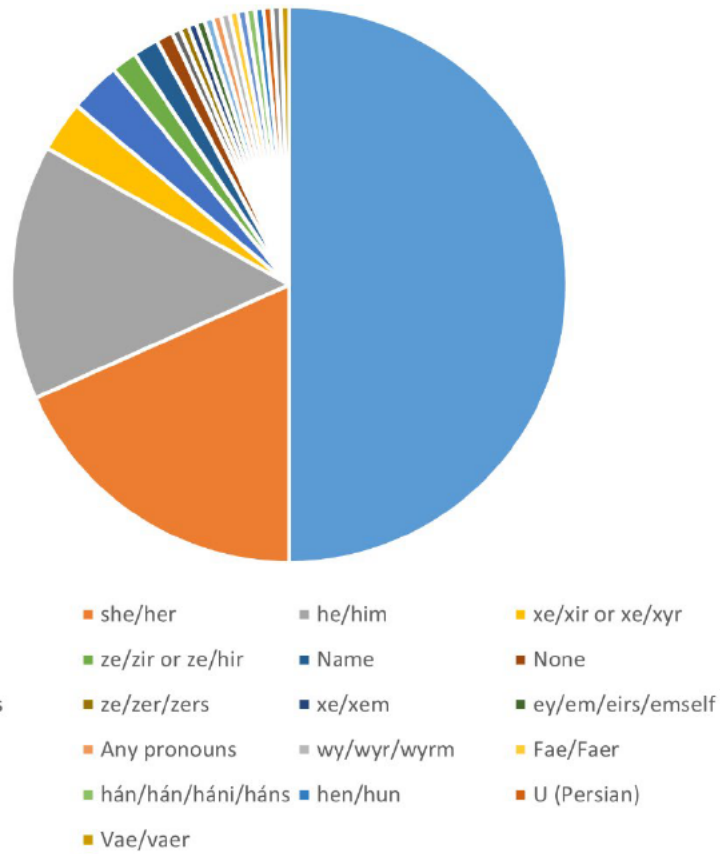
Figure 28: pie chart depicting the distribution of pronouns given in response to Question 10.

Pronouns	Count of Pronouns
they/them	101
she/her	37
he/him	30
xe/xir or xe/xyr	6
it/its	6
ze/zir or ze/hir	3
Name	3
None	2
vi/vior/viors	1
ze/zer/zers	1
xe/xem	1
ey/em/eirs/emself	1
Zey/hir	1
Any pronouns	1
wy/wyr/wyrm	1
Fae/Faer	1
die/diens	1
hán/hán/háni/háns	1
hen/hun	1
U (Persian)	1
E/En/Es	1
Vae/vaer	1
Grand Total	**202**

Figure 29: table showing count of pronouns given in response to Question 10.

How do you describe your ethnic background?	Count
White U.S. American	135
White	129
White British	73
White German	19
White Australian	14
White Irish	13
White European	12
White Scottish	11
Caucasian	10
White Jewish	7
Asian	7
White Canadian	7
White Dutch	7
White French	6
White U.S. American (European heritage)	6
White Hispanic	5
Ashkenazi Jew	4
White Swedish	4
White Polish	4
Chinese	4
Asian-American	4
German	3
White Spanish	3
White European	3
White Norwegian	3
Latinx	3
White U.S. American (Jewish)	3
New Zealand European	3
White Russian	3
Black American	3
White-Latinx	3
White English	2
Anglo-Australian	2
White Italian	2
Chinese-American	2
White Ashkenazi Jewish	2
Hispanic	2
White Irish/German	2
Hispanic and White	2
Black	2
Latino	2
Unknown	2
White Australian nationally, background is British, Irish, and Scottish.	1
White Scandinavian	1
White Hungarian	1
East Asian	1
White (Irish and French Canadian)	1

East Asian, South East Asian	1
White Central European	1
East Indian/Mexican	1
White Jewish Russian	1
European	1
White, Eastern European, Irish, and Spanish	1
European American	1
White and Native American	1
European-American	1
White British and Mediterranean	1
European-South East Asian	1
White Finnish	1
Filipino	1
Chinese-American and White	1
Filipino American	1
Biracial Desi, German-American	1
Filipino-American	1
Black British	1
Finnish	1
White/Japanese	1
French-Algerian	1
White and Asian	1
American Latine (commonly spelled as Latinx)	1
Chinese- and Korean-American and Singaporean	1
Greek Canadian	1
White Belarusian	1
Half White, Half East Asian/Chinese -- American	1
Asian Born in America	1
Half White, Half Vietnamese; American	1
White English/German American	1
British Italian	1
Australian Settler	1
Hispanic (Costa Rican)	1
British Asian Mixed	1
Hispanic (Latin American)	1
White Jew	1
American Caucasian	1
White Latine/Brazilian	1
Human	1
White Puerto Rican	1
I am Colombian, born and raised in Aruba (Carribean).	1
White Slavic/British	1
Icelandic	1
White Welsh European	1
Indian	1
White, Jewish, Italian-American	1
Indigenous (First Nations)	1
White (English/Polish)	1
Iranian American	1

White (Ukrainian and Scottish)	1
Irish, Hungarian, Scottish, potentially German, tiny amounts of Cherokee	1
White and Australian	1
Italian (White)	1
White Anglo-Australian	1
Italian Canadian (White)	1
African American	1
Italian Jew	1
White Australian/English	1
Japanese/White German, American	1
White Brazilian	1
Japanese-White Canadian	1
White British/Irish American	1
Jewish	1
White Canadian (Scottish & Acadian)	1
Jewish American and White Dutch	1
Chinese Canadian, East Asian	1
Jewish/British Catholic	1
Australian	1
Korean	1
White French	1
Korean American	1
Biracial - White American and Pakistani American	1
Korean-Canadian	1
Biracial (Filipino and White) American	1
Latin American	1
White Irish-American	1
Chilean mestizo	1
White Italian/Irish	1
Latino, Mexican	1
White Jewish	1
Latino-American	1
White Latine	1
American Ethiopian	1
White Middle-European	1
Latinx, Mixed	1
Colombian, Black, Jewish, White German	1
Mexican	1
Black	1
Mexican American	1
White Scottish/Italian	1
Midwestern white	1
Black Brazilian	1
Mixed	1
White Ukrainian	1
Mixed American (White & Asian)	1
White with Native American ancestry (Cherokee)	1
Mixed Asian (Eurasian-Chinese)	1
White, Irish/German	1

Mixed British and Chinese	1
White, Middle Eastern	1
Mixed Cuban and Italian-American	1
Cook Island Maori, New Zealand European	1
Mixed ethinicity with Japanese descendancy and white privilege	1
White (German)	1
Mixed Japanese and British	1
White (Italian, Armenian, and others)	1
Mixed Latin American	1
White / Cherokee	1
Mixed Norwegian (Little connection to my Arab half)	1
White and Asian American	1
Mixed Race (African-American and Puerto Rican)	1
White and black	1
Mixed Race (Irish, Guyanese, German, Dutch)	1
White Anglo Scots-Irish	1
Mixed Race (White Irish/Italian/Spanish/French-Jewish, Indigenous, African-American, & Romani)	1
White Anglo-Canadian	1
Mixed race / Pacific Islander and White	1
White Ashkenazi Polish-Canadian	1
Mixed race American	1
White Australian	1
Mixed Race White	1
White Australian, Métis	1
Mixed Race White and Japanese American	1
White Austrian	1
Mixed Race, White/European and Black/African	1
White Belgium	1
Mixed White British and Black Caribbean	1
Asian (Mandarin Chinese)	1
Mixed White European	1
White British, with a mixed background	1
Mixed, Caribbean (Mayan Belizean) and White	1
White British/Welsh	1
Mixed, white-ish, Native American, Polish, Filipino, Lithuanian, Irish, Mexican, Latinx	1
White Canadian (European heritage)	1
Multi-ethnic, White and Asian	1
White Caucasian	1
Multiracial, Black and White	1
Asian Indian	1
Multiracial/Mixed (Irish, Central American, English, Filipino, Okinawan)	1
White English	1
Native American	1
Amazigh (North African Indigenous)	1
Native American (Cherokee)	1
White European-American (multiethnic)	1
Native American, Asian, Latinx	1

Australian (descended a while back from British immigrants)	1
Native/Black/Dominican	1
White French/White Italian	1
Arab	1
White German/Polish	1
New Zealand Pākehā	1
White Hispanic	1
None	1
White Immigrant	1
None	1
White Irish, Scottish, English, and German	1
Nordic	1
White Irish/Italian-American	1
North African/Mediterranean	1
White Irish-Romanian-French-Polish	1
North African/Middle Eastern	1
White Italian	1
North-African and Brazilian American	1
White Italian-American	1
Other - Chinese, Middle Eastern, white European, American	1
Biracial American of color	1
Paakehaa - White New Zealander	1
White Jewish American	1
Pacific Islander, Asian, White	1
White Latin American	1
White-Latino/a, Mixed	1
White Latine (Chilean)	1
White-Polish French	1
White Mediterranean	1
Pākehā New Zealander, White Australian	1
White North American	1
Persian-Turkish	1
White person born in the United States; of Eastern European and French Canadian descent; Maryland Catholic ethnic background	1
Polish and German	1
White Polish German	1
Sami and White Norwegian	1
White Romanian	1
Scandinavian/Middle Eastern	1
White Russian-Polish	1
Serbian	1
Black & Jewish American	1
Singaporean Chinese	1
White Slavic	1
Slavic-American	1
American	1
Southeast Asian	1
Black British	1
Southeast Asian	1

Black Jamaican-American	1
Turkish	1
White Welsh	1
Turkish	1
White Western European and Ashkenazi Jewish	1
Ukrainian	1
White, African-American	1
Black/White biracial American (Texan and Irish descent)	1
White, Irish American	1
West European	1
White, Irish-French-Canadian	1
African American	1
White, Mexican	1
White (Ashkenazi Jew)	1
White/Caucasian	1
White (Australian, British ancestry)	1
White-Latino	1
White (British/(Northern) Irish)	1
White (Central Europe)	1
Pakeha (New Zealand European)	1
1.5 generation immigrant from Eastern Europe to America	1
Pākeha and Māori	1
Grand Total	**753**

Figure 30: table showing count of responses to Question 17 "How do you describe your ethnic background?"

Research survey into the self-descriptive language of non-binary people ✂

Research Project Title:
The importance of self-definition and the negative impact of explanatory gaps on non-binary individuals in their use of self-descriptive language.

Researcher:
Rai Furniss-Greasley (they/them)
MRes student at the University of Birmingham

Supervisors:
(Primary) Dr. Elliot Evans (they/them)
(Secondary) Prof. Lisa Downing (she/her)

This survey is designed to gather information about how non-binary people self describe and what words they use to do so, as well as the impact of the availability (or lack thereof) of suitable language for this purpose. Data gathered during this survey will be anonymous and will later be used to inform a research thesis on the topic. Owing to the personal nature and sensitivity of some questions this may cause distress to some participants as the survey will ask about your negative experiences with not knowing the words to describe yourself and your experiences with how others treat you in relation to your gender identity. A list of support organisations will be provided at the end of the survey.

Your response will be stored while this survey is open on the private University of Birmingham associated OneDrive account of the researcher, Rai Furniss-Greasley, and only they will have access to this (anonymous) data. After the survey is closed, the data will be transferred across to the University of Birmingham Research Data Store for a period of ten (10) years. This will only be able to be accessed by Rai Furniss-Greasley and the primary supervising researcher Dr. Elliot Evans. Thereafter, the data will be destroyed professionally. In both situations the data is stored within the United Kingdom and is subject to local data protection and privacy legislation.

As the data is anonymous throughout this process, there is no method for your entry to be removed from the project after you have saved and submitted the survey. If you would like to discuss any of this or ask any questions, please contact Rai via email (address included above).

Your answers will help inform this research project with accurate data from the genuine lived experiences of non-binary people, which is extremely important to advancing research in this area. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and it is up to you whether you choose to take part.

* Required

1. Have you read and understood the project information above and are you happy to contribute to this research? *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

2. Do you understand and accept that once you submit your answers they cannot be withdrawn? *

○ Yes

○ No

3. Are you 16 years of age or over? *

Please note: this research project is not able to accept responses from participants under 16 years old.

○ Yes

○ No

4. What is your first (most used) language for communicating? *

[   ]

Umbrella terms and new words

In this section, you will be asked what umbrella terms and phrases you identify with as well as whether you have come to use any new words, or created any yourself. Please note, you will be asked about more specific terms in the following section.

5. Which of the following terms do you feel describe your identity? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ Non-binary, or 'enby'

☐ Trans*, or transgender

☐ Genderqueer

☐ Genderfluid

☐ Demigender (e.g. demiboy or demigirl)

☐ Agender

☐ Gender Non-Conforming

☐ Xenogender

☐ Other

6. If an accurate term for your identity didn't exist, would you consider using a neologism (a newly created word) or have you?

This could be a new word that you create or that you have seen created and in use somewhere else. E.g. 'fluidflux' was created to describe the combined identity of someone who is both genderfluid and genderflux.

◯ Yes

◯ No

7. Would you feel confident in creating your own new word(s) to describe your experiences or have you?

◯ Yes

◯ No

8. If no, what factors would stop you?

[   ]

9. How have you felt when you couldn't find a word that described your experiences of gender?

The language you use

In this section, you will be asked more specifically about what words and phrases you use to describe yourself - both internally and externally - and how the use of this language affects you.

10. What pronouns do you use? (please tick all that apply)

- [ ] they/them
- [ ] he/him
- [ ] she/her
- [ ] it/its
- [ ] Spivak (e/em/eir)
- [ ] xe/xir or xe/xyr
- [ ] ze/zir or ze/hir
- [ ] Other

11. How do you describe your gender?

12. How do you feel when your pronouns and gender are respected and you are referred to correctly?

13. Have you ever experienced any 'push-back' from others to using your pronouns and other gendered descriptors?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

14. Have you ever experienced any microaggressions because of your gender?

'Microaggressions' are brief exchanges that send a negative messages to certain individuals because of their membership of a minority or marginalised group. These can be intentional or unintentional, verbal, behavioural or environmental.

○ Yes

○ No

15. If you answered 'yes' to Questions 13 or 14, how did this affect you?

Demographic information

In this final section, you will be asked for some demographic information. This is entirely optional and if you choose to answer these questions the information will be used to investigate whether there are overlapping commonalities within the non-binary community. This would be useful for future researchers to understand where non-binary people are situated in society and how best to help them.

16. What age range do you fall into?

   ○ 16-18

   ○ 18-24

   ○ 25-34

   ○ 35-44

   ○ 45+

17. How do you describe your ethnic background?

   e.g. Black British, White Irish, African-American etc

   [   ]

18. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

   ○ Post-14 (GCSE, GNVQ)

   ○ Post-16 (A Level, Foundation Degree, High School Diploma)

   ○ Post-18 (Bachelor's degree or equivalent)

   ○ Master's degree

   ○ Doctorate/PhD

   ○ Post-Doctorate

   ○ Other

19. What is your employment status? (please tick all that apply)

- [ ] Unemployed
- [ ] Employed - Part Time
- [ ] Employed - Full Time
- [ ] Student - Part Time
- [ ] Student - Full Time
- [ ] Retired
- [ ] Other

20. Where do you live?

We have included a limited range of locations because the survey will be targetted at UK residents primarily. If you would like to be more specific than 'Rest of the World', please use the 'Other' option to record your location.

- ( ) UK - England
- ( ) UK - Northern Ireland
- ( ) UK - Scotland
- ( ) UK - Wales
- ( ) Europe - West
- ( ) Europe - East
- ( ) North America - Canada
- ( ) North America - USA
- ( ) Rest of the World
- ( ) Other

21. How would you describe your social class?

- ( ) Working class
- ( ) Middle class
- ( ) Upper class
- ( ) Other

22. How would you describe your sexuality?

You are being asked this as the researcher theorises that a high proportion of the non-binary community will also have a sexuality other than 'straight' and that this may result in being marginalised in overlapping ways. To aid in future research, evidence of this would be extremely useful.

☐ Gay

☐ Lesbian

☐ Bisexual

☐ Pansexual

☐ Asexual or 'A-spec'

☐ Demisexual

☐ Queer

☐ Straight

☐ Other

23. Are you ready to submit your answers? *

Remember that once you submit your answers they cannot be changed or withdrawn.

○ Yes (please proceed to submit)

○ No (takes you back to Section 1)

End of Survey

Thank you for your participation in this survey!

If you find yourself distressed by any of the questions in this survey, please consider spending a few minutes to engage with this Guided Relaxation Exercise for Anxiety (duration: 11 minutes) to reduce your discomfort: https://youtu.be/6KLhMGiSmHs (not associated with the researchers or University of Birmingham in any way).

If you feel like you need to talk to someone more urgently about this please see below for a list of UK-based support services:

Mindline Trans*: 0300 330 5468
Samaritans: 116 123
LGBT Foundation: 0345 3 30 30 30 or https://lgbt.foundation/

Other support, advice and information is available from a variety of organisations for LGBT+ people and a good list of these can be found here via the charity Mind:

https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/lgbtiqplus-mental-health/useful-contacts/

If you would like to view a copy of the final thesis and its recommendations, please contact ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ and you will be added to a list of interested parties.

If you have any concerns about this survey or the project as a whole, please email Dr. Elliott Evans on: ▆▆▆▆▆▆