WHAT ARE THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF HOMOSEXUAL MUSLIM MEN? AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

By

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Thesis Overview

This thesis was submitted as part of the Doctorate in Forensic Clinical Psychology at the School of Psychology, University of Birmingham. It comprises of two volumes. The first volume is the research component, consisting of a meta-synthesis, an empirical study and press releases. The second volume is the clinical component and includes five Forensic Clinical Practice Reports (FCPR).

Volume I: Research Component

This volume comprises of three chapters. The meta-synthesis explores the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men. The empirical paper presents a qualitative study exploring the experiences of Muslim men who identify as homosexual, and how they cope with difficult experiences. The press releases provide a lay summary of the meta-synthesis and the empirical paper.

Volume II: Clinical Component

This volume consists of five FCPRs. FCPR 1 presents a cognitive behavioural and behavioural formulation of Jane's depression. FCPR 2 is a service evaluation within the Dialectical Behavioural Therapy service of a women's medium secure service. FCPR 3 is a single-case experiment design of John's charging behaviours on an intensive care unit. FCPR 4 is a case study of David and his voice hearing experience, and FCPR 5 is an abstract of an oral presentation on a service evaluation of the Clinical Psychology service within a men's local prison.

Dedication

This is dedicated to my partner Alex.

Thank you for being with me every step of the way.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge Alex for his support, encouragement and patience. He has picked me up on some particularly challenging days and always cheered me on to keep going. I appreciated the small things you did and helped smooth over an otherwise bumpy journey. You were always there when I needed you.

I would like to give a big thanks to Dr Juliane Kloess, who has been a wonderful supervisor. Thank you for your time, patience and feedback over the years which has helped my confidence grow in my academic ability. Words fail to express how appreciative I am of you and your support. I would like thank Dr Andrew Fox and Dr Darelle Villa for their support during the workshops, your input helped shape my research and meta-synthesis. I would like to thank Monica Lloyd, who has been a supportive appraisal tutor throughout the years and always had confidence in me.

Finally, I would like to thank the Hidayah for giving me the opportunity to do my research. Your warm welcome and friendly groups definitely helped me facilitate the research. I also would like to acknowledge the bravery of the participants in the research study, who talked about their difficult experiences with me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME I: RESEARCH COMPONENT

Literature Review: What Are the Experiences of Ethnic Minority Homosexual Men? A Meta-Synthesis

Abstract 2

Introduction 3

Methods 11

Results 30

Discussion 45

References 55

Empirical Chapter: What Are the Lived Experiences of Homosexual Muslim Men? An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Abstract 66

Introduction 67

Methods 74

Results 84

Discussion 99

References 108

Press Release: What Are the Experiences of Ethnic Minority Homosexual Men? A Meta-Synthesis

Press Release 114

References 116

Press Release: What Are the Lived Experiences of Homosexual Muslim Men? An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Press Release 117

APPENDICES FOR VOLUME I

Literature Review: What Are the Experiences of Ethnic Minority Homosexual Men? A Meta-Synthesis

Appendix 1: Example of First and Second Order Data Collected from Articles.....120

Appendix 2: Example of Identified Themes in Original Studies.....121

Appendix 3: Example of the Development of Themes.....122

Appendix 4: Example of the Thematic Structure 123

Empirical Paper: What Are the Lived Experiences of Homosexual Muslim Men? An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Appendix 5: Letter of Ethical Approval 124

Appendix 6: Advertising Poster and Leaflet.....125

Appendix 7: Participant Information Sheet 128

Appendix 8: Participant Consent Form.....130

Appendix 9: List of Support Services for Participants 131

Appendix 10: Interview Schedule.....133

Appendix 11: Example of Step 2 and 3 of Analytical Process 134

Appendix 12: Example of Step 4 of Analytical Process.....135

Appendix 13: Example of Step 6 of Analytical Process.....136

Appendix 14: Reflective Statement 137

VOLUME II: FORENSIC CLINICAL COMPONENT

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 1: Assessment and formulation of Jane's difficulties from two different psychological perspectives

Abstract 1

Presenting difficulties and assessment 2

CBT formulation 6

Behavioural formulation 11

Critique of formulations and reflections 17

References 19

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 2: Service Evaluation: Experiences of service users delivering Dialectical Behavioural Therapy training to clinical staff

Abstract 21

Introduction 22

Method 24

Results 25

Discussion 30

References 35

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 3: Single-Case Experimental Design

Abstract 37

Presenting difficulties 38

Assessments 41

Formulation 44

Method 49

Results 49

Discussion 51

References 54

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 4: Case Study of David and his voice hearing experience

Abstract 57

Presenting difficulties 58

Assessments 60

Formulation 62

Intervention 66

Evaluation 70

Reflections 71

References 73

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 5: Clinical Psychology Service: Service Evaluation Oral Presentation

Abstract 75

APPENDICES FOR VOLUME II

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 2: Service Evaluation: Experiences of service users delivering Dialectical Behavioural Therapy training to clinical staff

Appendix A: Service Evaluation Checklist 76

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME I

Literature Review: What Are the Experiences of Ethnic Minority Homosexual Men? A Meta-Synthesis

Figure 1: PRISMA Diagram of the Steps Taken to Identify Studies for Inclusion in the Review 18

VOLUME II

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 1: Assessment and formulation of Jane's difficulties from two different psychological perspectives

Figure 1: Longitudinal CBT formulation of Jane's depression 9

Figure 2: Vicious Flower of Jane's depression 11

Figure 3: Clinical Pathogenesis Map for Jane's depression 16

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 3: Single-Case Experimental Design

Figure 1: John's timeline 40

Figure 2: QABF mean data – charging at staff 42

Figure 3: Behavioural formulation of John's charging behaviour 45

Figure 4: John's weekly charging behaviours 50

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 4: Case Study of David and his voice hearing experience

Figure 1: Formulation of David's voice hearing experience 65

LIST OF TABLES

VOLUME I

Literature Review: What Are the Experiences of Ethnic Minority Homosexual Men? A Meta-Synthesis

Table 1: Noblit and Hare's (1988) Seven Phases of Meta-Ethnography 11

Table 2: Database Search Terms 13

Table 3: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria 14

Table 4: Characteristics of Studies Included in Review 19

Table 5: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes Identified 31

Empirical Paper: What Are the Lived Experiences of Homosexual Muslim Men? An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Table 1: Study Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria 75

Table 2: Participant Demographics 78

Table 3: Six Steps of IPA Analysis (Smith et al., 2009) 81

Table 4: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes 84

VOLUME II

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 2: Service Evaluation: Experiences of service users delivering Dialectical Behavioural Therapy training to clinical staff

Table 1: Main and sub themes 25

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 3: Single-Case Experimental Design

Table 1: Baseline trends of data 51

Forensic Clinical Practice Report 4: Case Study of David and his voice hearing experience

Table 1: David's weekly sessions 66

Table 2: David's CORE-OM pre and post scores 70

Table 3: David's BAVQ pre and post scores 71

Academic Integrity

Chapter 1 of this thesis, 'What Are the Experiences of Ethnic Minority Homosexual Men? A Meta-Synthesis' has been submitted for publication to the *Journal of Homosexuality*.

Edward Howard designed the review, collected and analysed the data, and wrote the report.

Dr Juliane Kloess provided critical edits and feedback throughout the process.

Chapter 1:

Literature Review

What Are the Experiences of Ethnic Minority Homosexual Men? A Meta-Synthesis

Abstract

Several models of sexual identity formation have been proposed; however, they fail to consider how ethnicity interacts with a homosexual identity. Research suggests that homosexuality has been constructed within a White, middle-class framework which excludes the voices of homosexual individuals of a non-White ethnicity. A meta-synthesis was conducted in order to explore the experiences of homosexual Black and Asian men in relation to their sexual identity. Thirteen studies that employed interviews or focus groups were included in the present review. It followed Noblit and Hare's (1988) seven-phase process for conducting a meta-ethnography, using participant quotes and author interpretations as data to inform the themes. A total of six themes, each encompassing one to three subordinate themes, were identified. Overall, the themes reveal that ethnic minority homosexual men live in a heterosexual-dominant culture that invalidates or punishes their existence. This made it difficult for the men to truly be themselves, resulting in feelings of loneliness, grief and self-hatred. While the men attempted to express their homosexual identity through homosexual spaces, they often experienced racism. The participants in the included studies also reflected on how homosexuality was a White and Western concept. The findings highlight that previous models of sexual identity formation do not lend themselves to explaining the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men, however, Gock's (2001) model of sexual and ethnicity development for Asian and Pacific Islanders holds promise in being used as a model for other ethnicities.

What Are the Experiences of Ethnic Minority Homosexual Men? A Meta-Synthesis

In 1973, psychiatry declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2nd Edition. The focus of treatment shifted from 'treating' homosexuality to promoting positive mental health by supporting homosexual individuals with the 'coming-out' process, and addressing the psychological impact of living in a society that stigmatises homosexuality (Coleman, 1988). Considering this stigma, the term 'homophobia' was introduced to encompass all negative attitudes towards homosexual individuals (Herek, 2004; Weinberg, 1972). However, 'homophobia' was considered too narrow a description of the negative attitudes towards homosexual individuals, and Fassinger (1991) therefore introduced the term 'heterosexism' (Neisen, 1990). 'Heterosexism' refers to society assuming that heterosexuality is the norm, and thereby devalues homosexual individuals. From this, it is proposed that living as a homosexual in a heterosexualist society may cause distress for homosexual individuals, and lead to experiences of 'minority stress' (Meyer, 1995, 2003). This stress includes concealing one's sexual orientation in an effort to cope with the stigma and perceived threat and rejection from others (Meyer, 2003).

Discrimination and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Individuals

According to Meads et al. (2012), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) individuals only account for up to 6% of the UK population. Previous reviews suggest that LGBT individuals continue to face substantial discrimination, harassment, disadvantage and inequality in major aspects of life, such as education, health and care services, and employment (Communities Analytical Services, 2013; Mitchell & Howarth, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2009), and that such experiences still continue to date (Hudson-Sharp & Metcalf, 2016). Specifically, Hudson-Sharp and Metcalf (2016) found that heteronormativity (where

heterosexuality is assumed to be the norm) was prevalent in educational institutions and healthcare services, which consequentially meant that it alienated LGBT individuals, failed to check for homophobia, and therefore left the support needs of this population unaddressed. Their review further indicated that many LGBT individuals experience harassment, discrimination and bullying at work, resulting in restricted job choice, reduced progression, and an inability to be 'out' at work. In addition, LGBT individuals were found to be at greater risk of experiencing hate crimes compared to heterosexual individuals, as were ethnic minority homosexual individuals, including unwanted sexual advances and attacks, compared to homosexual White people (Hudson-Sharp & Metcalf, 2016).

Consequently, LGBT individuals commonly experience minority stress which can lead to an increase in mental health difficulties (King et al., 2008). Specifically, LGBT individuals are between two to three times more likely to report enduring psychological or emotional difficulties compared to the general population. Suicide attempts, suicidal ideation, depression and anxiety disorders were 1.5 times higher for LGBT individuals compared to heterosexual peers. It was also found that LGBT individuals internalised stigma and devalued themselves due to their gender and/or sexual identity, and were therefore more apprehensive about accessing healthcare services as a result of anticipating discrimination and stigma (Meads et al., 2012). This in turn may partly explain the increasing mental health difficulties of LGBT individuals. However, it is important to note that the majority of findings are derived from studies that recruited predominantly White LGBT individuals, and there continues to be a lack of studies that offer insight into the experiences of LGBT ethnic minority individuals (Hudson-Sharp & Metcalf, 2016).

Identity Theory

Individuals can belong to multiple social groups (e.g., family, ethnicity, sexuality) and they are motivated to maintain these group memberships, as they provide a sense of belonging, comfort, meaning and purpose which contribute towards psychological well-being, including increased self-esteem (Jetten et al., 2017; Tajfet & Turner, 1979). Having membership in multiple social groups is thought to be protective against negative well-being (Jetten et al., 2017).

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that individuals categorise themselves in relation to others and how they view themselves through the lens of their group memberships. It is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership, and provides a sense of belonging to the social world (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Part of this process includes social categorisation, where individuals are placed into social groups and categories. Through differences of out groups and similarities with in groups social categorisation is enhanced, thereby reinforcing an individual's own self-image (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

However, individuals may hold many group memberships that are independent from each other, and they may compliment or conflict one another (Van Dommelen et al., 2015). An individual may feel tension between their identities, resulting in identity conflict and negative health outcomes (Koc & Vignoles, 2016). For example, homosexual Christian men with higher religious identification experienced greater shame and guilt in relation to their homosexual identity (Anderson & Koc, 2020). These individuals may experience managing dual identities, and the Bicultural Identity Integration theory (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002) was developed to address this. This theory proposes two components of identity integration: Blendedness versus compartmentalisation and Harmony versus conflict. Blendedness versus

compartmentalisation reflects the sense of disconnection versus the overlap between the two identities, and Harmony versus conflict reflects the degree of tension or clash between the two identities (Huynh et al., 2011). Similar to social identity theory, when these identities are integrated there are positive outcomes, such as higher self-esteem, lower anxiety and greater life satisfaction (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2012). For the purposes of this meta-synthesis, identity was conceptualised using the Bicultural Identity Integration theory (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002), where it is assumed that the men experience difficulties with their two identities; primarily ethnicity and homosexuality.

Theories of Homosexual Development

Cass (1979) introduced one of the first theories of homosexual development, which includes different stages an individual progresses through in order to complete their identity, namely (i) identity confusion, (ii) identity comparison, (iii) identity tolerance, (iv) identity acceptance, (v) identity pride, and (iv) identity synthesis. However, Kaufman and Johnson (2004) highlighted that there were several limitations to this model. Firstly, it assumes that the process of homosexual development is linear, when each homosexual individual's experience is unique and may progress through different stages at different times and in a different order. Secondly, the model does not take into consideration social context, such as whether the society in which the individual lives is accepting of homosexuals. Finally, little attention is paid to the varied nature of individuals' experiences in terms of their ethnicity, gender and class, and nor does the model refer to 'reflected appraisal', whereby an individual will make sense of their sexuality based on the feedback from and interactions with others (Ichiyama, 1993).

Several other models of homosexual identity development have been introduced since then, which outline the process of how homosexual men form and develop a healthy

sexual identity (Coleman, 1982; Cox & Gallois, 1996; Rosario et al., 2001; Troiden, 1989). While these models differ in various ways, they each describe two general dimensions of the process of homosexual identity development: (i) identity formation, and (ii) identity integration (Villicana et al., 2016). Identity formation includes a phase of exploration, during which homosexual individuals think about and question their sexual identity. This can include confusion and denial of same-sex desires, as well as moving to a space of reduced internalised heterosexist attitudes. Identity integration involves accepting and internalising one's homosexual identity and disclosing, normally verbally, one's identity to others (Villicana et al., 2016). However, Kaufman and Johnson (2004) criticised these models, stating that they have no sensitivity to the personal or situational complexities homosexual individuals may encounter, such as an ethnic minority identity.

Criticisms of Homosexual Identity Development

Research has argued that homosexual identity development has been constructed within a White, male, middle-class framework that ignores the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual individuals, which may subsequently exclude their voices (Han, 2009; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004; Rust, 2003). Using this White framework has limited our understanding of how ethnic minority homosexual individuals understand and practise disclosure (Villicana et al., 2016). For example, the term 'in the closet' (referring to individuals who have not yet disclosed their sexual identity), is described as a tool for White homosexual individuals to distinguish themselves as a minority group. However, Ross (2005) argues that they are not a minority group due to their position within the social hierarchy, and that 'in the closet' may not be relevant to ethnic minority homosexual individuals given that they are already marked as a minority in terms of their ethnicity, and the stigma associated with this. Ethnic minority individuals may therefore not wish to

disclose their homosexual identity in order not to further 'other' themselves (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000). That is, to be considered another minority.

In addition, the framework suggests that disclosure may indicate a willingness for an individual to discard their ethnic identity in order to fulfil their sexual identity (Dubé & Sabvin-Williams, 1999). This leaves individuals at risk of losing critical sources of support that are related to their ethnic identity, such as family and community connections (Villicana et al., 2016). Furthermore, it has been found that ethnic minority homosexual individuals face ethnicity-based stigmatisation and oppression by White homosexual individuals, which makes it difficult for them to integrate into the homosexual community (Diaz, 1998; Harper et al., 2004; Martinez & Sullivan, 1998). It is therefore argued that the act of disclosing one's sexuality/sexual identity is primarily a behaviour engaged in by White homosexual individuals, with ethnic minority homosexual individuals predominantly experiencing ostracism from both their ethnic and homosexual community, multiple forms of oppression, loss of support, and a perception that one has voluntarily abandoned his or her ethnic identity (Villicana et al., 2016).

Related to this, Ferraro and Farmer (1996) coined the term 'double jeopardy hypothesis', whereby individuals may experience added challenges and stress as a result of being affiliated with two stigmatised minority groups. This is also known as being in a double minority. Research has indicated that ethnic minority lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) individuals experience homophobia, racism and isolation which can undermine psychological well-being (Jaspal, 2012; Jaspal 2017). Jaspal et al. (2019) conducted a cross-sectional survey with 289 White and ethnic minority UK LGB male and female participants including various measures, such as experiences of discrimination, rejection, psychological distress and internalised homophobia. The findings indicated that ethnic minority LGB

individuals experienced significantly more discrimination, ethnic victimisation and internalised homophobia in comparison to White LGB participants. It was also found that being of an ethnic minority was associated with more psychological distress and depression, in comparison to White individuals.

Furthermore, in a study by Meyer et al. (2008) based in the US, Black and Latino homosexual and bisexual men were found to be at an increased risk of suicide in comparison to White homosexual and bisexual men. Latino queer men were found to experience discrimination and prejudice related to both their sexual orientation and their ethnicity (National Institutes of Health, 2011), leading to elevated levels of distress (Balsam et al., 2011). Similarly, African American queer men were found to be at an increased risk of developing psychological distress and sexual dysfunction (Zamboni & Crawford, 2007). Overall, this collectively indicates that ethnic minority LGB individuals are more likely to experience mental health difficulties due to experiencing discrimination as a result of their ethnicity and sexuality, which likely impacts on their psychological well-being. In contrast, the process of 'coming out' is reported to have positive mental health outcomes, such as lower levels of stress related to no longer having to live in secrecy, increased levels of self-esteem, and a reduction in internalised homophobia (Beals et al., 2009; Corrigan & Matthews, 2003; Frost & Meyer, 2009; Rosario et al., 2001).

Ethnic and Sexual Identity Development

Ethnic identity is defined to be a part of an individual's identity which consists of knowledge of their social group together with the emotional attachment to that social group (Tajfel, 1981). This includes self-identification with the social group, feelings of belonging, attitudes towards the group, and a sense of self-worth in relation to the group (Parham & Helms, 1985). Garnets (2002) argued that a model for understanding sexual identity

development needs to account for other aspects of an individual's identity that may be in conflict with their sexual identity, such as ethnicity. Gock (2001) specifically proposed a model of sexual and ethnic identity development among Asian and Pacific homosexual Islanders, suggesting that they go through five stages of identity development: (1) accepting one's own single ethnic identity without exploring the alternatives; (2) awareness of sexual identity in addition to ethnic identity; (3) identity conflict between ethnicity and sexuality; (4) prioritising one identity over another; and (5) identity integration. This final stage represents an individual's sexual identity being in tune with their ethnic identity (Gock, 2001). To date, the question remains as to whether this particular model is applicable to other groups of ethnic minority homosexual men, beyond that of Asian and Pacific Islanders.

Present Review

Overall, it is of critical importance that we further develop our understanding of the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men in order to be able to inform existing services and their approaches to supporting this population. The primary aim of the meta-synthesis presented here is therefore to explore the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men in relation to their sexual identity by answering the following research question: 'What are the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men?'. Meta-syntheses are used to analyse and synthesise qualitative research findings (which are considered to be the raw data) derived from a set of empirical research studies that have employed a qualitative methodology. The results go beyond the aggregation and summation of existing findings in order to constitute newly synthesised theory or understanding that has the potential to underpin decision making and action (Finfgeld-Connett, 2018).

Methods

In order to meet the present meta-synthesis' aim, a meta-ethnographic approach was undertaken to synthesise the available qualitative literature in this area. Noblit and Hare's (1988) seven-phase approach was followed to guide the analytic process. These steps are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Noblit and Hare's (1988) Seven Phases of Meta-Ethnography

Phase	Description
Phase 1: Getting Started	Identifying an area of interest that qualitative research might inform.
Phase 2: Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest	Conducting systematic literature searches to identify relevant studies related to interest.
Phase 3: Reading the studies	Repeated reading and understanding the studies to become familiar with them. This includes identifying concepts and themes within the studies and what they say about the area of interest.
Phase 4: Determining how the studies are related	Exploring how the studies relate to each other, considering what concepts, ideas, themes and metaphors each study presents with.
Phase 5: Translating the studies into each other	Grouping data together to create themes. This includes comparing key metaphors and concepts between studies and identifying similarities and differences.

Phase 6: Synthesising translations	Higher order interpretation of findings, which may lead to new interpretation of the data and developing new themes.
Phase 7: Expressing the synthesis	Disseminating the findings to wider audience through different mediums such as written, videos, plays and arts. Dissemination would need to consider an assessment of the audience, to be able to communicate effectively the findings of the meta-ethnography without reducing the potency of the findings.

Phase 1: Getting Started

This phase involves identifying an interest to me. I, who identifies as a White homosexual male, had an interest in the experiences of LGBT individuals, and was keen to understand the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual individuals in order to inform my work as a forensic clinical psychologist in training. Indeed, it has been suggested that meta-syntheses can be used to inform healthcare practices (Finfgeld-Connett, 2018). I conducted initial searches of the existing literature on this topic area, which confirmed that there was a limited number of empirical research studies that had been completed. This led to the development of the research question 'What are the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men?'.

Phase 2: Deciding what is Relevant to the Initial Interest

This phase involved a systemic approach to identifying and selecting the relevant literature. The search terms presented in Table 2 were developed and entered into a number of different databases in order to identify articles that were relevant to the research question. During the initial searches, the search terms Sexual*, LGB*, Gay, and Sexual Orientation

were also included (as part of the search string presented in line 1), however, this resulted in too large a number of articles being returned. Additional searches were conducted through the inclusion of new, related search terms, with a combination of lines 1 and 2 returning articles that were most relevant to the research question. The search terms in line 3 were subsequently included in order to further refine the search strategy, and narrow down the scope of the articles being returned (following earlier searches returning articles that involved samples of children, lesbians and females).

Table 2

Database Search Terms

	Search terms or restrictions
1	Homosexual Man OR Homosexual Men OR Homosexual
	AND
2	Ethnic* OR Race OR Racial
	NOT
3	Child* OR Lesbian OR Female OR Woman OR Women

The following databases were searched: PsychInfo, PsychArticles, CINAHL, EMBASE and Web of Science. Whilst no cut-off dates were used, a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied (see Table 3). The PRISMA diagram (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & Prisma Group, 2009) outlines the steps that were taken to identify the final set of articles for inclusion in the meta-synthesis (see Figure 1).

Table 3

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion criteria
• Male • Adult (≥18 years of age) • Homosexual and ethnic minority • Qualitative methodology • Lived experiences of being of an ethnic minority homosexual individual • English • Peer-reviewed journal articles	• Reviews • Book chapters • Dissertations • Focus is not primarily on ethnicity and/or homosexuality experiences (e.g., focus on experiences of healthcare services, education and crime)

A total of eight articles were excluded following the review of the full text, resulting in 11 articles. The reasons for exclusion were: (i) primary focus of the article being on the construct of masculinity (n = 3), (ii) female participants forming part of the sample (n = 2), (iii) White participants forming part of the sample (n = 1), (iv) Lesbians forming part of the sample (n = 1), and (v) data being derived primarily from observations and conversations with participants (n = 1). A further two articles were identified through the reference lists of the articles. These two articles were reviewed, and included in the final set of articles after applying the inclusion criteria, resulting in a final set of 13 articles.

The 13 articles were assessed for their quality using the NICE quality appraisal checklist (NICE, 2012). Four out of the 13 articles did not mention an explicit analytic strategy, and the quality of these studies was therefore rated as ‘Poor’. Subsequently, these studies scored lower for questions related to analysis (i.e., “Is the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?”; “Is the analysis reliable?”). For these studies, it was also found that there was limited information provided around data collection (e.g., duration of interviews), and the role of the researcher was not described. Consequently, this meant that few of the checklist

criteria had been fulfilled and the studies were therefore rated as 'Poor'. An overview of the quality appraisal per article is presented in Table 4.

During the literature search, no limitations were placed on data collection methods. Of the 13 articles, 10 had conducted interviews, two had conducted focus groups and one had conducted e-mail interviews. Using an interview approach enables the exploration of views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of individuals on specific matters. It provides detailed insights from individual participants and is particularly helpful for exploring sensitive topics, where participants may feel uncomfortable talking in front of others, such as in a focus group. Focus groups, however, are group discussions on a particular topic and are useful in generating information on collective views and/or shared experiences (Gill et al., 2008). It is understandable that the majority of the studies conducted interviews, considering the sensitive nature of the research topic.

Of the 13 articles included, five were from the USA, four from the UK, two from China, one from the Philippines and one from Australia. These five different countries will have their own differences in education, socio-economic status, government structures and prevailing religions. In turn, this will have differing impacts on the participants within the studies and subsequently influence their interpretation of their own ethnicity and homosexuality. For example, a Black participant in the UK may have a different sense of their sexuality and ethnicity in comparison to a Black participant in the USA.

Positionality is important for social sciences researchers to consider. Positionality can be defined as an individual's world view and the position they adopt for research (Rowe, 2014). This includes ontological assumptions, which are an individual's beliefs about the nature of social reality, and epistemological assumptions, which are an individual's beliefs about the nature of knowledge (Gary & Holmes, 2020). These assumptions can influence

how research is conducted, its outcomes and results, and also interpretation and understanding of other research they read (Gary & Holmes, 2020; Rowe, 2014). It is important for researchers to use a reflexive approach in understanding their position, as social sciences researchers cannot be fully separated from society to be able to take an objective stance to their research. They are part of the society they are seeking to study (Gary & Holmes, 2020).

As a White homosexual male, I have very little understanding of what it is like to be of an ethnic minority, however I am intrigued by their experiences of homosexuality and how they may be different from mine. I believe that homosexual individuals should live liberal lives, free from homophobia and discrimination. I approached this research from an outsider stance, due to feeling different from the ethnic minority groups I was studying. I believed that this outsider stance would enable me to be less biased in the interpretation of participant quotes to be able to see the overall structure or 'bigger picture'. However, a disadvantage to being an outsider to the research is that 'cultural' or linguistic jargon may be misunderstood or misinterpreted, and so rich data may be lost in the process (Gary & Holmes, 2020). I also have a social constructivist stance, whereby I believe that individuals construct their own realities in their mind, and there are therefore many realities. I am expecting the participants in this meta-synthesis to have a different understanding of their ethnic and sexual identities, which have been shaped by societal influences. My social constructivist stance has been influenced by my professional life as a trainee psychologist, whereby I provide psychological treatments for service users. I have found that individuals may experience the same event but develop their own understanding of it, shaped by their own previous experiences. These understandings may be different from others.

In research studies, positionality can be identified by three areas: (1) the subject under investigation, (2) the research participants, and (3) the research context and process (Gary & Holmes, 2020). Ethnicity and homosexuality can be considered as a social construct (Herdt, 2018) – individuals construct their own understanding of these, and it can be assumed that these studies will also have a social constructivist stance. Additionally, the researcher's positionality should be considered in comparison to the population they are studying and particular attention will be paid to if they are considered an 'insider' or 'outsider' to the participants. This is usually done by an explicit statement of their positionality. An 'insider' is a researcher who is considered similar to the population they are studying, for example a White homosexual male interviewing White homosexual men. An 'outsider' is a researcher who is considered different to the population they are studying (Gary & Holmes, 2020). This will be considered for each of the 13 studies included in the review, and reflected further in the discussion.

Figure 1

PRISMA Diagram of the Steps Taken to Identify Studies for Inclusion in the Review

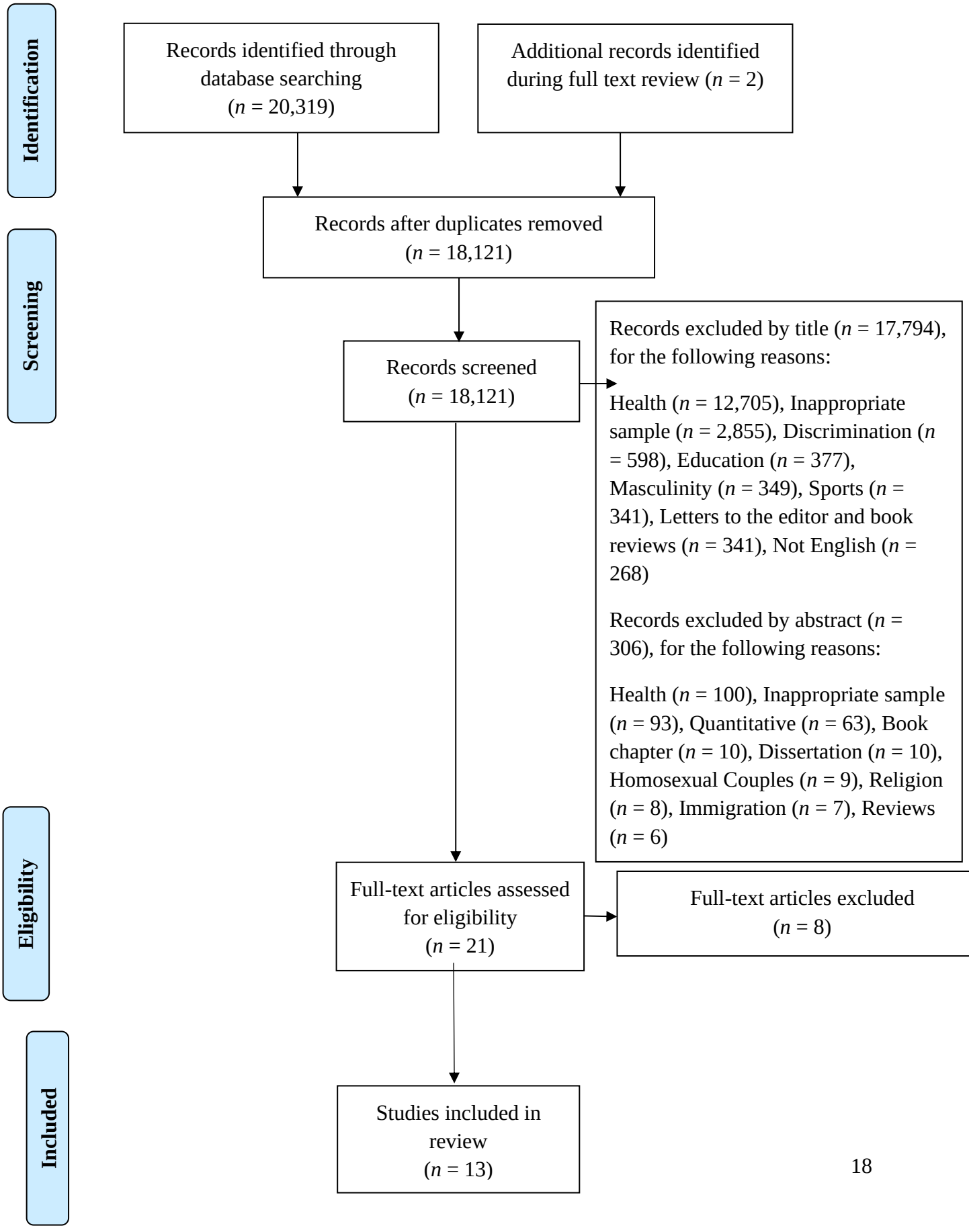


Table 4

Characteristics of Studies Included in Review

Main author, year of publication and location	Aim(s) of study	Participants	Data collection and analysis	Quality rating	**Main themes** *(Subthemes)* and findings
1. Anderson, 2009 UK	Exploring the identities of gay Caribbean men in the UK.	*N* = 10, Age range: 26-61, African Descent. Recruited after participants completed a questionnaire from another study	Interviews and analysis unknown	Poor	**Heterosexism; Discovering sexuality; Coming out; Identity; Religion; Regret; Marriage and children; Policing homosexuality** (*No Flaunting; Performing masculinity; The 'down-low'; Linguistic codes);* **Acceptance; Gay life in the Caribbean and the UK.** Overall, participants described experiencing fragmented and conflicting identities, regret and disappointment at their homosexuality, and a conflict between their Christian beliefs and their sexuality. The men shared that they live in a predominately heterosexual culture and police their own and other gay men's behaviour in order to appear heterosexual.
2. Baytan, 2000 Philippines	Exploring the intersection of sexuality and ethnicity in South-East	*N* = 10, Age range: 23-47, Chinese Filipino.	Interviews and analysis unknown	Poor	**Being Chinese; Being Intsik; De-sinicisation and homosexuality; Ethnicity and sexual partnerships; Language, ethnicity and sexuality.** Participants described a strong sense of being Chinese, whilst also experiencing a double minority as an ethnic minority and a homosexual. Participants described that being Chinese meant they

	Asian gay men.	Recruited by referral, friendship networks, visiting homosexual spaces, and snowballing			had to present themselves as heterosexual. Partner choice was influenced by ethnicity, age and social class, more specifically, by avoiding dating men of a similar ethnicity (as this was seen as incestuous), and preferring the date those of similar class.
3. Bowleg, 2012 USA		*N* = 12, Age range: 21-44, Black. Recruited from advertisements placed in LGBT newspapers	Interviews and Inductive	Good	**Negative stereotypes about Black men and Black gay men; Racial microaggressions** ***(Racism and racial microaggressions in general; Racial microaggressions in White LGB communities)*****; Heterosexism in Black communities; Acting masculine to avoid suspicions of being gay or bisexual; Introspection and psychological growth; Freedom from traditional societal conventions; Freedom of "not being comfortable"; Intersectionality; Social processes in shaping identities.** Participants described how they perceived their Black identity as their primary identity, before sexuality. Participants described being treated as stereotypes of their ethnicity, and experiencing racism related to this (e.g., being assumed to be a thug or a thief). Racism was also experienced in the White gay community, due to the participant's ethnicity, and participants described a strong sense of heterosexism in the Black communities. Specifically, in Black communities, homosexuality is generally not accepted, and it is assumed that all Black men are heterosexual. It was also reported that homosexuals were seen as less of a man in Black communities. As a result of this, participants reported acting masculine to avoid

						suspicions that they were homosexual. However, it was highlighted that the participants' homosexual and ethnic identity prompted them to introspect about themselves and society, which contributed towards psychological growth. Finally, participants noted that they felt free from the restraints of society, such as the expectation of having a family, and the relief felt associated with this.
4.	Christian, 2005 USA	To gain a deeper understanding of how Black gay men defined life satisfaction, and assessed their levels of life satisfaction.	*N* = 3, Age range: 30-33, Black. Recruited by snowballing, first participant known by researcher.	Interviews and Inductive Analysis	Fair	**Being Black** *(Difficulty; Manhood; Relationship; Self-identification; Support)***; Body image** *(DL; Perfect life; Satisfaction; Social integration; Who out to)***; Consequences** *(Fem, Preference versus lifestyle; Self-concept; Spirituality).* Participants in this study shared the incompatibilities of being Black and gay, and experiencing a double life, whereby they would publicly appear heterosexual and have a secretive gay life (known as 'Down Low' or 'DL'). The men shared how they mainly got their support from other Black gay men who were also of a DL status.
5.	Chung, 2006 USA	Exploring the development of racial and sexual identities among Asian American gay men.	*N* = 10, Age range: 24-34, Asian American. Recruited after participants completed a	Interviews and Constant Comparative Methodology	Good	**Personal Background** *(Immigration; Familial emphasis on education; Education and immigration; Reasons for immigration; Conservativeness in Asian culture)***; Coming out** *(Prior to coming out; Loneliness and isolation; From shame to pride; Coming out to parents; Parental reactions; Cultural differences in parental reactions; Coming out to others)***; Being Asian in the United States** *(Being different; Ethnic awareness and pride; Discrimination against Asians; Job discrimination against Asians)***; Being gay in the United States** *(Discrimination against gay people)***; Multiple identities** *(Asian culture's intolerance of homosexuality; Cultural*

			questionnaire from another study.			*differences in attitudes towards homosexuality; Differences within the United States; Minimising racial differences within gay community; Gay Asian image in America; Interracial dating; Isolation; Social support; Fitting in White gay community; Fitting in Asian heterosexual community' acculturative stress; Most important identity).* Participants described recognising same-sex attraction during early adolescence, and experiencing loneliness and isolation as a result of this. Participants reported that they experienced shame and internalised homophobia, and dated females in order to appear heterosexual. Some participants reported directly coming out to their parents, with negative reactions such as anger and verbal abuse. They also described double discrimination, whereby they would experience discrimination for being an ethnic and a sexual minority, whilst living in the USA. This was deemed to be stressful for participants. They reported difficulties of being accepted into the White gay community due to their ethnicity.
6.	Doyal, 2008 UK	Exploring the development of gay Black African men's sexual identity in their African countries of origin, and how these	*N* = 8, Age range: 18-40, Black African Recruited through snowballing	Interviews and analysis unknown	Poor	**Development of a sexual identity: The early years; Living in London: Managing discrimination and diversity; Managing sexual health; Reconciling sexuality and faith**. Participants described early experiences of guilt and feeling abnormal, especially living in homophobic communities and families, upon realising their homosexuality in early puberty. The men described a contradiction between being Black or African and desiring men, which sometimes led to feelings of isolation and confusion. Some participants wondered if the desire to have sex with

		identities were influenced upon moving to London.				other men made them White. All participants described feeling liberated, valued and normalised when they moved to the UK; however, they still experienced internal tensions between identifying as an African and homosexual. Finally, some participants reported their faith to be very important to them, but still experiencing a tension between their faith and homosexuality.
7.	Jaspal, 2012 UK	To compare British Indian gay men and British Pakistani gay men in their understanding of their sexual, religious and ethnic identities. To explore how they cope with their identity threat.	*N* = 15 (*M* = 21.4, *SD* = 3.2), Indian and Pakistani Recruited from snowballing	Interviews and Thematic Analysis	Good	**Identifying incompatibilities in the self-concept; Family, culture and interpersonal relations; Situating the prospect of marriage in life narratives; Maintaining a sense of belonging.** British Pakistani gay men reported that their gay identity was undesirable, sinful and wrong, with some reporting a desire to become heterosexual. Participants also experienced sadness, shame and discomfort in relation to this, and reported that homosexuality was not accepted within their social circles and family. Participants reported a pressure to marry a woman, which was sometimes viewed as a logical step forward. Participants therefore described a clashing between their ethnic and sexual identity, sometimes coping by ignoring their homosexual identity, and avoiding conditions for eligibility for marriage, such as securing employment and purchasing property. Participants also described viewing their gay identity as a phase. Coming out to others was seen as detrimental, threatening their sense of belonging in their religious or ethnic groups who were their sources of support.

8.	Li, 2010 China	Exploring how Chinese gay men negotiated Chinese heterosexual society, and constructed their sexual identity.	*N* = 11, Age range: 19-49, Chinese. Recruited from snowballing, homosexual websites, contacts within homosexual spaces	Interviews and Inductive Analysis	Good	**Establishing non-homosexual identities; Accumulating a homosexual identity; Exploring an independent homosexual life; Flexible sexual identities; Discourse as a strategic resource.** Participants described complicated journeys with their sexual identity, and being aware of their sexuality at a young age. Some of the men reported that heterosexual marriage was natural and a social obligation that should not be challenged, sometimes supressing their homosexual desires to marry and appear heterosexual. Participants sought independence by seeking out other gay men in homosexual groups. Their identity was considered flexible, whereby aspects of their identity would take priority depending on the social situation.
9.	McKeown, 2010 UK	Exploring the identities and discourses in relation to being both gay and from an ethnic minority background.	*N* = 47, Age range: 18-52, Black, Indian and Pakistani Recruited from online advertisements on homosexual websites, advertising in sexual health clinics and	E-mail Interviews and Content Analysis	Fair	**Sexuality and cultural background** *(Black African and Caribbean; South Asian)***; Discrimination and objectification** *(Black African and Caribbean; South Asian)***; Desire and attraction.** All participants shared that being gay and from their ethnic background was more problematic and challenging than for White British gay men. Black participants reported that homosexuality was not accepted by their families and communities, considering that both being Black and gay is incompatible and shameful. Homosexuality, reported by Black participants, was considered a White disease. Black participants reported being sexually objectified, being only desired for their black skin and hyper-masculinity, and rarely being seen for something romantically or long-term. South Asian men also reported conflict between their ethnic background and sexual orientation. This conflict was magnified by the pressure

		homosexual spaces			to marry and have children. South Asian gay men reported feeling excluded from the gay scene. Many participants reported being attracted to White men.
10. Mao, 2002 Australia	Exploring how gay Asian men in Sydney manage both gay and Asian identities, in the context of individualism-collectivism.	*N* = 19, Age range: early 20s to late 40s, Asian background: Chinese, South-East or East Asian origin. Recruited through homosexual Asian men's network of the AIDS Council of New South Wales	Focus Groups and unknown analysis	Poor	**Asian cultural identity and collectivist Asian cultures; Gay sexual identity and individualist Australian culture; Identity conflict and identity integration.** Participants described having a strong sense of being Asian and belonging to that social group, noting that good relationships with family were important to them. The men described a conflict between having Asian conservative norms and observing individualistic behaviours in the gay community, describing this as radical behaviour. Participants described how disclosure of their gay identity to others was difficult to family members, feeling a pressure to keep their gay identity hidden. Internally, participants described how the presence of their Asian identity makes integrating their sexual identity difficult, and the conflict they experienced in this process.
11. Operario, 2008 USA	Exploring two conflicting social identities, being Asian	*N* = 25, Age range: 18-39, Filipino, Chinese,	Interviews and Inductive Analysis	Good	**Development of dual Asian Pacific Islander-gay identity; Shifting and compartmentalising identities; Balancing Asian Pacific Islander-gay identity**. Participants described firstly being aware of their ethnic identity, followed by their gay identity. This was a source of tension and

	Pacific Islander and being gay, in the way that they intersect.	Taiwanese, and Vietnamese Recruited from snowballing			discomfort, which was managed by prioritising one identity over another depending on social context. Participants described not necessarily needing to come out to family, as it was a bid to protect their family and prevent disharmony.
12. Vega, 2012 USA	Exploring how Latino gay men negotiate their ethnic, sexual and social identity.	*N* = 28, Age range: 20+, Latino/Hispanic Recruited from Latino LGBT services and snowballing	Focus Groups and Inductive Analysis	Fair	**Identity formation & integration for Latino gay men** *(Holistic identity recognition; Sexual identity formation; Ethnic identity formation)***; Venues for Expression & defining Community** *(Venues for expression; Defining community).* Participants described wanting to be seen as a whole person, with both their ethnicity and their homosexuality, and described difficulties in integrating into the LGBT community due to their ethnicity. The impact of this was that participants did not know how to be as gay men. Participants described difficulties in expressing their sexual identity, due to it not being accepted in their culture. Participants expressed a desire to have physical spaces where both ethnicity and sexuality could be acknowledged.
13. Zhongxin, 2006 China	To examine how Chinese gay men define their own sexual identity, and how their sexual	*N* = 30, Age range: 18+, Chinese Recruited through a	Interviews and Thematic Analysis	Poor	**Sexual identity** *(Terms of self-identification)***; Understanding sexual orientation** *(Identifying oneself as a man who desires men)***; Representing identity in different contexts** *(Natal family; Conjugal family; The straight world; The tongzhi circle).* Participants described their gay identity as being a member of the tongzhi community (‘someone in the circle’), or using the word ‘gay’, as these were thought to be unknown to heterosexual

	identity is managed in different social contexts.	charity and social networks	individuals. It was thought that those in the tongzhi community were able to support each other. The men reported becoming aware of their homosexual orientation when they were 5-20 years old, describing early experiences of sexual encounters with other (usually older) men. These experiences were accompanied by confusion and negative attitudes towards their sexual identity. Participants described not coming out to family members, as there was no reason for their parents to know, and they did not want to inflict unnecessary suffering. Participants also reported concealing their sexual identity amongst heterosexual friends. There were familial pressures for have heterosexual marriages, which was seen as incompatible with their homosexuality. Participants who were married reported distant and unhappy relationships with their wives, and engaging in secretive homosexual lives.

Note. Studies were rated Poor, Fair and Good in correspondence with the NICE (2012) checklist final ratings of -, + and ++ respectively.

Phase 3: Reading the Studies

This phase included reading the studies repeatedly in detail to truly understand what the participants and authors are stating (Noblit & Hare, 1988). The data extraction table, which includes a summary of the studies, can be seen in Table 4. A total of 228 male participants across 13 studies were included in the present meta-synthesis. For this phase, I also created a spreadsheet and extracted first- and second-order data and themes in preparation for the analysis. First-order data refers to direct excerpts from the participants, presented as participant quotes in the results section (Atkins et al., 2008). Second-order data refers to the researcher's interpretations of the participant quotes (Atkins et al., 2008), and these data were found in the relevant results and discussion sections of the articles (see Appendix 1).

Phase 4: Determining How the Studies are Related

This phase involves determining the relationship between the studies that were analysed. Specifically, Noblit and Hare (1988) suggest to create a list of key metaphors, phrases, ideas and/or concepts when reading each account to determine how the studies are 'put-together'. I firstly noticed that some of the names of the themes appeared to be similar across articles, and therefore considered these as initial theme ideas for the analysis. For example, several articles had themes related to 'coming out' (Anderson et al., 2009; Chung & Szymanski, 2007) and 'who out to' (Christian, 2005), and I therefore considered 'Coming out' as a theme. The other themes initially identified in this way were 'Masculinity' and 'Switching identities' (see Appendix 2 for an overview of the thematic structure).

Phase 5: Translating the Studies Into One Another

This phase involved comparing concepts and their interactions in one account with the metaphors or concepts and interactions in another account (Noblit & Hare, 1988). I began by reading through the first- and second-order data on the spreadsheet and considering the

idiomatic meaning. That is, what meaning the participant or researcher were trying to communicate. I then began to loosely group data by similarity in meaning. For example, some first- and second-order data indicated references to feelings of depression, fear and hatred in relation to homosexuality, which were grouped under the theme 'Feelings associated with being homosexual'. The themes identified in Phase 4 were also used as initial subordinate themes, and further data was identified in line with these themes. Eventually, all data were allocated to a subordinate theme and placed on the spreadsheet (see Appendix 3).

As the articles were being compared, initial broad groupings of themes and data were gradually refined by merging and collapsing categories. I continually reviewed the themes and the data within them, sometimes collapsing themes together or moving data into another theme. For example, originally, there was a theme called 'Being homosexual means being feminine or a woman', and the data suggested that participants constructed homosexuality as being a woman or feminine. Considering that it was a small theme in itself, the theme was merged with 'Homosexual behavioural expectations', as on reflection, it appeared to be more related to participants' talk around how to behave as a homosexual man.

The thematic structure was reviewed by my academic supervisor, and shared with a meta-synthesis support group, which is facilitated by three qualitative researchers, two of whom are qualified clinical psychologists. This allowed me to clarify my own understanding of the themes, and enabled me to incorporate feedback from the group. The main feedback point related to the superordinate theme 'Surviving', which originally encompassed eight subordinate themes, and was therefore deemed too large. The superordinate theme was subsequently split into two superordinate themes, namely 'Surviving', which incorporated four subordinate themes related to behaviours homosexual men used to avoid danger and discrimination, and 'Living with others', which incorporated four subordinate themes related to homosexual men's experiences of how others perceived them (see Appendix 4).

Phase 6: Synthesising Translations

According to Noblit and Hare (1988), synthesis refers to making a whole into something more than the parts alone. This involves a higher-order interpretation and can be considered a third-order interpretation (Atkins et al., 2008). For this stage, I moved the subordinate themes into superordinate themes, and attached descriptions, subsequent interpretations, and the relevant meaning to them by considering the context to which they were related. For example, the two subordinate themes 'Homosexual behavioural expectations' and 'Wanting relationships' reflected that participants had some thoughts around how homosexual men should behave, pointing to a lack of ethnic minority homosexual role models, and a desire to have long-term relationships, possibly in a bid to normalise their sexuality. Participants therefore appeared to seek out ways in which to live comfortably and competently as a homosexual man, leading to the development of the superordinate theme 'Living as a homosexual man'.

Results

Phase 7 (Expressing the Synthesis) involves expressing the synthesis to various audiences (Noblit & Hare, 1988), and writing the findings up in such a way that they can be disseminated to others. It is hoped that the present meta-synthesis will reach a wider audience, and practitioners in particular, in order to inform current practice of working with ethnic minority homosexual men. A total of six themes, each encompassing one to three subordinate themes, were identified from the final set of articles. An overview of the themes is presented in Table 5, and each one is discussed in more detail thereafter.

Table 5

Superordinate and Subordinate Themes Identified

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes	Number of supporting studies
Intersectionality	Identities Blending Together*	7
	Identities Distinct and Separate**	7
Surviving	Appearing Heterosexual*	8
	Masculinity**	4
	Switching Identities*	7
	Secret Language**	5
Living with others	Homophobia*	6
	Racism*	6
	Social Circles**	7
	Family Influences*	9
Living as a homosexual man	Homosexual Behavioural Expectations*	10
	Wanting Relationships**	4
Making sense of Homosexuality	Looking to God for answers**	4
	Coming Out**	9
	Feelings associated with Homosexual Identity*	9
	How did I become homosexual?**	6

Societal influences	Collectivist vs Individualist**	3
	Western Influences*	7

Note. *Subordinate theme reported, **Subordinate theme not reported due to four or fewer studies supporting the theme and/or the majority of the studies supporting it being of poor quality.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality can be understood as the intersections between gender, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, race, social class, ethnicity and disability, and how people interweave these experiences to make sense of them (Meads et al., 2012).

Identities Blending Together

Asian American homosexual men described how their ethnicity and sexuality were blended together and thereby inseparable: "I don't know why it should be separate between Asian and gay. I'm out, I'm Asian; I'm dealing with both" (Chung & Syzmanski, 2006, p. 88). This was supported by a Filipino American participant in another study:

> They're [ethnic and sexual identity] part of my make-up, they're part of what makes me who I am. And, you know, they're both imbued with like, I don't know, you know, I mean they're just part of who I am. (Operario et al., 2008, p. 454)

This was also true for Black homosexual men in Bowleg's (2013) study who suggested that ethnicity and sexuality could not be considered separate identities: "Well it's hard for me to separate [my identities]. When I'm thinking of me, I'm thinking of all of them as me. Like once you've blended the cake you can't take the parts back to the main ingredients" (Bowleg, 2013, p. 758).

Furthermore, the same group of participants reported that they were at a double-disadvantage due to being both an ethnic and sexual minority (Bowleg, 2013). Although this was considered a disadvantage, Black homosexual men also highlighted advantages of being

both Black and homosexual, including improved awareness and introspection, when compared to heterosexuals (Bowleg, 2013):

> The combination of the two [identities; being Black and gay] has caused me to look a little deeper within myself and to find definition from within and also to just to love on a different level or beyond what people may think in terms of the stereotypes and judgements people make upon my life. (Bowleg, 2013, p. 762)

In addition, Black homosexual men described how they were first and foremost aware of their ethnicity, followed by their sexuality, which appeared to be related to their awareness of the former having developed earlier:

> I would say Black first just because I was more aware of that before I was aware of what being gay was all about, so I embrace that first. And although I can't really distinguish the two, I would say that I'm Black first. (Bowleg, 2013, p. 759)

Similarly, Operario et al. (2008) reported that many Asian Pacific Islander homosexual men talked about the importance of developing a strong Asian Pacific Islander identity before coming out, and noted that lacking a racial or ethnic identity could have detrimental consequences for them in a predominately White homosexual community. Overall, homosexual men appeared to develop a robust ethnic identity first before embarking on integrating a homosexual identity. This may involve building a strong social network or sense of self. Accounts of Black homosexual men reflect the constraints they experience within society, such as being of a double minority and the disadvantages associated with this, while at the same time being able to be themselves once they have come to terms with their reality.

Surviving

This theme relates to how participants survived in a hostile and homophobic environment by acting in a particular way around others, including those who also identified as homosexual.

Appearing Heterosexual

Black homosexual men described how their lives were dominated by heterosexism, with them frequently engaging in heterosexual relationships before same-sex attraction was acknowledged, in order to avoid being accused of being homosexual (Anderson et al., 2009). This was sometimes described as the 'down low', where Black homosexual men would concurrently engage in heterosexual and homosexual relationships at the same time (Anderson et al., 2009). The pressure to appear heterosexual was described by a Black participant as follows:

> It was like a compulsory thing to do it. All the guys around me, in the same community, they got their girls, they got their baby mother…they always pick on guys who are not seen with a woman, you know. (Anderson et al., 2009, p. 324)

For Chinese homosexual men, Baytan (2000) reported that the concept of 'Chineseness' is predicated on heterosexuality by, for example, marrying a Chinese female partner in order to fulfil their procreative and entrepreneurial duties. This was considered a natural and social obligation (Li et al., 2010), and homosexuality was seen as contaminating this obligation (Baytan, 2000). Similar to Black homosexual men, Chinese homosexual men stated that they tried to date females in order to appear heterosexual, following the pressure to pursue marriage (Baytan, 2000; Chung & Szymanski, 2006). Indeed, Li et al. (2010) found that some Chinese homosexual men were married despite engaging in homosexual relationships, and hiding these from their wives.

Indian and Pakistani homosexual men also described experiencing pressure to get married, and how this caused them great discomfort. One Indian homosexual man noted: "You reach an age where like, say now my folks start chatting about 'oh one day you'll be married and you'll have kids'. When I was younger they did like used to say it and it made me uncomfortable." (Jaspal, 2012, p. 773). Indeed, Jaspal (2012) reported that participants in

their study also considered marriage a ‘logical’ step forward in the future, despite identifying as homosexual. This may be related to cultural norms, according to which Indian and Pakistani men are expected to have heterosexual marriages.

For men of both Asian and Black ethnicities, their lives were dominated by heteronormativity in terms of the pressure to marry a woman, leading to them living out a heterosexual identity in order to blend in, and conceal their true sexual orientation, namely homosexuality. However, both Chinese and Black homosexual men engaged in homosexual relationships at the same time in an effort to present as heterosexual. There therefore appears to be a drive to express one’s homosexual identity despite the risk of violating heteronormative culture norms, and being ostracised or rejected as a result thereof.

Switching Identities

Chinese homosexual men talked about how they would choose between ‘being a man’, and assuming their heterosexual or homosexual identity respectively, particularly when not being around homosexual locations: “As a man, however, you must be a man and stand in men’s position when you are out [of homosexual venues].” (Li et al., 2010, p. 409). Another Chinese participant described going to another ‘world’, where they were able to express their homosexual selves: “In the gay circle, everybody knows everybody, so if you want to laugh, you laugh, if you want to walk a certain way, you walk a certain way. It’s like returning to a world that belongs to you.” (Zhongxin et al., 2006, p. 11).

Chinese homosexual men in another study further expanded on this, explaining how they would change the presentation of their sexual identity depending on the situation:

> Meaning, if I’m in a room with white men, I immediately acknowledge to myself that I’m the only person of colour in the room and I think the difference is also marked in their eyes. And the same thing with walking through Chinatown here, or the San Gabriel Valley in Los Angeles with queer friends. (Operario et al., 2008, p. 455)

This was also true for a Black homosexual man in another study who was mindful of the fact that they have to 'pass' as heterosexual when away from homosexual spaces:

> I personally don't go out in the Black community at large and portray myself as a gay person, speaking in gay lingo for example or acting in a way that would bring attention to myself, that would form suspicion that I would be a gay person if I'm by myself…I'm very conscious of it…of feeling like I have to, in a way, pass. (Bowleg, 2013, p. 762)

The quotes so far also indicate that appropriate physical spaces were required in order to be able to express one's identity. An Asian American participant talked about how this was easier in a city compared to a small town:

> It's easier [to be gay or Asian] in a big city than a small, rural town. Being Asian in a big city is not bad. If you are anything but straight in a small town, you sure would stand out. (Chung & Szymanski, 2006, p. 86)

Vega et al. (2012) reported similar findings for Latino homosexual men who valued having local 'gay establishments' that were homosexual- and Latino-friendly in order to be able to express their homosexual identity. Furthermore, Black homosexual men talked about their difficulties in finding a location where they would be able to express both their ethnicity and sexuality:

> I feel comfortable with being a gay man there, but I don't necessarily feel really comfortable being a Black man…I would not go right out and accuse them of being racist, but I think there are aspects of African American life or Black life or Black character that they are uncomfortable with…There are few places that I can go where I can feel completely whole; in the African American communities as well as the gay White communities, as well as at work. (Bowleg, 2013, p. 761)

Finally, Christian (2005) reported that the Black homosexual men who participated in their study were not able to openly acknowledge any homosexual affiliations when in the presence of their family and friends. Similarly, Zhongxin et al. (2006) described how Chinese participants generally had to conceal their homosexual identity among their heterosexual friends. Overall, it therefore appears that ethnic minority homosexual men are mindful of their environment, and adapt accordingly. Within homosexual spaces, such as gay clubs, they are able to express their sexual identity while having to suppress their ethnic identity. Outside of homosexual spaces, ethnic minority homosexual men felt pressure to appear heterosexual in front of others, and suppress their sexual identity. This highlights that there are few spaces where ethnic minority homosexual men feel able to fully express themselves. Given the importance some of the participants appeared to attach to this, having dedicated physical spaces may therefore help ethnic minority homosexual men to feel whole by blending both of their identities together.

Living with Others

This theme refers to participants' experiences of discrimination from others and family, including homophobia and racism, as well as the support they received from various social circles.

Homophobia

Black homosexual men described a fear of being found out that they were homosexual, and being harmed when actively engaging in sexual encounters with other men (Anderson et al., 2009): "They had this guy who used to keep [host] a gay party every Saturday night there and they found out there were gay people there, and they caught [sic] the place on fire! The guy had to run away." (Anderson et al., 2009, p. 319). Black homosexual men further described the homophobia they experienced when their lifestyles deviated from those of the heteronormative society, such as getting a girlfriend:

> It was a nosey assumption that people make because you don't have a girlfriend, because you live on your own…which is what [my] neighbour said. 'He's living on his own! And this man come [sic] into his house! So he must be a batty man! (Anderson et al., 2009, p. 319)

One Black homosexual participant experienced direct homophobia whilst walking down a street in England:

> I was walking down Oxford Street with my partner, it was in the evening so we were just going for a walk and then this kid just shouted 'batty boy' and I was shocked and just turned around and said 'yeah, that's what I am…and what are you?' And he just hissed at me and then walked off. (Doyal et al., 2008, p. 182)

Furthermore, Black homosexual participants highlighted that they were more likely to experience homophobia from other Black people: "Most people tend to think of the Black community as very homophobic, and to a certain extent they are." (Bowleg, 2013, p. 761).

> Most people who give me these troubles they're either Somalian or from Jamaica. It's fascinating…whoever is going to call me names or whoever is going to threaten me will have to come from those two countries. It is bad to say but it is true. (Doyal et al., 2008, p. 182)

It therefore appears that homophobia was a central issue for Black homosexual men who participated in the studies that were included in the present meta-synthesis. In particular, their experiences ranged from direct homophobia to death threats. Similarly, Asian participants also shared their experiences relating to homophobia: "I still feel if I see gay men holding hands and kissing [in public], I'll be afraid for their lives. It would be great if we could do that." (Chung & Szymanski, 2006, p. 86). Another Filipino American participant further elaborated:

> It's hard to be gay no matter who you are, whether you're Asian or not, those cultural baggages exist, whether you're Asian, or whether you're white, or whether you're Latino, or whether you're black. Homophobia and heterosexism is not limited to the Asian community. (Operario et al., 2008, p. 457)

Chinese homosexual men, from another study, described a desire to be seen as equal: "We have our own conscience and moral standards…I hope the homosexual population can obtain more rights earlier…homosexuals have to be independent and seek their sexual freedom, and live as real human beings." (Li et al., 2010, p. 407). The selected quotes reflect a depth of thought related to homophobia. This depth of thought is likely to have come from direct experiences of homophobia, observations through others, or the media within the participants' culture. Overall, homosexual participants of various ethnicities all referred to experiences of homophobia, and the fear of being harmed.

Racism

Chung and Szymanski (2006) reported that only five of the seven Asian American participants who took part in their study experienced both negative and positive responses to being an Asian American in a White homosexual community, highlighting the difficulties of being integrated into the homosexual community: "To Chinese, I am too American; to Americans, I'm too Chinese. You cannot be accepted by the gay group and you cannot be accepted by the Asian group. It is a challenge and sometimes it can be so depressing." (Chung & Szymanski, 2006, p. 88).

Black homosexual men predominantly experienced discrimination in relation to their ethnicity, reporting that they were often viewed by others as unsuccessful (McKeown et al., 2010). In addition, Black homosexual participants reported being taken advantage of sexually due to their physical attributes.

> I have been taken advantage of sexually by some men who I've later come to believe are attracted to black/mixed-race men because of the myth of the 'big black dick' and the 'sweet black ass'… They were generally interested in me only for sex and wanted no interaction that was not on a physical level. (McKeown et al., 2010, p. 849)

South Asian homosexual men also described experiencing rejection due to their ethnicity, and the physical attributes associated with it, referring to users on dating apps being explicitly racist about their preferences by stating 'No Asians' on their profiles (McKeown et al., 2010):

> Asian men of all sorts are considered the bottom of the list in sexual hierarchy preferences. This is because people look at us being ugly, short and have a small dick so in short we [are the opposite] of what gay men should be…the total opposite from the cover of gay magazines. (McKeown et al., 2010, p. 851)

According to Bowleg (2013), many White LGBTs were uncomfortable with Black LGBTs, and expected Black LGBTs to assimilate or otherwise accommodate in order to be accepted. This is reflected in a quote by a Black homosexual participant: "Most of the time [White gay communities], want you to give up the Black part of you." (Bowleg, 2013, p. 761).

Overall, ethnic minority homosexual participants described the difficulties they encountered when integrating into the White gay community. Specifically, White homosexual men were reported to make assumptions about physical attributes of other ethnicities, and were outwardly rejecting of certain ethnicities on dating platforms.

Family Influences

Black homosexual men described the discomfort they experienced growing up in a family where homophobia was present, and being taught that homosexuality was wrong and shameful (Anderson et al., 2009; McKeown et al., 2010):

> I mean my earliest experience I think was when there was a gay guy on the telly and my sister said to my mum ‘oh what would you do if you thought (respondent’s name) was gay?’ at which point I almost went white with shock. My mum just turned round and said ‘I'd stick a red hot poker right up his ass’. I mean, that, for me, sent a very powerful message that I can’t tell anybody who I am. (Doyal et al., 2008, p. 178)

One Chinese homosexual man reported concerns about talking to his family about homosexuality almost as a way of protecting them: “I can never talk to my family about my lifestyle because I don’t want to hurt them”. (Baytan, 2000, p. 397), and other Asian American participants stated that they never explicitly told their parents that they were homosexual, even though they believed that their parents knew – there was an avoidance in talking about sexuality with their family in order to avoid confrontation (Chung & Szymanski, 2006). Other Chinese homosexual men also reported similar experiences in other studies (Operario et al., 2008; Zhongxin et al., 2006). Indeed, it was found that family was central to some Chinese homosexual participants’ lives:

> I think the Asian culture is so important that it makes you feel you belong to a group. The sense of belonging to family is significant. You can still be independent. But having a family means that you have something to back you up. You feel a lot stronger [about] which way you are heading to. As part of a reasonable sized minority in a White society, I believe, being part of the family is very important to me. (Mao et al., 2002, p. 423)

While ‘coming out’ to family may be considered a direct approach, other Chinese homosexual men used indirect approaches to facilitate a conversation about their sexual identity. For example, one Chinese homosexual man left a book on homosexuality for his mother to discover; however, this was met with denial or incomprehension (Zhongxin et al.,

2006). In addition, Chinese homosexual men also avoided discussions around heterosexual marriage in a bid to conceal their homosexuality:

> I never talk about these problems (marriage) with my family. However, it has got to be the point that I really have to talk about it. The main thing is that I am independent. At the very worst, I can always just keep hiding it from them. Anyway, there are many people now who don't marry at all, or marry very late. (Zhongxin et al., 2006, p. 8)

This quote illustrates how the participant presented alternative reasons for why someone may not get married, possibly as an attempt to justify his own behaviour, as well as offering a more socially acceptable version to his own reality, thereby further concealing his homosexual identity from others. Similarly, Jaspal (2012) reported that for Pakistani homosexual men, disclosing homosexuality may result in being shunned from the community, with Indian participants describing difficulties in expressing their sexuality in family settings:

> Everyday being gay is like getting harder for me because I can just see it in my head – mum is crying, dad is crying too and like just thinking 'he can't be my son' and my brothers would be like freaking out that I'm queer…I wouldn't be the same guy for them, the same son, or same brother or whatever. I couldn't handle it. (Jaspal, 2012, p. 773)

Chinese (Mao et al., 2002; Zhongxin et al., 2006), South Asian (Jaspal, 2012; McKeown et al., 2010), and Black (Doyal et al., 2008) homosexual participants all experienced family pressure to marry and have children. This may have been augmented by the fact that they knew that they would struggle to fulfil their family's wishes as a result of identifying as homosexual. Indian (Jaspal, 2012) and Black (Doyal et al., 2008) homosexual men coped with this pressure through avoidance, and engaging in other activities:

> Cos at 24…everybody understands, even your parents understand that you're still studying, they actually try to say 'please finish your education before you begin to look for a woman or things like that'. So they're actually happy that I'm concentrating on the studies (laughs). Not knowing that something is not quite....right (laughs). But the time will come that I might have to tell them but I need to be more stable than this. (Doyal et al., 2008, p. 181)

This quote illustrates how the participant has reflected on the possibility of telling their family, however, that this would only occur at a moment in time when they would be in a better place themselves. These conditions may reflect physical needs, such as living away from the family, and/or emotional needs, such as feeling emotionally robust enough to 'come out'.

Overall, homosexual participants of various ethnicities experienced challenges and difficulties in terms of expressing their sexual identity within their families, and pressures to marry in order to fulfil family obligations and avoid bringing shame to the family. Participants tended to manage this pressure by avoidance, and/or presenting socially acceptable reasons for not marrying. Participants may have also used this approach in order to maintain positive relationships with their families, which represents a key source of social support for them.

Making sense of Homosexuality

Across studies, homosexual participants described their journal of making sense of and understanding their sexual identity. Some participants turned to God, others 'came out', and again others wondered if past abusive experiences led to them becoming homosexual. This process of making sense of their sexual identity gave rise to difficult feelings.

Feelings Associated with Identifying as Homosexual

Black homosexual men described experiencing depression and despair when coming to terms with their homosexual identity. These feelings usually arose in the context of their religion, and were related to regret, guilt, shame and frustration in terms of wishing to change their sexuality: "I was so depressed. That's why I asked God, why me? It can't be!" (Anderson et al., 2009, p. 320). Pakistani homosexual men also reported that their homosexual identity brought pain, grief, discomfort and no prospect of future happiness: "I know what I'm doing is wrong…if I could choose I wouldn't be gay…I know I'm going to hell for this… [I feel] sad, really ashamed, not comfortable or happy in my life, totally like my worlds are clashing." (Jaspal, 2012, p. 771).

In the study by Vega et al., (2013), Latino homosexual men reported wanting to be seen as a whole person and human being, suggesting that they did not feel complete, which gave rise to difficult feelings such as sadness. Furthermore, Asian American and Chinese participants described feeling hatred towards themselves upon realising that they were homosexual (Chung & Szymanski, 2006; Mao et al., 2002):

> I have been through a stage I actually hated myself. I accepted myself afterwards. When I was exposed to gay community and gay scenes, I realised that I was recognised a gay Asian. Then I began to hate myself again. I'm alright now. (Mao et al., 2002, p. 425)

They further described feeling lonely due to not knowing other homosexual men: "I felt so lonely because I did not know anyone else who was gay." (Chung & Szymanski, 2006, p. 82), and some even considered suicide as they struggled to accept their sexuality (Chung & Szymanski, 2006; Zhongxin et al., 2006). Chinese homosexual participants in Zhongxin et al.'s (2006) study further described themselves as "abnormal" (p. 7) or suffering from a "moral problem" (p. 7): "This is a natural mistake of the DNA. You can't change it, you can only try to improve the quality of your own life. God was not fair to me. I am damaged

goods. It is a tragedy." (Zhongxin et al., 2006, p. 7). In light of these difficult feelings, Pakistani homosexual men predominantly coped with these by means of denial: "It kind of feels like it'll get better if I like get with a woman and have kids. I might forget about guys and my life before." (Jaspal, 2012, p. 775).

Overall, through coming to terms with and developing an awareness of their sexual identity, ethnic minority homosexual participants described experiencing various difficult feelings, such as sadness, grief and shame. It is evident here that they saw themselves as 'damaged goods', and felt punished by God, with some merely coping by considering suicide and being denial. In light of the severity of some of the feelings described by participants across studies, it is possible that other ethnic minority homosexual men completed and died by suicide in order to put an end to these feelings.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

The aim of the meta-synthesis presented here was to address the question of "What are the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men?". Overall, the findings have highlighted that ethnic minority homosexual men experience a range of abuse and invalidation, with their accounts illustrating how heterosexuality is promoted across cultures and societies that ultimately have a substantial psychological impact on this population. Negative experiences of abuse predominantly involved homophobia and death threats, making it difficult for men to truly be able to be themselves, and seek ways to express aspects of their identity. Participants reported attending homosexual spaces, such as gay clubs, to express their sexual identity, however, were often met with racism, which subsequently made them uncomfortable to express their ethnic identity. Taken together, this was described by participants to have resulted in a range of difficult feelings, including sadness, loneliness,

grief and self-hatred. Participants reported coping with this by considering suicide, and avoiding any discussions around heterosexual relationships and marriage.

Mental Health

Heteronormative culture has been recognised for a number of years, whereby being heterosexual is seen to be the norm (Neisen, 1990). It appears that ethnic minority homosexual men are still living within such a heteronormative culture, which impacts on their ability to live authentic lives. The present meta-synthesis points to ethnic minority homosexual men experiencing minority distress in concealing their sexuality, due to perceived threat of rejection and a poor appraisal of their own homosexual identity (Meyer, 1995/2003). Participants tended to conceal their sexuality by non-disclosure, acting masculine, presenting as heterosexual, and using a secret language to avoid detection. This continual self-monitoring undoubtedly has psychological implications, and may lead to stress and exhaustion (Meyer, 2003). More specifically, homosexual men of all ethnicities experienced difficult feelings, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. It can be argued that these men are in a double minority, and are therefore likely to experience both homophobia and racism. This was particularly evident as participants described the importance of being able to access and spend time in physical spaces where they could be themselves, and express both their sexual and ethnic identity (Ferraro & Farmer, 1996).

Homosexuality as a White and Western Concept

It became apparent that participants were taught that homosexuality was a White and Western concept, and that it was therefore 'diseased' and/or 'foreign'. This idea was reinforced by the fact that social media mainly portrayed White homosexual men, inferring that other ethnicities were not attractive, and beauty is exclusive to White people. Overall, this made it difficult for ethnic minority homosexual men and others to accept homosexuality, and subsequently integrate into the White gay community (Diaz, 1998; Harper et al., 2004;

Martinez & Sullivan, 1998). According to Ross (2005), homosexuality is a White and middle-class concept, with 'coming out' and 'in the closet' being considered Western terms. More specifically, Chinese participants were avoidant of 'coming out', and did not see it as a suitable process for them because they wanted to maintain harmony within their family environment. It is therefore suggested that 'coming out' is another way to further 'other' ethnic minority homosexual men (Akerlund & Cheung, 2000), which puts them at risk of being excluded from their culture, and the social support that comes with it (Villicana et al., 2016).

Identity Theory

The results indicate that ethnic minority homosexual men were keen to maintain their ethnic group membership or strengthen their homosexual group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For example, Chinese participants reported not wanting to disclose their homosexuality to others because they did not want to disrupt the harmony within the family. Additionally, other ethnic minority homosexual men noticed the homophobia present within their ethnic communities and chose not to disclose their homosexuality. Ethnic minority homosexual men also attempted to strengthen their homosexual group membership by attending gay clubs, however they were often met with racism, and so this was difficult to achieve. Ethnic minority homosexual men also appeared to switch identities, depending on their environment, and this behaviour may be seen as a way of maintaining their group membership in terms of both their ethnicity and sexuality, even though they may be viewed as opposing identities (Van Dommelen et al., 2015).

Bicultural Identity Integration theory was evident in this meta-synthesis (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002), where ethnic minority homosexual men experienced tensions between their homosexual and ethnic identities. Many of the men experienced their identities as disconnected and oppositional, therefore making integration difficult and experiencing

distress as a result of this. A few of the men reported successfully integrating their identities, viewing their identities as blended and in harmony and experiencing less distress as a result. There were additional benefits, with Black homosexual men reporting developing improved awareness and introspection due to this integration. It is also important to note for this integration to be successful, Asian Pacific Islander and Black homosexual men reported developing a strong identity with their ethnicity first before attempting to integrate their homosexual identity. This may be applicable to other ethnic minority homosexual men, but further research is required to determine this more conclusively.

Theories of Homosexual Development

Cass' (1979) model of homosexual development includes different stages an individual progresses through in order to complete their identity, specifically: (i) identity confusion; (ii) identity comparison; (iii) identity tolerance; (iv) identity acceptance; (v) identity pride; and (iv) identity synthesis. Based on the findings from the present meta-synthesis, the model fails to take into consideration the environment an individual lives in (ethnic minority homosexual men in this case), and 'reflected appraisal', whereby an individual makes sense of their sexuality based on feedback from and interactions with others (Ichiyama, 1993). Participants described existing in a heterosexual society that invalidates homosexuality, and their sense of identity was therefore shattered due to difficulties of integrating their homosexual and ethnic identities together. In particular, others were not accepting of, and openly hostile towards them (and homosexual men more broadly).

However, our findings do appear to support some of the stages in Cass' (1979) model, namely identity confusion and identity comparison. Participants reported feeling confused about their sexuality, questioning why they were homosexual, and comparing their identity to White homosexual culture in order to help them make sense of their experience, and normalise it. This resulted in identity acceptance, identity pride, and/or identity synthesis

being difficult to achieve. Other models have attempted to explain the development of a healthy homosexual identity (e.g., Rosario et al., 2001), with the general theme of identity formation and identity integration (Villicana et al., 2016). For identity formation, our findings indicate that ethnic minority homosexual men do indeed explore their sexuality, by attending homosexual spaces, questioning their sexual identity, and experiencing confusion and denial. However, some participants did not experience reduced internalised heterosexist attitudes, possibly as a result of viewing homosexuality as too 'foreign', with this attitude being reinforced further through their own culture. There appeared to be limited integrating of their sexual identity, which was indicated by an avoidance of disclosing their sexuality to others. Previous research suggests that disclosing homosexuality to others increases self-esteem, and decreases stress and internalised homophobia (Beals et al., 2009; Corrigan & Matthews, 2003; Frost & Meyer, 2009; Rasario et al., 2001). Some participants described similar benefits, including greater mental wellbeing, insightfulness, and a sense of freedom from the restraints of society, when disclosing their true sexual identity to others.

Gock's (2001) sexual and ethnicity development model for Asian and Pacific Islanders appears to be slightly more in line with our findings. Following similar stages to Gock's (2001) model, participants reported firstly being aware of their ethnicity, and then of their sexual identity, which created an internal conflict. Their accounts highlighted that they often prioritised one identity over another, depending on the situation, such as, for example, expressing their homosexual identity and supressing their ethnic identity when attending gay clubs. Limited information was generated from participants' accounts around how they integrated both of their identities, however, they did describe developing a strong ethnic identity first, and subsequently seeking to integrate their homosexual identity.

Strengths and Limitations

A strength of the meta-synthesis presented here was that it followed a systematic approach to searching relevant literature, and analysing data in order to provide greater insights into the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men. However, a criticism of using a meta-synthesis approach is that first-order data were selected from a full dataset by the researchers involved the studies, and the included extracts may therefore not fully represent participants' experiences (Atkins et al., 2008). The quality of the articles that were included in the present review varied, and ranged from poor (n = 5) to fair (n = 3) and good (n = 5). Naturally, this impacted on the quality of the themes presented – some of the themes identified as part of the meta-synthesis were not reported due to the relevant studies being of a poor quality. The articles that were rated as 'poor' often did not appropriately refer to or describe the analytical approach they employed, making it difficult to determine how valid and reliable their findings were. Nearly half of the studies used a snowballing technique, with the remaining studies recruiting participants through charities, websites or previous research studies. Understandably, ethnic minority and homosexuality combined is a sensitive topic, and it may therefore be difficult to recruit individuals from such a population. However, one disadvantage of these recruitment strategies is that the sample may not be representative of the wider population of ethnic minority homosexual men and their experiences.

Few of the studies reported the sexual and/or ethnic identities of the author/researcher, or their role in the research. This undoubtedly has an influence on the process of data collection and analysis, including how comfortable and open participants felt about sharing their experiences. These studies may have therefore benefited from using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as part of which the researcher considers their own position in the context of a participant's experience (Smith et al., 2009). Interestingly, ten of the 13 studies were conducted in Western countries (UK, USA & Australia), and the

researchers may have therefore viewed sexuality through the lens of a White and Western concept, thereby potentially biasing their interpretations. However, it is worth noting that nearly all of the participants had been living in these countries for many years, and may have consequently internalised this concept, and interpreted their sexuality through the same lens respectively.

It appears that the countries that the studies originated from may have impacted on the development of the themes presented here. There were five studies from the USA, four from the UK, two from China and one from Australia and one from the Philippines. The studies that originated from Australia, China and Philippines primarily had Chinese homosexual participants (Baytan, 2000; Li et al., 2010; Mao et al., 2002; Zhogxin et al., 2006). A further two studies from the USA had Chinese participants (Chung & Szymanski, 2006; Operanio et al., 2008). This had an impact on the themes. For example, in the *Identities Blending Together* theme, Chinese participants from the USA (Chung & Szymanski, 2006; Operanio et al., 2008) reported that their ethnic and homosexual identities were blended together, through the process of creating a strong ethnic identity before accepting their homosexual identity. Chinese participants from China and Philippines were not present in this theme. It can be suggested that the Chinese participants in the USA felt the need to create a strong ethnic identity, in response to being a minority within their own country, whereas Chinese participants from China and Philippines may have already had a strong ethnic identity. Another example is the theme *Appearing Heterosexual*, where 'Chineseness' was considered influential to Chinese participants, but these were from studies in China and Philippines, and 'Chineseness' did not appear to be present in the USA or Australia studies. This may indicate that 'Chineseness' is a stronger concept in China and Philippines, as they may be Asian-dominant countries. A final example is in the *Racism* theme. Racism was only an issue for participants in the UK and USA, whereas the participants from China and Philippines were

not present in this theme. Again, these participants may not experience racism because they may not be of an ethnic minority within their countries, but merely a sexual minority. Overall, this points to the impact of countries the participants originated from on the interpretation of their ethnicity and sexuality, and the subsequent generation of data and development of themes.

Furthermore, only one study explored the experiences of Latino homosexual men through a focus group. This provided an overview of their collective experiences, which is reflected in the results section of this meta-synthesis, whereby Latino homosexual men's experiences are referred to broadly, or collectively, rather than identifying quotes from individual participants. The studies that used interviews were likely to have data that revealed the complexities and nuances of the experiences of identifying as an ethnic minority homosexual individual, which naturally may not be revealed in focus groups. Subsequently, conducting this meta-synthesis with primarily interview data meant that there was a more in-depth exploration of the experiences of some ethnic minority homosexual men. However, it should be noted that the results do not apply to all ethnic minority homosexual men, but may provide some insight into their experiences too.

All studies were judged to have a social constructivist stance, due the literature they referred to highlighting how sexuality and ethnicity were social constructs. However, the positionality of the researchers was difficult to determine for all of the studies, due to limited information about their own identities and position in relation to the population they were studying. Most studies made no reference to the researchers' own identities or their positionality. In some studies, researchers reported their ethnicity, gender and sexuality and, from this, I made assumptions that they were considered an 'insider' or 'outsider' to the population they were studying. However, it was difficult to identify whether someone was an 'insider' or 'outsider' as a result of their identity. For example, a Black female conducted

interviews with Black homosexual men (Bowleg, 2012). The researcher may be considered an 'insider' due to their ethnicity, but could also be considered an 'outsider' due to their gender. Being an 'insider' or 'outsider' to the population being studied will influence the generation of data and data analysis. For example, being an 'insider' may mean that participants could worry about being judged by the researcher and be reluctant in sharing their experiences, whereas this may not be an issue for a researcher that is considered to be an 'outsider' (Gary & Holmes, 2020).

Directions for Future Research and Clinical and Practical Implications

Only one article explored the experiences of Latino homosexual men, highlighting that this group of individuals were under-represented in the present meta-synthesis. This suggests that there is limited research involving Latino homosexual men, as there is involving other ethnicities that were not included in the studies reviewed here. Indeed, it has been reported that research with ethnic minority LGBT individuals is rare (Hudson-Sharp & Metcalf, 2016), and this is clearly still the case. It would be of interest to explore further how ethnic minority homosexual men successfully integrate their two identities, and live an authentic and fulfilling life, as well as how Gock's (2001) sexual and ethnicity identity development model may apply to other ethnic minorities, beyond those of Asian and Pacific Islanders.

For mental health professionals working with ethnic minority homosexual men, it is important to be aware that homosexuality is viewed and understood to be a White and Western concept, and to use an open-minded and exploratory approach to working with this population. Individuals in this population are likely to experience high levels of anxiety, depression, suicidality, and stress in terms of concealing their homosexuality. Mental health professionals are therefore uniquely placed in working to identify the needs of this population, and supporting them in managing any difficulties they have. It would also be

helpful for professionals to signpost this population to support groups that focus on supporting ethnic minority homosexual men. Finally, this meta-synthesis has highlighted the importance of raising societal awareness around homosexuality, and breaking the stigma of ethnic minority homosexual men.

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Chapter 2:

Empirical Chapter

What Are the Lived Experiences of Homosexual Muslim Men? An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Abstract

A number of research studies have shown that Muslim men who identify as homosexual experience significant psychological distress, given the perceptions around homosexuality in their cultures and the difficulties that result from this. The study reported here therefore aimed to explore in more detail the lived experiences of Muslim men who identify as homosexual, the difficulties they faced, and how they coped with these as a result of their sexual and religious identities. Participants were recruited from an Islamic lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) support charity. Five Muslim men who identified as homosexual took part in semi-structured interviews, and data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Three superordinate themes were identified: (1) incompatibility with family and community, (2) pressures to conform to cultural expectations, and (3) surviving and accepting the homosexual self. Participants described an awareness of their homosexual identity from a young age, and a realisation that this was not compatible with a community and culture that valued heterosexuality and arranged marriage. This resulted in significant mental health difficulties, where participants felt the need to supress their homosexual identity, and pressured to fulfil a heterosexual role in order to avoid rejection. Participants reported some acceptance of their homosexuality through internal cognitive processes and attending an Islamic LGBT support group, where they met similar others who validated their homosexual identity, thereby helping to reduce their experiences of distress. Directions for future research and implications for practice are discussed in light of the psychological vulnerabilities this population may present with.

Introduction

Justification

Chronologically, the empirical study in this chapter was designed and developed first, followed by the meta-synthesis in Chapter 1. The researcher had an interest in sexual identity and was keen to understand how different aspects of identity can impact on acceptance of homosexuality. As outlined in the previous chapter, individuals can belong to multiple social groups and are motivated to maintain these group memberships. This can contribute to a range of psychological and well-being benefits (Jetten et al., 2017; Tajfet & Turner, 1979). Individuals place themselves into different social categories, so that differences and similarities between outgroups and ingroups can be experienced respectively to enhance an individual's own self-image (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Through the development of the empirical study outlined in this chapter, the researcher learnt that ethnic identity can also have an impact on acceptance of homosexual identity. This learning informed the development of the meta-synthesis.

Homosexuality and Islam

Homosexuality is defined as a sexual orientation, whereby an individual is attracted to people of their own sex (Ross et al., 1988). For some Muslims, homosexuality is viewed as sacrilegious and sinful (Siraj, 2016). The Qur'an (which Muslims regard as the words of Allah), the Shari'ah (legal rulings) and the Hadith (the reported sayings of Prophet Muhammad) promote heterosexuality through marriage, and view homosexuality as a violation against Allah (Yip, 2005). It has been suggested that some Muslims even go so far as to deny that homosexual men exist in Muslim societies (Sanjakdar, 2013). Reports of the persecution of all homosexuals in Islamic states support a view of some Muslim communities not recognising homosexuality and viewing it as against their faith (Yip, 2008). Muslim scholars have previously reported that all humans are naturally heterosexual, and that

homosexual behaviours are considered unlawful (Minwalla et al., 2005). Homosexuality may be tolerated or denied in some Islamic societies provided that men continue to fulfil their religious/cultural duties, such as heterosexual marriage and procreation (Yip, 2004). Any violation of cultural norms concerning homosexuality can be regarded as a threat to the family's honour, potentially resulting in consequences, such as ostracism and psychological and/or physical abuse towards homosexual Muslim men (Jaspal & Siraj, 2011).

Activism and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights

Activism refers to intentional action to bring about social or political change and can take many forms, including street marches, rallies, petitions, protests and the use of social media (Cammaerts, 2007). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) social movements have been happening for many years, with the political goals of changing laws and policies to obtain new rights, benefits and protections from harm with an overall aim to achieve equality (Bernstein, 2002). Stonewall, a major LGBT rights charity in the UK, have been campaigning for LGBT rights since 1989. Specifically, they have influenced policies and laws, such as same-sex couples becoming free to adopt children, protection from discrimination at work and the right for same-sex couples to get married (Stonewall, 2021). The impact of this can be felt, as UK society appears to be more accepting and supporting of LGBT individuals. For example, the British Social Attitudes survey indicated in 1983 that 17% of respondents thought there was 'nothing wrong with same-sex relationships', in comparison to 2018, in which two-thirds agreed with this statement (BSA, 2018). This shift in attitude indicates a greater acceptance of LGBT individuals within society. This, in turn, is likely to impact on LGBT individuals in terms of internalising this acceptance and subsequently fostering greater well-being (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015). However, more change needs to occur as indicated by the 2018 National LGBT Survey (National LGBT Survey, 2018). This survey highlighted that LGBT respondents were less satisfied with their

life, in comparison to the general UK population; more than two thirds of LGBT respondents said that they avoid holding hands with a same-sex partner for fear of a negative reaction from others, and at least two in five respondents reported verbal harassment or physical violence in the previous 12 months of the survey. It was also reported that more than nine in 10 of the most serious incidents went unreported, often because respondents thought 'it happens all the time' (National LGBT Survey, 2018).

Although there have been positive movements in general for LGBT individuals in the UK, it is unclear what the current societal attitudes are towards LGBT Muslims in the UK. However, there are many Islamic LGBT charities in the UK that are supporting Muslim LGBT individuals, such as Hidayah and Imaan, and also charities such as Stonewall who provide specialist support for LGBT individuals who follow a faith. These charities can be seen as activists, who are challenging the narrative around Muslim LGBT individuals in order to promote societal acceptance. This, in turn, will hopefully encourage Muslim LGBT individuals to internalise this acceptance (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015).

Identity Discrepancy

It has been recognised that religion is an important aspect in the lives of Muslim men who identify as homosexual; it is therefore difficult for them to reject or ignore their religious identity in favour of their sexual identity (Jaspal, 2010; Siraj, 2006). Muslim men who identified as homosexual were interviewed about their experiences of their identity, and described how their homosexual feelings were too strong to supress and/or discard (Siraj, 2006). Bhugra (1997) refers to this tension between being a Muslim and identifying as homosexual as a 'traumatic discrepancy', which arguably leads to strong feelings of guilt (Siraj, 2006). Nine British South Asian men who identified as homosexual were interviewed about their experiences of coming out, and described how experiencing both identities meant that they did not feel like they fully belonged to either (Bhugra, 1997).

To manage this discrepancy, individuals may activate or supress either of these identities in different social contexts (Abraham, 2009; Yip, 2004). More specifically, a Muslim man who identifies as homosexual may activate their Muslim identity and supress their homosexual identity when attending a Mosque. Muslim men who identify as homosexual have also reported rejecting any personal responsibility for their sexual identity as a way of managing this discrepancy by reporting that they were born homosexual, that Satanic attempts turned them away from God, and that British culture was to blame for encouraging a homosexual lifestyle (Jaspal, 2010; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Indeed, homosexuality has been described as a Western 'disease' among Muslim parents, or an aberration that needs to be harshly punished (Yip, 2004). In a study by Jaspal (2014), British Asian men who identified as homosexual and Muslim completed a diary for one month documenting their thoughts on the pressures of arranged marriage. It was reported that participants considered engaging in arranged marriage, thereby supressing their homosexual identity, and bowing to the pressure of their cultural expectations to have a family (Jaspal, 2014).

It has been suggested that some Muslim men who identify as homosexual may hyper-affiliate with their Muslim identity as a way of managing the discrepancy around their identities (e.g., observing Ramadan and not engaging in homosexual behaviours for the duration; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2014). Other participants also reported to be engaging in similar behaviour as a way of becoming a 'true' or 'good' Muslim, and thereby alleviating guilt and strengthening their Islamic faith (Jaspal, 2013). This included praying to God in the hope that their homosexual feelings would be removed and replaced by heterosexual feelings (Siraj, 2006). Muslim men who identified as homosexual described superficially agreeing with extreme Muslim views to demonstrate their religious authenticity, and be accepted by other Muslims, and thereby avoiding rejection (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2014). They also shared a

sense of needing to prove oneself to other Muslims and themselves that they are a true Muslim in an attempt not to become excluded from the religious group and/or community (Jaspal & Siraj, 2011). Overall, this may indicate the strength of the pressure Muslim men who identify as homosexual are facing and experiencing, both from the community and themselves, in order to feel accepted within the community. This hyper-affiliation may also illustrate the magnitude of the discrepancy between the two identities of homosexual Muslim men, with their sexual identity simply not being compatible with their religious identity.

In order to cope and manage some of the difficult experiences homosexual Muslim have reported, they may use support groups in a bid to reinterpret the Qur'an in a homosexual affirmative manner (Jaspal, 2012). This may include re-interpreting the Qur'an and partly accepting their sexual identity through the view that Allah made them so. Although this was seen as a favourable approach for some Muslim men who identified as homosexual, for others this was not even considered an option as it was deemed to be too threatening to their Muslim identity (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). This may indicate the strength of tension that homosexual Muslim men experience, with some unable to reconcile both their sexual and religious identities using religious texts.

For some Muslim men who identify as homosexual, interactions with other homosexual White men has negative connotations, such as a fear of sexual disclosure as a result of socialising with them who were seen as being too open about their sexuality. It was further reported that they also feared rejection and exclusion by other homosexual White men due to their religious identity (Jaspal, 2010). They believed that homosexual White men did not understand the experiences of homosexual Asian men, in particular in relation to the need to keep their homosexual identity from their families, and having to engage in arranged marriages (Jaspal, 2010). Other participants reported that homosexual White men viewed their culture as 'backwards' (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012). Attending homosexual spaces, such

as a gay club, was reported to be threatening for some Muslim men who identified as homosexual, making them question the authenticity of their 'Muslimness', as it was experienced as a confirmation of their homosexual identity, but also a violation of their Muslim identity. Participants also reported a preference for socialising with other homosexual men from their own ethnic group, due to similar cultural backgrounds and a shared understanding of the difficulties they faced and more acceptance of themselves (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012). It can therefore be suggested that Muslim men who identify as homosexual seek out these spaces in order to validate their sexual identity. However, some homosexual spaces may be seen as too 'White', and therefore too different from oneself, and may only bring a sense of partial validation of one's sexual identity. It can be suggested that this reinforces that homosexual Muslim men's sexual identity cannot be fully assimilated into the self, and may lead to additional psychological distress.

Muslim Core Identity and Coming Out

Jaspal and Cinnirella (2014) suggest that religion is an important aspect of homosexual Muslim men's identity who need to feel connected to and with their religious community. Indeed, in their study, participants reported being accepting of homophobia displayed by other Muslims, including distributing anti-homosexual leaflets calling for the death penalty of homosexual people, and showing how integral their Muslim identity and membership of the community is to their sense of self (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2014).

Coming out, the act of disclosing one's homosexual identity to others, has widely been reported as an issue for British Muslim men who identify as homosexual, who fear or reject the notion of formally coming out as a result of the homophobia present in their own religious communities, where they would commonly hear derogatory terminology about homosexual men (Abraham, 2009; Jaspal & Siraj, 2011). Participants further reported internalising this derogatory terminology and stigma, believing to some extent that it was

true. Other participants acted heterosexual, whilst supressing their homosexual identity, in an attempt to continue to feel accepted. Participants reported not coming out in order to maintain the family honour, and avoid bringing shame to the family or being seen to be too far assimilated with White British culture, which is fundamentally seen as 'un-Muslim' in their norms and values. Finally, several participants reported fear of physical violence from other Muslims in response to coming out, including being physically assaulted or even death (Jaspal & Siraj, 2011; Siraj, 2006).

Mental Health and The Present Study

As a result, Muslim men who identify as homosexual may experience distress and isolation from their community due to internalising these messages. For example, one participant believed that being homosexual was evil, hoping that they would be able to get on the 'right' path, and that homosexual temptations were straying them away from the 'right' path (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). Other participants reported feeling isolated or not as connected to their community. Even though participants reported a strong faith and spirituality, this alone was not sufficient to feel like an authentic Muslim as a result of feeling disconnected from their religious community (Jaspal & Cinnirella 2014).

The majority of homosexual Muslim men who have taken part in the research studies to date reported difficult experiences around coming to terms with their sexual identity, and the psychological impact they suffered as a result. This included experiencing feelings of (i) guilt (for not feeling like a 'true' Muslim, or inadequate due to a homosexual identity); (ii) fear (from threats, physical abuse or being murdered by family or members of the community); (iii) helplessness and anger (in relation to a perceived inability to change their sexuality); and (iv) self-hatred (Bhugra, 1997; Jaspal 2010; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2014; Jaspal & Siraj, 2011; Minwalla et al., 2005; Siraj, 2006), and can, understandably, have a substantial impact on the mental health of Muslim men who identify

as homosexual. However, little research has been conducted into how Muslim men who identify as homosexual cope with their experiences and any resulting emotions and feelings. The aim of the study presented here is therefore to explore this in more depth by conducting semi-structured interviews with this population. Specifically, the study explored what the lived experiences of Muslim men who identify as homosexual were, what difficult feelings they experienced in relation to this, and how they managed these. The existing literature has primarily focused on the negative experiences of Muslim men who identify as homosexual, with little exploration of how they accept their homosexuality, or the coping mechanisms they employ to manage some of the difficult experiences they have had. It has, however, been highlighted that Muslim men who identify as homosexual lead deep and complex lives. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2009) was therefore used to enable a deeper understanding of these complex experiences and their underlying psychological processes (Smith et al., 2009), which are important in order to better make sense of how this population experiences their Muslim and homosexual identities. Other qualitative analytical approaches, such as thematic analysis, may not be able to reach the depth of these experiences or reveal some of the complexities inherent here (Pringle et al., 2011).

Method

Context

A search was conducted to identify Islamic lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) charities in the UK. The Hidayah was identified as a result. The Hidayah is a volunteer-led registered charity with the aim of providing support for LGBT Muslims and promoting education about LGBT Muslims to counter discrimination and prejudice, with monthly support groups occurring across England. At the time of the study, three support groups were taking place in Leeds, Manchester and London. The Hidayah were contacted

with more information about the study, and to enquire whether they would be willing to support it. They were keen to support the study, and invited the researcher to attend the monthly support group in Leeds to be introduced to group attendees and the chair of the charity. The researcher began attending the monthly support groups in Leeds and Manchester in August 2018 in order to brief potential participants about the study. The monthly support groups were held at an LGBT centre in the respective city centres, and lasted approximately 2 hours. The majority of the attendees described themselves as homosexual Muslim men. The researcher attended six of the monthly support groups in Leeds, and two of the monthly support groups in Manchester, between August 2018 and April 2019. Once full ethical approval for the study was granted (see Appendix 5) in April 2019, recruitment began and took place until February 2020. Participants were predominantly recruited from the bases in Leeds and Manchester. In order to achieve a homogeneous sample, a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied (see Table 1).

Table 1

Study Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
• Good command of English • Male • Identifies as homosexual • Identifies as Muslim	• Not born into a Muslim family (i.e., individuals who convert to Islam later in life).

Rapport Building

In order to build rapport, the researcher participated in group activities, including quizzes, arts and crafts, as well as discussions on various topics. These topics included the

history of homosexuality in Islamic cultures, and homosexual Muslim representations within the media. The researcher contributed his own thoughts to discussions, acknowledging that he did not identify as Muslim, and this appeared to be valued by the group, as he was seen as open and honest. Engagement in these activities helped build trust between the attendees and the researcher.

Originally, the researcher identified himself as an 'outsider' of the group due to having different spiritual beliefs and viewing his ethnicity as different from the attendees. This was believed to be an advantage, to enable the researcher feel distant from the population, and coming from a place of 'unknowing'. The researcher attended the group with little knowledge of Islam, including their beliefs, values and traditions. Thus, the researcher adopted a naïve approach and asked various questions about their culture, beliefs and traditions to be able to build his understanding of how religion influences their lives. The attendees appeared to value this, as they reported that they felt listened to, validated and understood by the researcher. This also helped build trust between attendees and the researcher, in addition to engaging in activities. Subsequently, the researcher was seen as a 'safe' person to talk to and interest in the research project increased. Eventually, the first participant agreed to be interviewed and all participants reported that they felt comfortable in being interviewed by the researcher, as they felt they had built some trust with him.

Participants appeared to be open and honest with the researcher during the interviews. Three participants disclosed that they were doubting their faith and religion, with one participant further stating that if the researcher had been Muslim, they would not have disclosed these doubts, because it is seen as unacceptable to express these to another Muslim. As the researcher spent time with the attendees of the charity, there was a slight shift towards him feeling like an 'inside' member due to his homosexuality. When attendees shared their experiences of homophobia, the researcher validated these experiences and also disclosed his

own experiences. This increased a sense of shared experiences and identity between the attendees and researcher. Over time, this sense of being an ‘insider’ increased as attendees invited the researcher to participate in their celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan. When all the interviews had been conducted, the researcher felt like he was partly an ‘insider’ and partly an ‘outsider’. This was a shift from originally positioning himself as a complete ‘outsider’. This new position was seen as an advantage, as the researcher had some inside understanding of the culture, beliefs and values of the participants that were developed through rapport building.

Participants

Five participants took part in the study and all reported growing up in a predominately Muslim household (see Table 2). Four interviews took place in Leeds between August 2019 and February 2020, and one interview took place in Manchester in September 2019. No other demographic details were obtained, such as relationship status and education, as attendees to the charity and participants themselves often stated that they feared being ‘outed’ or identified through this research project. Specific ages were not included to protect the identities of the participants.

Table 2

Participant demographics

Participant name*	Age Range	Ethnicity	Sexuality
Alic	40-45	South Asian	Homosexual
Farhan	30-35	South Asian	Homosexual
Hamza	25-30	South Asian	Homosexual
Imran	20-25	South Asian	Homosexual
Kamran	45-50	South Asian	Homosexual

Note. *Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identity and for confidentiality.

Self-Acceptance of Sexuality

Self-acceptance of sexuality can be defined as accepting one's sexuality and being comfortable with this part of the self (Perrin-Wallqvist & Lindblom, 2015). A recent review of quantitative research into LGBT individuals found that self-acceptance of sexuality was associated with lower psychological distress and greater psychological well-being (Camp et al., 2020). It was also found that lack of acceptance of sexuality by family and friends was related to poorer self-acceptance of sexuality (Camp et al., 2020). Additionally, there was a significant negative relationship between internalised heterosexism and self-acceptance of homosexuality (Yanykin & Nasledov, 2017). That is, a strong belief that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation meant that it was more difficult for LGBT participants to accept their homosexuality.

It can be suggested that the participants who attended the support group had already achieved some acceptance of their homosexuality. That is, as the support group supports LGBT Muslims, then the individuals who attend are likely to have some acceptance that they are LGBT themselves. However, this acceptance may be limited due to the possibility of

experiencing limited acceptance by friends and family and possibly internalised heterosexist beliefs. Therefore, it is expected that this population may still be experiencing psychological distress in relation to their homosexual and religious identities.

Procedure

Posters and leaflets advertising the study (see Appendix 6) were placed in the relevant rooms where the meetings took place in both Leeds and Manchester. Potential participants were invited to express their interest in taking part either to the researcher directly in-person or via email. Once they had done so, they were provided with a copy of the participant information sheet (see Appendix 7). A convenient date and time were subsequently arranged between the participants and the researcher. This was normally scheduled around the charity's monthly support group in the respective locations.

Prior to the interviews taking the place, the participants were talked through the participant information sheet again by the researcher, reminding them of issues around confidentiality and their rights to withdraw from the study at any time. None of the participants withdrew from the study. Participants were then asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix 8). Each interview lasted between 35-50 minutes, and was recorded using an encrypted Dictaphone. Following the interviews, the researcher engaged the participants in a debrief, and participants were asked to share their thoughts and feelings post-interview. Most reported that they felt 'better', and that the interview was an enjoyable experience. They were provided with a list of support services (see Appendix 9) in case they wished to seek further help or support.

One interview was organised for April 2020 in Leeds, however, due to the COVID-19 lockdown in the UK, which began in March 2020, the monthly support groups were cancelled until further notice. The researcher kept in contact with the participants via email in a bid to re-arrange a face-to-face interview to take place at the University. However, due to

continuing restrictions, and a stop on all research activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made to cease recruitment in November 2020.

The interviews were guided by an interview schedule (see Appendix 10) that consisted of seven exploratory and open-ended questions around the experiences of Muslim men who identified as homosexual. Overall, these questions aimed to explore participants' lived experiences, with a particular focus on the personal meaning they attached to these. All interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

Analysis

The transcribed interviews were analysed using IPA (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is a qualitative data analysis approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their life experiences (Smith et al., 2009). It provides a rich and detailed account of a person's experiences, including their underlying psychological processes, and allows the researcher to interpret the participant's experiences, which in turn facilitates the identification of themes.

The analytic process consisted of six steps (Smith et al., 2009) (see Table 3). The researcher read and re-read the transcripts to facilitate familiarisation and immersion in the data. Step 2 consisted of identifying and noting any objects of concern (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, linguistic comments were highlighted in terms of how participants talked about the identified objects of concern. Finally, conceptual comments which reflected the researcher's interpretation of what was being said were noted. This part of the analysis was recorded in the right column of the transcript (see Appendix 11 for an example).

As part of Step 3, analytical notes and the participants' original words were reviewed to identify themes (see Appendix 11). Themes that appeared similar in meaning were then

collated during Step 4 (see Appendix 12). Steps 2-4 were subsequently completed for each participant, fulfilling the criteria for Step 5. To facilitate Step 6, each participant was colour-coded, and participant themes were grouped to create higher-level themes (see Appendix 13). These were then arranged to create subthemes. Step 6 of the analysis was reviewed by the researcher's supervisor, and various examples of Steps 4-6 were presented to an IPA support group at the University which is facilitated by two academics who are qualitative researchers with expertise in IPA, and attended by trainees on the practitioner doctorate programmes in the department. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to clarify their own understanding of the data and analysis, and ensured that the themes were coherent and clear (see Appendix 14 for the researcher's reflective statement).

Table 3

Six Steps of IPA Analysis (Smith et al., 2009)

Step	Description
1. Reading and re-reading	Re-reading the transcript to become immersed in the data.
2. Initial noting	Identifying specific ways by which the participant talks about, understands and thinks about the experience. This includes identifying the object of concern (e.g., homosexuality) and the meaning of it (e.g., what it is like for the participant). Additional analysis includes linguistic comments (e.g., how something was said) and conceptual comments (e.g., researcher's

	interpretation of the participant's experience) about the object of concern.
3. Developing emergent themes	Creating themes from the analytical notes and participant's original words.
4. Searching for connections across emergent themes	Grouping the themes together and developing super-ordinate themes in the process.
5. Moving to the next case	Moving onto the next participant transcript for analysis.
6. Looking for patterns across cases	Noticing similarities and differences in themes across participants.

Theoretical Orientations

The aim of IPA is for researchers to explore how individuals make sense of their experiences, as it is assumed that people are reflective beings (Taylor, 1985). The fundamental principles of IPA include phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology is the philosophical approach to the study of experience (Smith et al., 2009). It aims to identify the key components of an experience which makes them unique or distinguishable from others (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Phenomenology focuses on how people perceive objects and events, rather than simply describing what they see. Each experience is therefore considered personal to the individual and each person ascribes meaning from their activities and the events that happen to them (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009).

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009), which involves understanding a person's mind-set and their use of language. Language is used to mediate or understand the world around them, and is also used to communicate a person's experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The researcher attempts to understand what it is like to be the participant, while also recognising that this is never completely possible (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher engages in a process referred to as 'double hermeneutics', through which the researcher is attempting to make sense of the participant making sense of their own experiences. Or, the researcher trying to understand what an experience, such as an event, is like from the participant's perspective. The researcher therefore does not have direct access to the experience of the participant but instead is able to engage in this process through accessing the participant's interpretation of their own experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Finally, idiography is concerned with the particular and refers to an in-depth analysis of individuals (Pietiewicz & Smith, 2014). This can be seen in contrast to most of psychology which aims to make universal claims about group behaviour and seeks to create general theories about human behaviour (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher can make claims about specific study participants because analysis is focused on a detailed case exploration (Pietiewicz & Smith, 2014) with a commitment to detail and a depth of analysis, which is why IPA can be a useful analysis for individual case studies (Smith et al., 2009).

In summary, the fundamental principles of IPA are dedicated to the human experience, with an understanding that humans are reflective beings with their own unique perspectives on objects and events. It is not possible for a researcher to fully understand the experiences of the participant; however, the researcher attempts to understand the participant's experiences through their use of language. This involves a depth of analysis. The fundamental principles impacted on the development of the research project, by ensuring that the interview questions were open-ended, and the researcher using prompts to further

explore their experiences. For example, the researcher asked questions such as “What did you think of that?” and “How did that make you feel?”. Furthermore, the researcher completed a reflective account following each of the interviews. These reflections were subsequently used to supplement the analysis in order to support the interpretations of the data by drawing on any identified patterns and nuances in the participant’s talk.

Results

Three superordinate themes, including five subordinate themes, were identified and are presented as an overview in Table 4.

Table 4

Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes
1. Incompatibility with family and community	
2. Pressures to conform to cultural expectations	Living the life of a heterosexual Muslim man Living in a community that values heterosexuality
3. Surviving and accepting the homosexual self	Hiding homosexuality for self-preservation Towards accepting the homosexual self

Incompatibility with Family and Community

Participants reported an awareness of their homosexuality at a young age, and compared their identity to their community’s views who did not tolerate homosexuality. Feelings of guilt, shame and fear arouse when participants realised that their homosexual

identity was not compatible with the community. Alic reported that he became aware of his homosexuality at the age of 5 or 6. However, this had an impact on his early experiences:

> I felt very guilty growing up because I always tried to prove myself to my parents that I'm better than my brothers and in a way I was in a sense that I was always being a good boy to my mum and parents. So it kinda, deep down a guilt that I wasn't what they wanted so I always tried to prove myself that I was better than them then maybe at least of the same level as them so there was guilt, immense. (Alic)

Alic here describes his strong sense of guilt, stemming from feelings of low self-worth he attempted to compensate for this by proving himself to his family. It is suggested that he was experiencing an underlying fear of rejection – through the act of proving himself to his family he felt less likely to be rejected. This was fuelled by an awareness of his homosexual identity, which he believed he would be rejected for. Alic later described strong feelings of worthlessness, low confidence, and a sense of no purpose in his life, and attributed this to his homosexuality. Imran also shared his early experience of becoming aware of his homosexuality at the age of 6 years, after hearing in the community that a Muslim man married a non-Muslim man:

> …so the first thing I heard about that was that it's shameful, how is the family lifting up their head? How's the dad walking around? How is he still coming to Mosque? And it's just like it's got nothing to do with him if his son is leaving his faith…so in that sense that's only the first time I heard about gays and then I was like then questioning myself and I was like 'shit'. (Imran)

Imran reported that he was 6 years old when this happened, and his account reflects a sudden awareness of his community's shaming of homosexuality. This subsequently prompted internal reflection about his own identity, where he comes to realise the meaning of this in the context of his faith. It can be suggested that his homosexual identity was evaluated

negatively in this moment ("I was like 'shit'"), as he compared his homosexual identity to the community's view. He later described this as a fearful time for him in light of the anticipated rejection should his homosexuality come to light.

Hamza reported that he knew that he was homosexual from 'a very young age', and that he experienced guilt and shame throughout his teenage years:

> At first when I was like later teens, so I was 17, 18, 19 I was, I was at a point where I was questioning my faith. I was like 'Do I leave my faith?', 'Am I no longer Muslim?', 'Is it best not to be Muslim?', 'Can I be Muslim?' so I…at the time where I struggled with my identity and who I was. (Hamza)

Hamza's questioning of leaving his faith as a teenager reflects that he perceived his faith and homosexuality to be incompatible, fracturing his sense of identity. It is suggested that the impact of identifying as homosexual here is that he may not have felt an authentic Muslim, and therefore contemplates leaving his faith to comfortably assimilate his sexual identity. This was a difficult time for Hamza, as he previously reported that he valued his faith in his youth. However, he later reported reading academic texts on homosexuality and Islam which helped address his questions of reconciling his two identities ("I can help [the support groups] by providing the research, the evidence, the resources, so that's how I kinda came to reconcile my identity a little bit with I'm Muslim, I'm gay."). This suggests that he was able to find arguments that supported homosexuality and Islam which validated his identity. Hamza was most involved with the charity, in comparison to the other participants, by supporting it with research activities and organising events. Subsequently, Hamza may have developed a strong sense of belonging, and feelings of acceptance, to the charity, with this reinforcing his positive beliefs on Islam and homosexuality that will have ultimately facilitating some of his acceptance of his homosexuality. Farhan reported how it made him

feel when he first became aware of his homosexuality at a young age while living in his home country:

> That feeling like they make me like very very like embarrassed and very very strict. It made me very very like a hard life. These feelings come and if I share with somebody in my street and my village, community anybody that I was friends with…if the family found out they straight away kill him. (Farhan)

Similar to other participants, Farhan reported experiencing intense shame and fear of others in the community becoming aware of his homosexuality, and there being life-threatening consequences, even death. He described this as "a hard life", and that he was required to be "strict" with himself in terms of being careful who he discloses his homosexual identity to in order to keep himself safe. This 'strict' behaviour may also reflect an awareness that his homosexuality was not compatible with the views of the community.

Overall, participants developed an awareness of their own homosexuality identity from a young age and learnt that their community did not value homosexuality. There appeared to be an innate sense of knowing that they were homosexual. They therefore experienced guilt, shame and fear in response to this. Imran and Hamza feared rejection from their religious community, Alic feared rejection from his family, but Farhan feared the loss of his own life if he were to disclose his homosexual identity.

Pressures to Conform to Cultural Expectations

Participants described feeling pressured to marry, and living in a community that valued heterosexuality. As a result, some participants felt that they had no choice but to play a heterosexual role within their community.

Living the Life of a Heterosexual Muslim Man

All participants described the immense pressure or expectation to engage in arranged marriage by their family, which was experienced as distressing for participants, with some reporting difficulties in terms of meeting the needs of their potential future wives:

> So like, it came to the point where my brothers were getting married so the question was when are you going to get married because that's like, the cultural norm and I was like [pause] yeah, it was a tough one and I said my mum was like 'Why aren't you interested in females? Why don't you get married?' and my answer was 'oh, I'm just not interested in females' then she said 'You're not **that** are you?' now you see she didn't even say the word gay. (Hamza)

Hazma refers to getting married as "the cultural norm" which highlights how normalised arranged marriage is within his family. Additionally, being asked the question of 'when' [he is getting married] implies that Hamza will inevitably get married; it is just a matter of time. The questioning from his mother about marriage and females indicates to Hamza that she expects him to marry. Hamza reflects on probing his mother on her position on homosexuality, and was taken aback that she would not use the word 'gay', thereby experiencing his mother as someone who appears intolerant of homosexuality, and subsequently feeling unable to express his homosexual identity to her and his family overall. He later reported that this led to mental health difficulties, such as anxiety and depression, demonstrating the significant distress Hamza suffered as a result of not being able to express his identity. Imran appears to have internalised these cultural expectations:

> So I regret shagging a girl in a sense when now I'm 100% sure I'm going to get married to a girl and sort of fake it because I know straight away it's going to flop but if I didn't experience that I think I could have played along with it until I got married and then obviously be like fuck it I'm gunna have to do it now. But not I know nothing is going to happen so I'm like fuck it. (Imran)

For context, Imran previously described the unenjoyable experience of engaging in a sexual encounter with a female. However, at the same time, this experience triggered an insight in him in terms of an arranged marriage, and he acknowledged that he previously thought that he would be able get married to a female and 'fake it' in order for the marriage to be successful. However, since the sexual encounter, he acknowledges that arranged marriage would not work for him. It appears that this experience confirmed his homosexual identity, and he subsequently felt unable to engage in heterosexual intimate relationships, and arranged marriage respectively. His use of the phrase 'fuck it' may suggest that Imran feels more powerless as a result, and that arranged marriage is an inevitable consequence for him, causing him to feel increasingly anxious. Kamran similarly offers an insight into the pressures he experienced to get married at a young age:

> …because she was actually naïve to this and she didn't actually know, I think at a younger age you do because I got married quite young and you're in the actual growing age as well. So yes you're pushed into this marriage but unfortunately I felt sorry for her more than myself cause she was actually pushed in as well. (Kamran)

His reference to 'growing age' suggests that Kamran viewed himself as too young for getting married, and felt powerless as a result. Kamran also explains that he predominantly sympathised with his wife, not only because she was "pushed" into the marriage as well, but also for ending up with a husband who was unable to meet her needs due to his non-heterosexual identity. When asked how he felt about this at the time, he stated that "I felt very isolated, I felt as if I was like I could commit suicide. I felt very suicidal, I felt as if I were worthless". Here, the significant impact on this mental health becomes clear.

Farhan narrated how his refusal to get married led to his family suggesting that there was something wrong with him, and required medical attention:

> My family said this is your age, you are going to be married between 24 and 30 and that's your age now, but if you say no they say something's going wrong. They will take me to the doctors and anything like that and say 'Oh my son is not feeling for the girls, they have a problem'. (Farhan)

It becomes apparent that Farhan's family views non-heterosexuality as an illness that needs to be cured. A similar experience was shared by Hamza who reported that his family suggested for him to see a doctor. However, he saw this as opportunity for a knowledgeable professional to educate his family about homosexuality.

Kamran was the only participant who disclosed that he has previously been married. He therefore had experienced both the pressures to marry and the experiences of marriage, and subsequently found these uncomfortable. He reported that his marriage ended after a few years and his parents were initially in disagreement with this, but eventually accepted it. His quotes reflect a historical recall of events, rather than his experiences now. This may indicate that Kamran does not currently feel pressured to have a heterosexual marriage, due to there being fewer external pressures to marry. However, the younger participants' (Hamza, Imran and Farhan) quotes indicate experiencing a current pressure to marry, all reporting that they were told by family that they had to be married by the age of 30. They are therefore more likely to experience current distress as a result and due to their age.

Another difference in the experience of distress could be due to living locations. The older participants (Kamran and Alic) reported that they felt they had to physically move away from the community in order to be able to feel that they could be themselves, whilst the younger participants were still living within their communities. Therefore, the younger participants could be experiencing more pressure, in comparison to the older participants, due to still living in the community and being reminded of the expectations of them.

Overall, younger participants described the immense pressure they experienced from their families to engage in arranged marriage. This caused a great sense of powerlessness in them, both in terms of having to live the life of a heterosexual man (which was against how they identified), and not being able to fulfil and meet the needs of their wives.

Living in a Community that Values Heterosexuality

Participants described how they experienced their community as threatening, especially in light of the fact that they were unlikely to tolerate homosexuality, and valued heterosexuality:

> Basically, that gay people are – they say about – they not leave you in the street. It's very bad when you go out and they call out in our language 'Kuni' and that's why I was not showing to the people I'm gay. (Farhan)

Farhan describes the harassment directed at Muslim men who identify as homosexual in the streets, and the strong language used to humiliate them (in Farsi, 'Kuni' means 'fag'). It is suggested that this sent a strong message to Farhan that he would not be safe if he chose to express his homosexual identity in the community. Instead, he chose to keep it hidden in order to be safe. Alic also hinted at the possible lack of acceptance of homosexuality in his community:

> In general I think-they would say they don't like gays but if some gay person they see in general they wouldn't try to harm him like kick him in the street or something just because he's gay. They would not try to have – you call it a homophobic attack on the person who is gay. That is my personal experience, it might be different for others but-but that's- I'm not witness of anything. (Alic)

While Alic acknowledges that there was an open dislike for men who identify as homosexual, he denied that these men would be physically assaulted. In his final sentence, he makes clear that this was his personal experience, and that others may have had different

experiences, suggesting that he may have heard from others that they did experience harassment and physical assault. It appears that Alic is engaging in a narrative of anticipating judgement from the interviewer about the Muslim community, and therefore attempts to manage any negative impressions. Kamran, in contrast, shares how he did not feel safe in the community:

> …even the way that people looked at me and then same again on the roads and they see me in the community and, you know, 'Oh he's not married him' and those sorts of rumours sort of like going about and I'm thinking 'Oh God how do you manage that sort of thing?'. It were awful, it was absolutely awful. (Kamran)

Kamran describes how he experienced his community as gossipy, and judging him for not being a married man at the time, including "giving [him] funny looks", and "looking you up and down". His use of the word "awful" to describe this experience indicates the impact it had on him, leading to subsequent feelings of depression and shame. He later reported that he felt that he had to physically move away from the community in order to be able to feel happier. Similarly, Imran goes on to describe the hostility towards homosexual men he witnessed in his community when a TV programme about this was being discussed:

> It was a TV programme, like [name of programme] and it was not even that long ago and everyone was like 'Oh can you believe they're doing stuff like this, it's fucking disgusting you know they're just trying to show people that this is ok' and then obviously the people that knew me were just like trying to not get involved but in a sense they wanted to help me and they used to be like 'Oh, what's wrong with it they're just opening people's eyes if you think it's wrong then keep your opinion to yourself'. And then suddenly the person turned around and be like 'Why you a fag?'. (Imran)

Imran's experience of the community, or 'everyone', was that they did not tolerate homosexuals, and expressed disgust at the idea of it following watching a TV programme. He also shared that others were aware of his homosexual identity in the community, and came to his defence, however, this was met with further hostility. Imran later reported that he did not want to be a 'suspect homosexual' during the discussion, and therefore left the conversation early, and subsequently felt guilty for not supporting those who defended him. It is suggested that his need to leave the conversation may have been driven by anxiety, as Imran received a clear message that homosexuals were not tolerated in the community he was part of.

Overall, participants described primarily experiencing their communities as threatening and hostile, including being verbally and physically abusive towards men who identified as homosexual. As a result of these experiences, participants felt compelled to suppress their homosexual identity, and be forced to play the role of a heterosexual man.

Surviving and Accepting the Homosexual Self

Participants described living in environments that did not accept or tolerate homosexuality. In response to this, they hid their sexual identity from others in order to avoid rejection and harassment/abuse. However, despite this, participants talked about the internal process they went through of coming to terms with identifying as homosexual, and even accepting their sexual identity in the end.

Hiding Homosexuality for Self-Preservation

All participants described experiencing fear of rejection from others, and therefore invested a lot of energy in hiding their homosexual identity. For example, Farhan described the fear he felt in case his homosexuality was discovered by others when he lived in his home country:

> Yeah scared because I know that if I share with somebody else and I can't – I can't feel my life with somebody, I can't-I mean like sometimes I'm feeling and I'm like "God Shit" and I can't tell anyone… Just feel scared about my family because my family and my dad…they will like hate me. (Farhan)

Here, it becomes apparent how scared Farhan felt about this family finding out that he identifies as homosexual, stating in no uncertain terms that they would "hate" him. It is suggested that he supressed his homosexual identity in order to keep himself physically safe and avoid rejection, and subsequently experienced significant distress as a result of not being able to talk to others about it. Imran reported monitoring himself: "I'm surprised I don't have anxiety to be honest. You kinda have to think about every step you're taking, like how you look, how you're walking, are your eyebrows overplucked? [laughs]." He further describes devoting continual cognitive resources to how he appears and comes across. It is very likely that this was exhausting for Imran, as suggested by his surprise at "not having anxiety", and was arguably reinforced by his friends commenting on his effeminate behaviours, which he feared may expose his homosexual identity. Similarly, Alic described how he hid his homosexual identity from others: "Islamic faith is - It comes from my parents. That's how I was brought up so even though I want to change in myself, hide it, that sort of thing and get away from religion. I still can't do it no." (Alic). This illustrates how Alic experiences his religion as inherited and inescapable. While he later reported that he values his religion, this quote would suggest that he may experience it as quite restrictive at times, leading to inner tensions between his religious and sexual identities, and resulting in him hiding his sexual identity in the context of his faith. It appears that he feels powerless to reject his religious identity but has some control over expressing his sexual identity.

Overall, participants feared rejection from their communities, and therefore concealed their homosexual identity in various ways, including presenting as asexual (Hazma) and as 'un-homosexual' as possible (Imran).

Towards Accepting the Homosexual Self

Despite participants experiencing challenges and living in difficult circumstances, they described progressing towards some level of acceptance of their homosexual identity through internal processes, and engaging with environments that were validating their sexual identity. Imran described how he smoked weed in response to feeling shame: "I started smoking weed for like two years and then I dunno once it clicked that it was nothing to be ashamed of and I should basically just live my life I just completely stopped weed." Here, Imran describes having a sudden realisation ("once it clicked") that his homosexuality was nothing to be ashamed of, and subsequently experiencing less shame as a result. It is not entirely clear what made "it click", however, it appeared to be a powerful moment for Imran in that it helped him to accept his homosexual identity. This also demonstrates a strong resilience, as he suddenly stopped taking substances in response to an internal process that reduced his shame significantly. Imran also disclosed in the interview that he was questioning his faith and was considering stopping practising as a Muslim, as he felt it was not compatible with how he identified. This illustrates that he did not feel that his homosexuality was compatible with his Muslim identity, and was considering discarding his Muslim identity in favour of his homosexual identity. He also disclosed that it was socially unacceptable to share these thoughts with other Muslims, including other Muslim men who identify as homosexual. In the following quote, Kamran describes his internal approach to becoming more comfortable with his homosexual identity:

> I think you never come to terms with it [homosexuality], I don't think I've ever-but I just feel a bit more comfortable and I'm quite comfortable with my own sort of

> identity and I feel comfortable with who I am. I think a wrong person is a person who is actually a problem to somebody else but I'm not a problem to somebody else…So I don't class myself as being a bad person in any shape or form possible so I'm actually quite comfortable and I know myself I've always done the right thing. I've followed the right path in my life. (Kamran)

Kamran acknowledges that he may never fully accept his sexual identity, however, that he feels comfortable being who he is. He defines a "wrong person" as someone who is problematic to others, and clarifies that his homosexual identity does not mean that he is "a problem to somebody else", or "a bad person" at all, and that he is therefore "quite comfortable" being who he is. Kamran reported he had attended the support group for many years, and him referring being "quite comfortable" may indicate his final position on his homosexuality. This position may have been developed over years through attending the group and interacting with others. Part of Hamza accepting his homosexual identity was saying "I am gay" aloud:

> When I went to university, I moved out, I became a lot, you know, more free. I really did find myself and I actually never said I was gay until probably the age of like 17 was when I said "I am gay". […] Yeah, nah it felt good to say "I am gay" [laughs]. (Hamza)

Hamza describes how "good" it felt when he verbally acknowledged his homosexual identity. It appears that his move to attend University was liberating for him, and helped facilitate the validation of his sexual identity. He had previously reported that he found his home environment difficult, due to his family not being accepting of his homosexual identity, and he clearly found the change of scenery to be beneficial in his journey to acceptance.

As part of accepting their homosexual identity, participants talked about the positive aspects of attending Islamic LGBT support groups. Kamran shared his experience of this:

> The good thing, I've made a lot of sort of groups that I've come and joined quite a few groups and I've found [name of charity] in [location] have actually helped me cope with on my own and come to terms with it and become a lot stronger. These groups have actually helped me. (Kamran)

Kamran's description of "becoming a lot stronger" may have been related to his increased ability to cope with difficult emotions and feelings independently, and a strengthening of his identity as a result. Arguably, meeting others with similar experiences will have contributed towards validating his homosexual identity. The effect may have been magnified through attending other Islamic LGBT support groups, which exposed him to a range of different environments that promoted acceptance of homosexuality. Similarly, Alic highlighted the importance for him attending the Islamic LGBT support group:

> I think I was thinking to meet some people, I've met a couple of people here and obviously yourself. It helps to come out of isolation and come here so see people and just even go for shopping, that kind of thing, go to your house, even come out for window shopping, that helps as well as a few things that anybody else does. (Alic)

Alic describes how attending the group helps to combat his feelings of isolation. He refers to common social activities he wishes to engage in, possibly to help normalise his homosexual identity through socialising with others who are similar to him. That is, through engaging in these 'normal' activities with similar others, he feels 'normal' within himself. This appears to be important to Alic, as he reported that he physically moved away from his community in order to feel and be himself. He also disclosed that he does not fully identify as a Muslim. Thus, through this process of normalisation, it can be suggested that he is weakening his Muslim identity and enhancing his homosexual identity through shared activities with similar others. Subsequently, through weakening his Muslim identity, he may

experience less distress about his homosexual identity. Farhan talked about how the Islamic LGBT support group helped him feel more comfortable:

> I'm just still now more comfortable when I start these organisations so still more confidence and still like more better than before. Before I was too like hiding from people and I can't come to the club, I can't come to pride basically so when I become open, I start openly going to the gay pride now and properly enjoying my life. (Farhan)

Here, Farhan describes how attending the support group has helped him to feel more open and confident, as well as more like himself and happier. As a result, he now feels able to attend public events, and engage with the gay community. Farhan was a newer member of the group, only having attended a few sessions at the time of the interview, and had never attended an Islamic LGBT support group before. His quote possibly indicates how attending the support group was the start of his journey towards acceptance, the journey concluding when he feels confident in attending gay clubs and pride.

It is understandable that all participants shared the benefits and positive experiences of attending the support group, and experienced some acceptance of their homosexuality, because they were recruited from the support group. Their continual attendance to the support group indicates that it is valued and useful to them.

Overall, participants described coming to terms with and accepting their homosexual identity through different means. Imran described an internal process of achieving acceptance, while Alic, Hamza and Farhan pointed to the impact of attending environments that helped validate their sexual identity, with Kamran referring to both of these in moving towards some acceptance.

Discussion

The aim of the study presented here was to explore the lived experiences of homosexual men, including the difficulties they faced, and how they coped with these as a result of their sexual and religious identities. Three superordinate themes were identified that are reflective of the experiences of homosexual Muslim men who lived in environments that valued heterosexuality. As a result, participants felt pressured to perform a heterosexual role, and engage in arranged marriage.

Participants' accounts offered an insight into the level of abuse and violence, including death threats, they feared if their homosexual identity became known. This resulted in participants struggling to accept their sexual identity, causing them to experience psychological distress and mental health difficulties, including low mood, guilt, shame, isolation and worthlessness. As part of this, participants talked about hiding their sexual identity as a likely function of self-preservation in order to avoid rejection from others in their religious communities, and going through significant efforts to keep this secret, including monitoring their own behaviours for fear of inadvertently disclosing it to others. When participants were asked about how they coped with their difficult circumstances and experiences, they described the importance of attending LGBT Islamic support groups to be able to connect with similar others. This was seen as a homosexual identity-confirming and containing experience, which also helped participants move towards acceptance, and reduce feelings of isolation. In addition, some participants described turning to substances to help cope with feelings of shame, while others explained that feelings of guilt and shame reduced once they had come to terms with their homosexual identity, and moved towards acceptance.

Previous research suggests that Muslim men who identify as homosexual experience identity discrepancy between their sexual and religious identities, resulting in strong feelings of guilt, and that they coped with these by supressing or activating their different identities

depending on context (Bhugra, 1997; Siraj, 2006; Yip, 2004). This is supported by the present study in terms of participants suppressing their homosexual identity, primarily when surrounded by their family and community, in order to avoid rejection and keep safe. Participants further reported feeling pressured to present as heterosexual, and even engaging in arranged marriage, in order to fit in and not cause any suspicions. This finding is supported by previous research (Jaspal, 2014), and gave rise to a range of significant mental health difficulties, including anxiety, depression, guilt, isolation, shame, as well as a sense of powerlessness and an inability of fulfilling and meeting the needs of their wives.

Previous research has found that Muslim men who identify as homosexual blamed British culture for encouraging a homosexual lifestyle, having a homosexual identity, and being tempted away from God (Jaspal, 2010; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010). This is contrary to the findings in the present study, with most participants reporting that they had come to (partly) accept their homosexual identity. This process towards acceptance was facilitated by attending support groups, which is supported by Jaspal (2012). In addition, participants in the present study also described experiencing containment, happiness and relief through meeting other Muslim men who identified as homosexual, as well as validation through group members narrating shared experiences and challenges. Indeed, participants reported that attending support groups reduced their sense of isolation.

In terms of participants' way of managing their sexual and religious identities, it can be suggested that participants experienced these identities as opposing and subsequently had difficulties maintaining their social group memberships for both of these (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Hamza was the only participant who reported re-interpreting the Qur'an in a homosexual-affirmative manner, again supporting findings from Jaspal (2012). However, elaborating on this, Hamza described the process of reading academic texts on homosexuality and Islam, where he found supportive arguments both for homosexuality and Islam which

helped partly reconcile his sexual and religious identities. It can also be suggested that his close relationship with the charity, indicated through how he supported the research, may have also contributed towards validating his identities and subsequently moved towards integrating them. Other participants reported doubts or purposely removing themselves from their faith as a result of their community rejecting homosexuality. This was seen as controversial, as reported by Imran, as it was socially unacceptable to share these thoughts, even with other Muslim men who identify as homosexual. From a Social Identity Theory perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it can be suggested that Imran is hoping to maintain his group membership with other Muslim men who identify as homosexual by choosing not to share his thoughts with others. Additionally, the older participants (Kamran and Alic) reported physically moving away from the community in order to feel able to be themselves. These participants therefore likely reported more of an acceptance of their homosexual identity once the commitment to their faith had lessened, or they began to develop an increased sense of being an outgroup to their Muslim identity, and an increased sense of being an ingroup to their homosexual identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This also led to an improvement in their mental health, and reduced feelings of guilt and shame. Although it has been previously been reported that one's Muslim identity cannot be removed in favour of homosexual identity (e.g. Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2014), here it appears that some participants are choosing to move away from their Muslim faith, which is further facilitated by physically moving away or questioning their faith. Participants may have disclosed these thoughts and experiences to the researcher, as they may have viewed him as an outsider, and therefore not feared any personal negative consequences in disclosing these thoughts.

Membership and duration of attending the charity appeared to have an impact on participants' acceptance of their Muslim and homosexual identities. Hamza had been a member of the charity for years, and was the most involved in comparison to other

participants. Through his experiences of being in the charity, he demonstrated a comfortableness and confidence with his identity. This can be seen with Kamran too, who was able to find a comfortable position between his two identities. For Farhan, who was a newer member of the group, he hoped to be able to develop his confidence in order to attend homosexual spaces, such as gay clubs and pride, and hoped to achieve this through attending the group.

Contrary to the findings in the present study, previous research suggests that homosexual Muslim men may hyper-affiliate with their Muslim identity as a way of managing the tensions between their sexual and religious identities (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2014). However, some participants referred to themselves as not being a 'good' or 'true' Muslim because of their homosexual identity, and experiencing isolation and worthlessness as a result. This may increase some Muslim men's vulnerability to being exploited by others. In the media, a Muslim man who identified as homosexual described his experiences of being influenced by radical Islamists in light of the hatred he felt towards himself due to his sexual identity (Hornall, 2015) by hyper-affiliating with Islam in an attempt to rid himself of homosexual 'sinful' thoughts. He developed a strong sense of antipathy towards both the Western world and himself for being anti-Islamic, and subsequently contemplated attacking Canary Wharf. Identifying as homosexual was therefore fuelling this destructive behaviour, and he had no choice but to remove himself from the Islamic community, which he described as toxic, in order to be able to be happy and comfortable be himself (Hornall, 2015).

Furthermore, an Australian report exploring the needs of LGBT individuals with multi-faith backgrounds highlighted concerns around LGBT Muslim men becoming radicalised (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2016). Interviews with both hetero- and homosexual Muslim men revealed that young homosexual Muslim men were being bullied and felt isolated, and with no purpose in their lives. As a result, these men felt motivated to join more extremist

groups in an attempt to ‘cleanse their soul’, or as a way of completing suicide following their lives having become unbearable. In light of the concerning nature of these findings, this led to calls for communities to adopt a more understanding approach to homosexuality (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2016).

There are many pathways to becoming radicalised, and there is no one agreed model of radicalisation (Hardy, 2018). It has been suggested that contributing factors, such as low self-esteem and a need for a sense of identity, may draw some individuals to join a radical cause in order to feel respected and valued (Hardy, 2018; Kruglanski et al., 2014). According to Hamid (2009), radicalised individuals provide others (to be recruited and/or radicalised) with a distinctive sense of identity, and moral and spiritual superiority, which functions to set them aside from the rest of society. Once they have been radicalised, they are then conditioned to view society through the lens of extremism, and contribute to the cause, which may involve engaging in extremist behaviours, such as recruiting others for the same cause or committing acts of violence. However, there are many other factors to take into consideration that may influence the radicalisation process, including ideological, social, political, economic, technological and other psychological factors (Hardy, 2018). However, it is important to note that not all homosexual Muslim men are vulnerable to radicalisation.

Practical Implications

The participants in the present study resided in environments that did not accept or tolerate homosexuality. This led to them suffering significant psychological distress and mental health difficulties, with some participants reporting engaging in self-harming behaviours, experiencing suicidal thoughts, and using illicit substances to cope with feelings of shame. This population may also suffer from increased levels of isolation, and lack a solid support system. It is therefore suggested that focusing on equipping them with relevant

coping strategies to manage their psychological distress is paramount in keeping them safe, and improving their mental health. Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT; Gilbert, 2009) is recommended to be used with this population, as it is helpful in treating shame and self-criticism. Shame and self-criticism are often rooted in difficult experiences, including abuse, bullying and/or lack of affection from others (Andrews, 1998; Schore, 1998). Consequently, individuals with these early experiences can be highly sensitive to rejection or criticism, become highly self-critical and have difficulties in being kind to themselves (Gilbert, 2009). According to CFT theory, there are three emotion regulation systems that influence our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and beliefs. These systems are threat, drive and contentment. The threat system continually monitors for threats, and activates emotions (e.g. anger, anxiety, disgust), behaviours (e.g. fight, flight, freeze, submission), and/or cognitive biases (e.g. jumping to conclusions), in response to a perceived threat. The drive system directs individuals towards their goals, and provides a sense of achievement and pleasure. The contentment system is linked to feelings of calm, feeling socially connected, safe and cared for. This system regulates both the threat and drive systems, and the goal of CFT is to balance these three systems, as an imbalance between them can lead to mental health difficulties. This goal is achieved by developing compassion, warmth and kindness for themselves and empathy for others during therapy through various tasks, such as mindfulness and appreciation exercises, ultimately improving mental well-being (Gilbert, 2009).

Muslim men who identify as homosexual are likely to hide their sexual identity from others, and not even disclose it even when asked directly. Encouraging this population to disclose their homosexual identity to others, including family, is therefore unhelpful, given the value they place on the intimate connections they have with their families and communities. There is a real fear of losing these, which would likely lead to greater distress, further isolation and increased vulnerability. Instead, it may be more helpful to direct Muslim

men who identify as homosexual to Islamic LGBT support groups in order to be able to connect with similar others, and feel validated and contained through interactions with them. Participants in the present and previous studies have reported re-interpreting the Qur'an to help them accept their sexual identity. Islamic LGBT support groups are well equipped to support men in this process. It is also important for healthcare professionals to create therapeutic environments where homosexuality is acknowledged and accepted as existing in Islamic cultures to ensure that Muslim men who seek help are able to live healthy lives.

Limitations and Future Directions

It has to be acknowledged that this is a highly sensitive topic area. As a result, recruitment took longer and was challenging at times. Participants were noticed to be very cautious for fear of being 'outed'. Once a participant shared their positive experience of taking part in the research interview, this appeared to lead to others expressing an interest in the study. It became apparent that some participants struggled to express their emotions and feelings in relation to the experiences they had, and the researcher tried to use prompts to help facilitate reflection and meaning-making. Finally, one participant's interview had to be stopped prematurely, and while the researcher kept in touch with the participant via email in order to arrange to continue on another occasion, no response was received from the participant. As a result, this interview may not have contributed to all of the themes presented here.

As highlighted in the Results, the participants' attendance to the support group indicates some level of acceptance of their homosexuality. Subsequently, they may experience less distress associated with this possibly due to support from the group and internalising the environment of acceptance of the support group. Although the present study aimed to explore distress related to their Muslim and homosexual identities, some of these stressors may simply not have been present in the interview due to the impact of acceptance.

Therefore, it should be noted that the results of this study cannot be generalised to all Muslim men who identify as homosexual, as there are likely other individuals who have not sought support and are experiencing difficulties in accepting their homosexuality, including distress associated with this. For Kamran, it was noticed that when he was asked about his experiences of being a Muslim man who identifies as homosexual, he often talked about difficult past experiences. Kamran also reported some acceptance of his homosexuality, describing this as a "comfortable position", and may therefore experience less distress in comparison to the other participants. It can be suggested that he views the distress associated with his homosexual and Muslim identities as a historical event, during a time where he was in an arranged marriage, rather than a current issue. This was also identified in other participants' accounts, as they sometimes talked about difficult past experiences when asked about their current experiences.

In light of the level of vulnerability some Muslim men who identify as homosexual may present with, more research is needed into how they seek to rectify their religious identity through joining radicalised causes and groups in order to better understand this process, and identify early indicators that would help prevent these men from being radicalised. It has been recognised that social support groups are helpful in terms of providing emotional support, and moving Muslim men who identify as homosexual towards acceptance. One participant described how they were able to fuse their homosexual and religious identities comfortably through their re-interpretation of the Qur'an. It would be beneficial for future research to explore this process in more depth in order provide appropriate guidance and support for these men as they navigate through reconciling their two identities.

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Chapter 3:

Press Releases

University of Birmingham

Press Release

14th May 2021

What are the experiences of Ethnic Minority Homosexual Men?

Research highlights that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals continue to face discrimination, disadvantage and inequality in major aspects of life, such as employment and health care services. Consequently, LGBT individuals are at increased risk of mental health difficulties, including depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.

Research suggests that models of sexual identity development include exploration (e.g., questioning sexual identity) and acceptance. Researchers have argued that this understanding has been developed from the experiences of White homosexual individuals and fails to consider the impact of non-White ethnicities in sexual identity development.

A systematic literature search was conducted within the Centre for Applied Psychology at the University of Birmingham exploring the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men.

Thirteen qualitative studies including 9 ethnicities (African, Chinese, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Black, Asian American, Indian, Pakistani and Latino) were found. Participants' interview quotes and the author's interpretations of these were analysed.

The findings suggest that ethnic minority homosexual men experience a range of abuse and live in environments that promote heterosexuality and disregard homosexuality. They felt unable to express their homosexual identity, and often experienced racism when attending

gay clubs. This is known as being a ‘double minority’, as the men felt rejected for their homosexuality in their community and also felt rejected by the gay community due to their ethnicity. Findings suggest they experienced significant distress in hiding their sexuality. This included depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts. They also feared rejection from others and viewed their own homosexuality negatively.

Previous models of sexual identity development offer little in understanding the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men. Researchers argue there is little consideration of ethnicity in the development of sexual identity. Gock’s (2001) suggests that homosexual Asian and Pacific Islanders go through several stages of development. This includes: i) awareness of their ethnic identity, ii) awareness of sexual identity, iii) identity conflict, iv) prioritising one identity over another and v) acceptance of both identities. This model holds promise for other ethnic minority homosexual men in understanding their experiences.

Overall, research into the experiences of ethnic minority homosexual men is sparse and more is needed to understand their experiences. There is continued stigma around ethnic minority homosexual men. It may be helpful for professionals working with this population to understand they will experience significant distress due to concealing their homosexuality and anticipating rejection from others.

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University of Birmingham

Press Release

14th May 2021

What Are the Lived Experiences of Homosexual Muslim Men?

For some Muslims, homosexuality is viewed as sacrilegious and sinful. For Muslim men identifying as homosexual, religion is an important aspect of their identity. Research indicates tension between being a Muslim and identifying as homosexual with participants reporting strong feelings of guilt, fear, anger and helplessness. To manage this tension, Muslim men identifying as homosexual may activate or supress their identities in different environments. For example, presenting as heterosexual at a mosque and supressing their Muslim identity at a gay club. However, little research has been conducted into how homosexual Muslim men cope with their difficult experiences. The aim of this study is therefore to explore this in more depth.

Five Muslim men identifying as homosexual from an Islamic lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) charity were interviewed on their experiences of being a homosexual and Muslim, with a particular focus on the personal meaning they attached to these experiences.

Participants described an awareness of their homosexuality at a young age, and that their homosexual identity was not compatible with a community that valued heterosexuality and arranged marriage. They described experiencing guilt, shame, anxiety, depression, and felt the need to supress their homosexual identity and pressured to appear heterosexual. As part of this, one participant reported monitoring his appearance and behaviours as he feared his

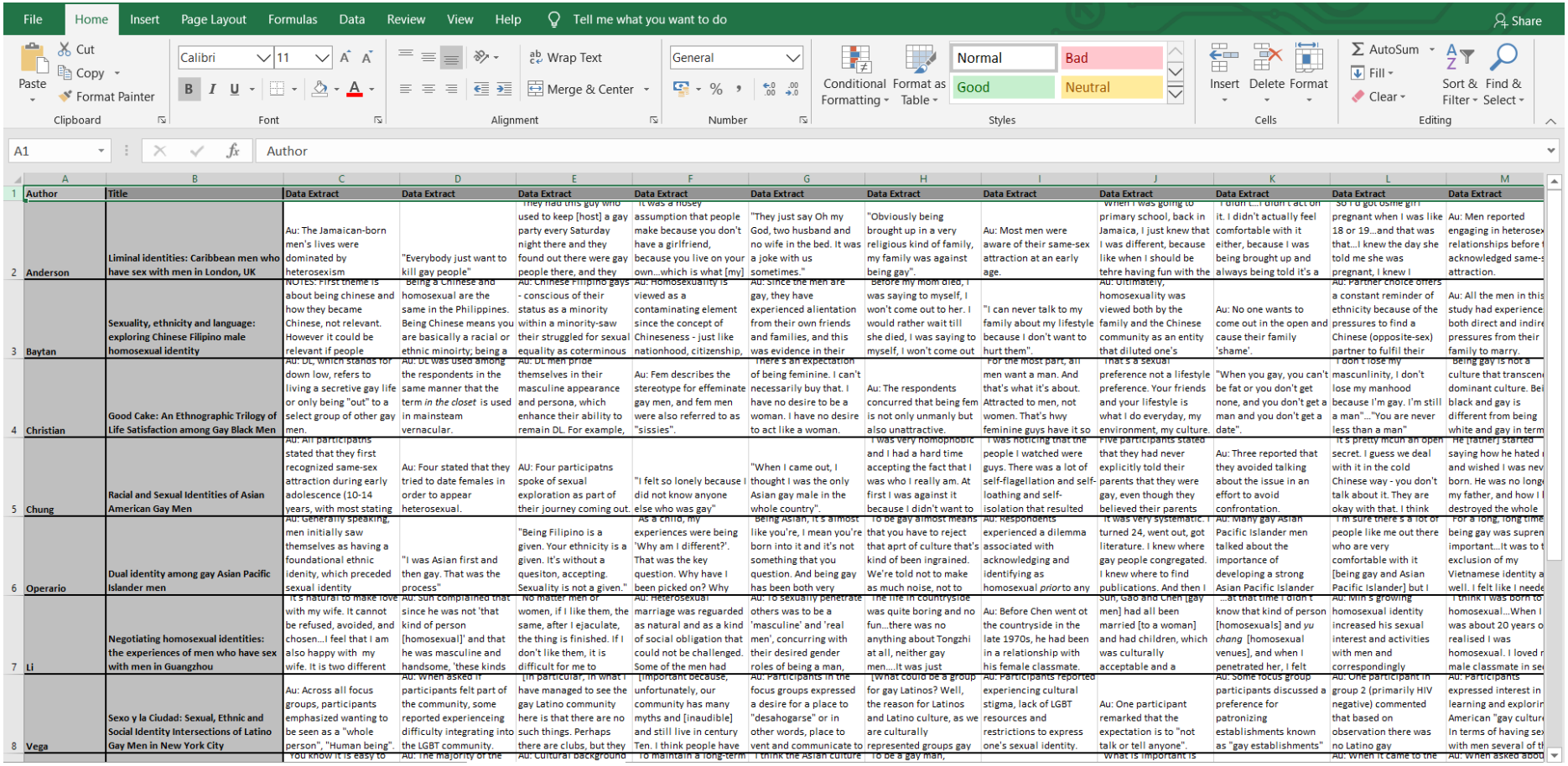
homosexuality would be exposed through an effeminate presentation. Participants described valuing their community but also feared rejection from them.

Participants also described some, but not full, acceptance of their homosexuality. This was helped by attending an Islamic LGBT support group where they met others similar to them. Participants reported logical thinking processes that helped accept their homosexuality, whereas another participant reported using substances to cope with shame associated with his homosexuality. Collectively, this helped reduce the intensity of the emotions they experienced.

The findings also highlighted that some of the participants experienced isolation and worthlessness due to not being a 'good' or 'true' Muslim. This may place Muslim men identifying as homosexual in vulnerable positions to be exploited by others, or radicalised. This would require further research to fully explore this. Finally, it may be unhelpful to encourage this population to 'come out', as they may lose important relationships with their family and religious community.

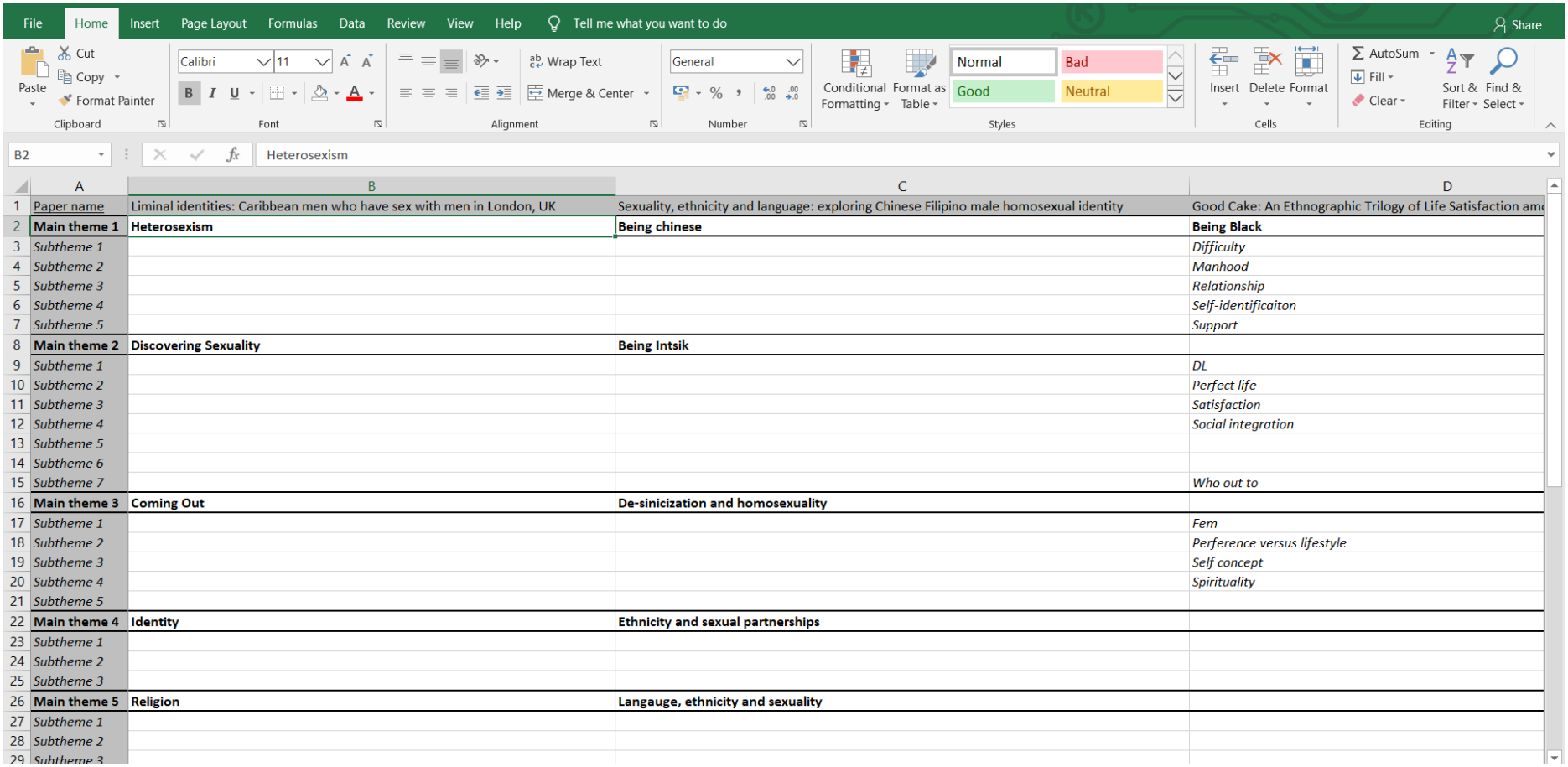
Appendices

APPENDIX 1 – Example of First and Second Order Data Collected from Articles



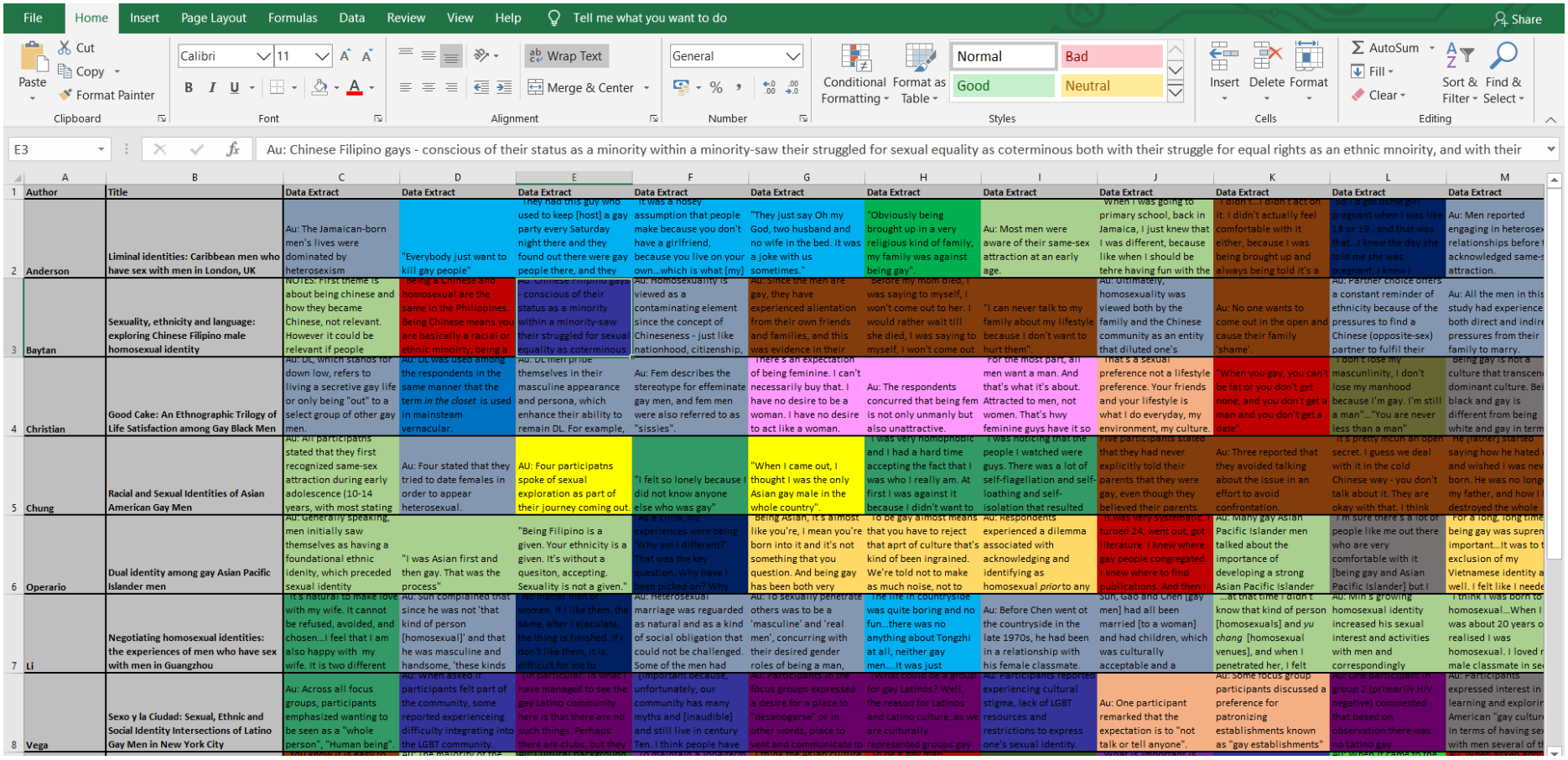
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Author	Title	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract
2	Anderson	Liminal identities: Caribbean men who have sex with men in London, UK	Au: The Jamaican-born men's lives were dominated by heterosexism	"Everybody just want to kill gay people"	They had this guy who used to keep [host] a gay party every Saturday night there and they found out there were gay people there, and they	It was a nosey assumption that people make because you don't have a girlfriend, because you live on your own...which is what [my]	"They just say Oh my God, two husband and no wife in the bed. It was a joke with us sometimes."	"Obviously being brought up in a very religious kind of family, my family was against being gay".	Au: Most men were aware of their same-sex attraction at an early age.	When I was going to primary school, back in Jamaica, I just knew that I was different, because like when I should be tehre having fun with the	I didn't t...I didn't act on it. I didn't actually feel comfortable with it either, because I was being brought up and always being told it's a	So I'd got osme girl pregnant when I was like 18 or 19...and that was that...I knew the day she told me she was pregnant, I knew I	Au: Men reported engaging in heterosex relationships before acknowledged same- attraction.
3	Baytan	Sexuality, ethnicity and language: exploring Chinese Filipino male homosexual identity	NOTES: First theme is about being chinese and how they became Chinese, not relevant. However it could be relevant if people	"Being a Chinese and homosexual are the same in the Philippines. Being Chinese means you are basically a racial or ethnic minoirty; being a	Au: Chinese Filipino gays - conscious of their status as a minority within a minority-saw their struggled for sexual equality as coterminous	Au: Homosexuality is viewed as a contaminating element since the concept of Chineseness - just like nationhood, citizenship,	Au: Since the men are gay, they have experienced alientation from their own friends and families, and this was evidence in their	"Before my mom died, I was saying to myself, I won't come out to her. I would rather wait till she died, I was saying to myself, I won't come out	"I can never talk to my family about my lifestyle because I don't want to hurt them".	Au: Ultimately, homosexuality was viewed both by the family and the Chinese community as an entity that diluted one's	Au: No one wants to come out in the open and cause their family 'shame'.	Au: Partner choice offers a constant reminder of ethnicity because of the pressures to find a Chinese (opposite-sex) partner to fulfil their	Au: All the men in this study had experience both direct and indir pressures from their family to marry.
4	Christian	Good Cake: An Ethnographic Trilogy of Life Satisfaction among Gay Black Men	Au: DL, which stands for down low, refers to living a secretive gay life or only being "out" to a select group of other gay men.	Au: DL was used among the respondents in the same manner that the term *in the closet* is used in mainsteam vernacular.	Au: DL men pride themselves in their masculine appearance and persona, which enhance their ability to remain DL. For example,	Au: Fem describes the stereotype for effeminate gay men, and fem men were also referred to as "sissies".	There's an expectation of being feminine. I can't necessarily buy that. I have no desire to be a woman. I have no desire to act like a woman.	Au: The respondents concurred that being fem is not only unmanly but also unattractive.	For the most part, all men want a man. And that's what it's about. Attracted to men, not women. That's hwy feminine guys have it so	That's a sexual preference not a lifestyle preference. Your friends and your lifestyle is what I do everyday, my environment, my culture.	"When you gay, you can't be fat or you don't get none, and you don't get a man and you don't get a date".	I don't lose my masculinlity, I don't lose my manhood because I'm gay. I'm still a man"..."You are never less than a man"	Being gay is not a culture that transcen dominant culture. Be black and gay is different from being white and gay in term
5	Chung	Racial and Sexual Identities of Asian American Gay Men	Au: All participatns stated that they first recognized same-sex attraction during early adolescence (10-14 years, with most stating	Au: Four stated that they tried to date females in order to appear heterosexual.	AU: Four participatns spoke of sexual exploration as part of their journey coming out.	"I felt so lonely because I did not know anyone else who was gay"	"When I came out, I thought I was the only Asian gay male in the whole country".	I was very nomophobic and I had a hard time accepting the fact that I was who I really am. At first I was against it because I didn't want to	I was noticing that the people I watched were guys. There was a lot of self-flagellation and self-loathing and self-isolation that resulted	Five participants stated that they had never explicitly told their parents that they were gay, even though they believed their parents	Au: Three reported that they avoided talking about the issue in an effort to avoid confrontation.	It's pretty much an open secret. I guess we deal with it in the cold Chinese way - you don't talk about it. They are okay with that. I think	He [father] started saying how he hated and wished I was nev born. He was no long my father, and how I destroyed the whole
6	Operario	Dual identity among gay Asian Pacific Islander men	Au: Generally speaking, men initially saw themselves as having a foundational ethnic idenity, which preceded sexual identity	"I was Asian first and then gay. That was the process"	"Being Filipino is a given. Your ethnicity is a given. It's without a quesiton, accepting. Sexuality is not a given."	As a child, my experiences were being 'Why am I different?'. That was the key question. Why have I been picked on? Why	Being Asian, it's almost like you're, I mean you're born into it and it's not something that you question. And being gay has been both very	To be gay almost means that you have to reject that aprt of culture that's kind of been ingrained. We're told not to make as much noise, not to	Au: Respondents experienced a dilemma associated with acknowledging and identifying as homosexual *prior* to any	It was very systematic. I turned 24, went out, got literature. I knew where gay people congregated. I knew where to find publications. And then I	Au: Many gay Asian Pacific Islander men talked about the importance of developing a strong Asian Pacific Islander	I'm sure there's a lot of people like me out there who are very comfortable with it [being gay and Asian Pacific Islander] but I	For a long, long time being gay was supren important...It was to exclusion of my Vietnamese identity well. I felt like I neede
7	Li	Negotiating homosexual identities: the experiences of men who have sex with men in Guangzhou	It's natural to make love with my wife. It cannot be refused, avoided, and chosen...I feel that I am also happy with my wife. It is two different	Au: Sun complained that since he was not 'that kind of person [homosexual]' and that he was masculine and handsome, 'these kinds	No matter men or women, if I like them, the same, after I ejaculate, the thing is finished. If I don't like them, it is difficult for me to	Au: Heterosexual marriage was reguarded as natural and as a kind of social obligation that could not be challenged. Some of the men had	Au: To sexually penetrate others was to be a 'masculine' and 'real men', concurring with their desired gender roles of being a man,	The life in countryside was quite boring and no fun...there was no anything about Tongzhi at all, neither gay men...It was just	Au: Before Chen went ot the countryside in the late 1970s, he had been in a relationship with his female classmate.	Sun, Gao and Chen [gay men] had all been married [to a woman] and had children, which was culturally acceptable and a	...at that time I didn't know that kind of person [homosexuals] and *yu chang* [homosexual venues], and when I penetrated her, I felt	Au: Min's growing homosexual identity increased his sexual interest and activities with men and correspondingly	I think I was born to homosexual...When I was about 20 years o realised I was homosexual. I loved male classmate in se
8	Vega	Sexo y la Ciudad: Sexual, Ethnic and Social Identity Intersections of Latino Gay Men in New York City	Au: Across all focus groups, participants emphasized wanting to be seen as a "whole person", "Human being",	Au: When asked if participants felt part of the community, some reported experiencing difficulty integrating into the LGBT community.	[In particular, in what I have managed to see the gay Latino community here is that there are no such things. Perhaps there are clubs, but they	[Important because, unfortunately, our community has many myths and [inaudible] and still live in century Ten. I think people have	Au: Participants in the focus groups expressed a desire for a place to "desahogarse" or in other words, place to vent and communicate to	[What could be a group for gay Latinos? Well, the reason for Latinos and Latino culture, as we are culturally represented groups gay	Au: Participants reported experiencing cultural stigma, lack of LGBT resources and restrictions to express one's sexual identity.	Au: One participant remarked that the expectation is to "not talk or tell anyone".	Au: Some focus group participants discussed a preference for patronizing establishments known as "gay establishments"	Au: One participant in group 2 (primarily HIV negative) commented that based on observation there was no Latino gay	Au: Participants expressed interest in learning and explorir American "gay cultur In terms of having se with men several of t
9			You know it is easy to	Au: The majority of the	Au: Cultural background	To maintain a long-term	I think the Asian culture	To be a gay man,		What is important is		Au: When it came to the	Au: When asked abou

APPENDIX 2 – Example of Identified Themes in Original Studies (which informed the development of themes presented in the meta-synthesis)



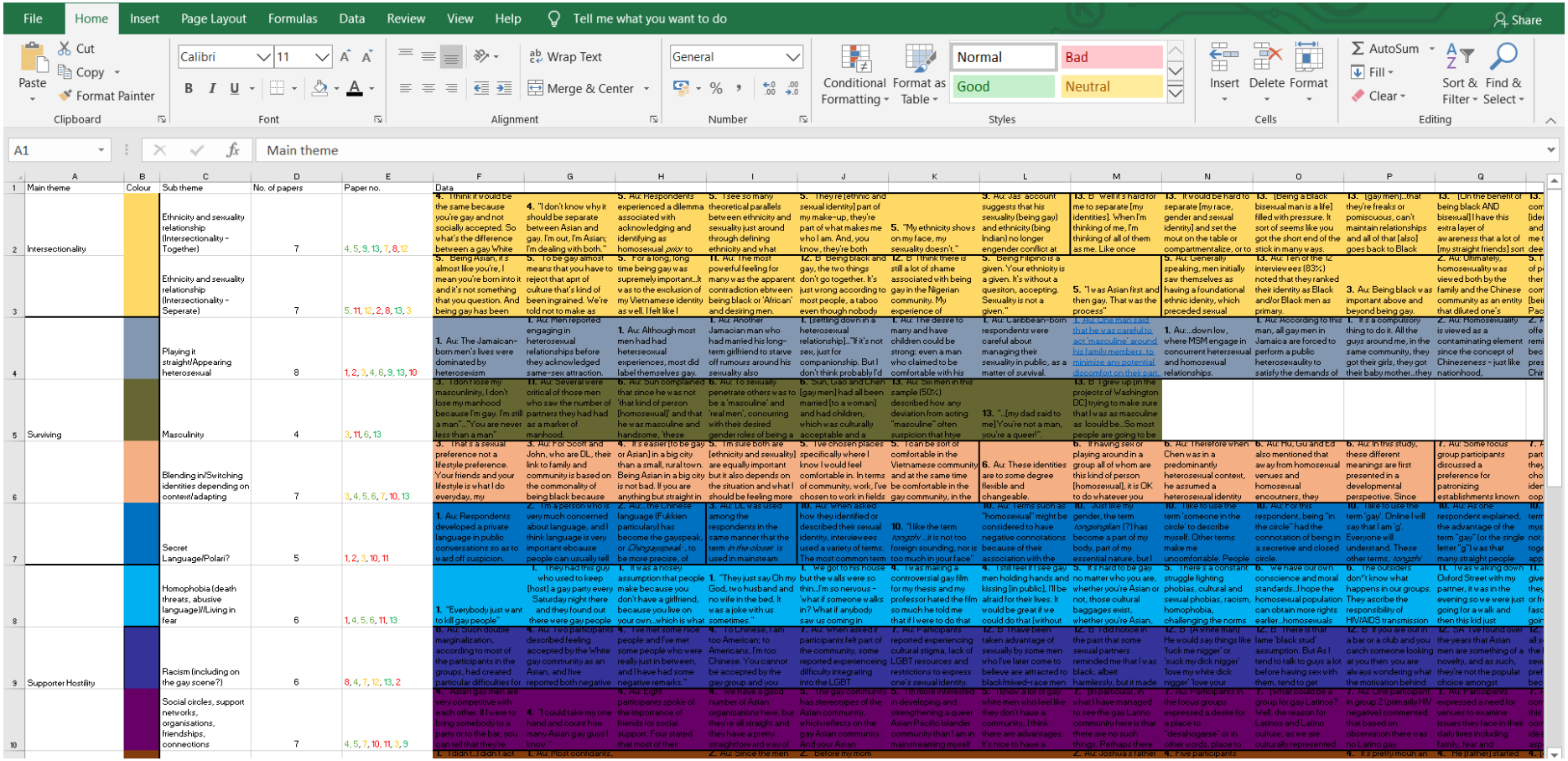
	A	B	C	D
1	Paper name	Liminal identities: Caribbean men who have sex with men in London, UK	Sexuality, ethnicity and language: exploring Chinese Filipino male homosexual identity	Good Cake: An Ethnographic Trilogy of Life Satisfaction am
2	**Main theme 1**	**Heterosexism**	**Being chinese**	**Being Black**
3	*Subtheme 1*			*Difficulty*
4	*Subtheme 2*			*Manhood*
5	*Subtheme 3*			*Relationship*
6	*Subtheme 4*			*Self-identificaiton*
7	*Subtheme 5*			*Support*
8	**Main theme 2**	**Discovering Sexuality**	**Being Intsik**	
9	*Subtheme 1*			*DL*
10	*Subtheme 2*			*Perfect life*
11	*Subtheme 3*			*Satisfaction*
12	*Subtheme 4*			*Social integration*
13	*Subtheme 5*			
14	*Subtheme 6*			
15	*Subtheme 7*			*Who out to*
16	**Main theme 3**	**Coming Out**	**De-sinicization and homosexuality**	
17	*Subtheme 1*			*Fem*
18	*Subtheme 2*			*Perference versus lifestyle*
19	*Subtheme 3*			*Self concept*
20	*Subtheme 4*			*Spirituality*
21	*Subtheme 5*			
22	**Main theme 4**	**Identity**	**Ethnicity and sexual partnerships**	
23	*Subtheme 1*			
24	*Subtheme 2*			
25	*Subtheme 3*			
26	**Main theme 5**	**Religion**	**Langauge, ethnicity and sexuality**	
27	*Subtheme 1*			
28	*Subtheme 2*			
29	*Subtheme 3*			

APPENDIX 3 – Example of the Development of Themes (data was initially grouped together using a colour coding scheme, each colour representing an early theme)



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Author	Title	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract	Data Extract
2	Anderson	Liminal identities: Caribbean men who have sex with men in London, UK	Au: The Jamaican-born men's lives were dominated by heterosexism	"Everybody just want to kill gay people"	"They had this guy who used to keep [host] a gay party every Saturday night there and they found out there were gay people there, and they	"It was a nosey assumption that people make because you don't have a girlfriend, because you live on your own…which is what [my]	"They just say Oh my God, two husband and no wife in the bed. It was a joke with us sometimes."	"Obviously being brought up in a very religious kind of family, my family was against being gay".	Au: Most men were aware of their same-sex attraction at an early age.	"When I was going to primary school, back in Jamaica, I just knew that I was different, because like when I should be tehre having fun with the	"I didn't…I didn't act on it. I didn't actually feel comfortable with it either, because I was being brought up and always being told it's a	"So I'd got some girl pregnant when I was like 18 or 19…and that was that…I knew the day she told me she was pregnant, I knew I	Au: Men reported engaging in heterosex relationships before t acknowledged same-s attraction.
3	Baytan	Sexuality, ethnicity and language: exploring Chinese Filipino male homosexual identity	NOTES: First theme is about being chinese and how they became Chinese, not relevant. However it could be relevant if people	"Being a Chinese and homosexual are the same in the Philippines. Being Chinese means you are basically a racial or ethnic minority; being a	Au: Chinese Filipino gays conscious of their status as a minority within a minority-saw their struggled for sexual equality as coterminous	Au: Homosexuality is viewed as a contaminating element since the concept of Chineseness - just like nationhood, citizenship,	Au: Since the men are gay, they have experienced alientation from their own friends and families, and this was evidence in their	"Before my mom died, I was saying to myself, I won't come out to her. I would rather wait till she died, I was saying to myself, I won't come out	"I can never talk to my family about my lifestyle because I don't want to hurt them".	Au: Ultimately, homosexuality was viewed both by the family and the Chinese community as an entity that diluted one's	Au: No one wants to come out in the open and cause their family 'shame'.	Au: Partner choice offers a constant reminder of ethnicity because of the pressures to find a Chinese (opposite-sex) partner to fulfil their	Au: All the men in this study had experience both direct and indir pressures from their family to marry.
4	Christian	Good Cake: An Ethnographic Trilogy of Life Satisfaction among Gay Black Men	Au: DL, which stands for down low, refers to living a secretive gay life or only being "out" to a select group of other gay men.	Au: DL was used among the respondents in the same manner that the term *in the closet* is used in mainsteam vernacular.	Au: DL men pride themselves in their masculine appearance and persona, which enhance their ability to remain DL. For example,	Au: Fem describes the stereotype for effeminate gay men, and fem men were also referred to as "sissies".	"There's an expectation of being feminine. I can't necessarily buy that. I have no desire to be a woman. I have no desire to act like a woman.	Au: The respondents concurred that being fem is not only unmanly but also unattractive.	For the most part, all men want a man. And that's what it's about. Attracted to men, not women. That's hwy feminine guys have it so	That's a sexual preference not a lifestyle preference. Your friends and your lifestyle is what I do everyday, my environment, my culture.	"When you gay, you can't be fat or you don't get none, and you don't get a man and you don't get a date".	"I don't lose my masculinlity, I don't lose my manhood because I'm gay. I'm still a man"…"You are never less than a man"	"Being gay is not a culture that transcen dominant culture. Be black and gay is different from being white and gay in term
5	Chung	Racial and Sexual Identities of Asian American Gay Men	Au: All participatns stated that they first recognized same-sex attraction during early adolescence (10-14 years, with most stating	Au: Four stated that they tried to date females in order to appear heterosexual.	AU: Four participatns spoke of sexual exploration as part of their journey coming out.	"I felt so lonely because I did not know anyone else who was gay"	"When I came out, I thought I was the only Asian gay male in the whole country".	"I was very homophobic and I had a hard time accepting the fact that I was who I really am. At first I was against it because I didn't want to	"I was noticing that the people I watched were guys. There was a lot of self-flagellation and self-loathing and self-isolation that resulted	Five participants stated that they had never explicitly told their parents that they were gay, even though they believed their parents	Au: Three reported that they avoided talking about the issue in an effort to avoid confrontation.	"It's pretty much an open secret. I guess we deal with it in the cold Chinese way - you don't talk about it. They are okay with that. I think	"He [father] started saying how he hated and wished I was nev born. He was no long my father, and how I destroyed the whole
6	Operario	Dual identity among gay Asian Pacific Islander men	Au: Generally speaking, men initially saw themselves as having a foundational ethnic idenity, which preceded sexual identity	"I was Asian first and then gay. That was the process"	"Being Filipino is a given. Your ethnicity is a given. It's without a quesiton, accepting. Sexuality is not a given."	"As a child, my experiences were being 'Why am i different?'. That was the key question. Why have I been picked on? Why	"Being Asian, it's almost like you're, I mean you're born into it and it's not something that you question. And being gay has been both very	"To be gay almost means that you have to reject that aprt of culture that's kind of been ingrained. We're told not to make as much noise, not to	Au: Respondents experienced a dilemma associated with acknowledging and identifying as homosexual *prior* to any	"It was very systematic. I turned 24, went out, got literature. I knew where gay people congregated. I knew where to find publications. And then I	Au: Many gay Asian Pacific Islander men talked about the importance of developing a strong Asian Pacific Islander	"I'm sure there's a lot of people like me out there who are very comfortable with it [being gay and Asian Pacific Islander] but I	"For a long, long time being gay was supren important…It was to exclusion of my Vietnamese identity a well. I felt like I neede
7	Li	Negotiating homosexual identities: the experiences of men who have sex with men in Guangzhou	"It's natural to make love with my wife. It cannot be refused, avoided, and chosen…I feel that I am also happy with my wife. It is two different	Au: Sun complained that since he was not 'that kind of person [homosexual]' and that he was masculine and handsome, 'these kinds	No matter men or women, if I like them, the same, after I ejaculate, the thing is finished. If I don't like them, it is difficult for me to	Au: Heterosexual marriage was reguarded as natural and as a kind of social obligation that could not be challenged. Some of the men had	Au: To sexually penetrate others was to be a 'masculine' and 'real men', concurring with their desired gender roles of being a man,	The life in countryside was quite boring and no fun…there was no anything about Tongzhi at all, neither gay men….It was just	Au: Before Chen went ot the countryside in the late 1970s, he had been in a relationship with his female classmate.	Sun, Gao and Chen [gay men] had all been married [to a woman] and had children, which was culturally acceptable and a	…at that time I didn't know that kind of person [homosexuals] and *yu chang* [homosexual venues], and when I penetrated her, I felt	Au: With growing homosexual identity increased his sexual interest and activities with men and correspondingly	"I think I was born to homosexual…When I was about 20 years o realised I was homosexual. I loved male classmate in se
8	Vega	Sexo y la Ciudad: Sexual, Ethnic and Social Identity Intersections of Latino Gay Men in New York City	Au: Across all focus groups, participants emphasized wanting to be seen as a "whole person", "Human being".	Au: When asked if participants felt part of the community, some reported experieceing difficulty integrating into the LGBT community.	Au: In particular, in what I have managed to see the gay Latino community here is that there are no such things. Perhaps there are clubs, but they	Au: Unfortunately, our community has many myths and [inaudible] and still live in century Ten. I think people have	Au: Participants in the focus groups expressed a desire for a place to "desahogarse" or in other words, place to vent and communicate to	Au: Participants found a group for gay Latinos? Well, the reason for Latinos and Latino culture, as we are culturally represented groups gay	Au: Participants reported experiencing cultural stigma, lack of LGBT resources and restrictions to express one's sexual identity.	Au: One participant remarked that the expectation is to "not talk or tell anyone".	Au: Some focus group participants discussed a preference for patronizing establishments known as "gay establishments"	Au: One participant in group 2 (primarily HIV negative) commented that based on observation there was no Latino gay	Au: Participants expressed interest in learning and explorir American "gay cultur In terms of having se with men several of t

APPENDIX 4 – Example of the Thematic Structure (data was organised into themes, with each row corresponding to a theme)



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	
1	Main theme	Colour	Sub theme	No. of papers	Paper no.	Data												
2	Intersectionality		Ethnicity and sexuality relationship (Intersectionality – Together)	7	4, 5, 9, 13, 7, 8, 12	**4.** "I think it would be the same because you're gay and not socially accepted. So what's the difference between a gay White	**4.** "I don't know why it should be separate between Asian and gay. I'm out, I'm Asian; I'm dealing with both."	**5.** Au: Respondents experienced a dilemma associated with acknowledging and identifying as homosexual *prior* to	**5.** "I see so many theoretical parallels between ethnicity and sexuality just around through defining ethnicity and what	**5.** "They're [ethnic and sexual identity] part of my make-up, they're part of what makes me who I am. And, you know, they're both	**5.** "My ethnicity shows on my face, my sexuality doesn't."	**3.** Au: Jas' account suggests that his sexuality (being gay) and ethnicity (being Indian) no longer engender conflict at	**13.** B: "Well it's hard for me to separate [my identities]. When I'm thinking of me, I'm thinking of all of them as me. Like once	**13.** "It would be hard to separate [my race, gender and sexual identity] and set the mout on the table or compartmentalize, or to	**13.** "[Being a Black bisexual man is a life] filled with pressure. It sort of seems like you got the short end of the stick in many ways.	**13.** "[gay men]...that they're freaks or pomsexuous, can't maintain relationships and all of that [also] goes back to Black	**13.** "[On the benefit of being black AND bisexual]] I have this extra layer of awareness that a lot of [my straight friends] sort	**13.** com [ide and me dee
3			Ethnicity and sexuality relationship (Intersectionality – Seperate)	7	5, 11, 12, 2, 8, 13, 3	**5.** "Being Asian, it's almost like you're, I mean you're born into it and it's not something that you question. And being gay has been	**5.** "To be gay almost means that you have to reject that aprt of culture that's kind of been ingrained. We're told not to make as	**5.** "For a long, long time being gay was supremely important...It was to the exclusion of my Vietnamese identity as well. I felt like I	**11.** Au: The most powerful feeling for many was the apparent contradiction ebtween being black or 'African' and desiring men.	**12.** B: "Being black and gay, the two things don't go together. It's just wrong according to most people, a taboo even though nobody	**12.** B: "I think there is still a lot of shame associated with being gay in the Nigerian community. My experience of	**5.** "Being Filipino is a given. Your ethnicity is a given. It's without a question, accepting. Sexuality is not a given."	**5.** "I was Asian first and then gay. That was the	**5.** Au: Generally speaking, men initially saw themselves as having a foundational ethnic identity, which preceded sexual	**13.** Au: Ten of the 12 interviewees (83%) noted that they ranked their identity as Black and/or Black men as primary.	**3.** Au: Being black was important above and beyond being gay.	**2.** Au: Ultimately, homosexuality was viewed both by the family and the Chinese community as an entity that diluted one's	**5.** I of p ther com [bei Pac
4			Playing it straight/Appearing heterosexual	8	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 13, 10	**1.** Au: The Jamaican-born men's lives were dominated by heterosexism	**1.** Au: Men reported engaging in heterosexual relationships before they acknowledged same-sex attraction.	**1.** Au: Although most men had had heterosexual experiences, most did label themselves gay.	**1.** Au: Another Jamacian man who had married his long-term girlfriend to starve off rumours around his sexuality also	**1.** [getting down in a heterosexual relationship]..."It's not sex, just for companionship. But I don't think probably I'd	**1.** Au: The desire to marry and have children could be strong; even a man who claimed to be comfortable with his	**1.** Au: Caribbean-born respondents were careful about managing their sexuality in public, as a matter of survival.	**1.** Au: [The man said that he was careful to act 'masculine' around his family members...to minimise any potential discomfort on their part	**1.** Au:...down low, where MSM engage in concurrent hetersexual and homosexual relationships.	**1.** Au: According to this man, all gay men in Jamaica are forced to perform a public heterosexuality to satisfy the demands of	**1.** It's a compulsory thing to do it. All the guys around me, in the same community, they got their girls, they got their baby mother...they	**2.** Au: Homosexuality is viewed as a contaminating element since the concept of Chineseness – just like nationhood,	**2.** A offe remi bec pres Chir
5	Surviving		Masculinity	4	3, 11, 6, 13	**3.** "I don't lose my masculinity, I don't lose my manhood because I'm gay. I'm still a man"..."You are never less than a man"	**11.** Au: Several were critical of those men who saw the number of partners they had had as a marker of manhood.	**6.** Au: Sam complained that since he was not 'that kind of person [homosexual]' and that he was masculine and handsome, 'these		**6.** Au: To sexually penetrate others was to be a 'masculine' and 'real men', concurring with their desired gender roles of being a	**13.** Au: Sam in this sample (50%) described how any deviation from acting "masculine" often suspicion that htye	**13.** "...[my dad said to me] 'You're not a man, you're a queer!'".						
6			Blending in/Switching identities depending on context/adapting	7	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13	**3.** That's a sexual preference not a lifestyle preference. Your friends and your lifestyle is what I do everyday, my	**3.** Au: For Scott and John, who are DL, their link to family and community is based on the commonality of being black because	**4.** It's easier [to be gay or Asian] in a big city than a small, rural town. Being Asian in a big city is not bad. If you are anything but straight in	**5.** I'm sure both are [ethnicity and sexuality] are equally important but it also depends on the situation and what I should be feeling more	**5.** I've chosen places specifically where I know I would feel comfortable in. In terms of community, work, I've chosen to work in fields	**5.** I can be sort of comfortable in the Vietnamese community and at the same time be comfortable in the gay community, in the	**6.** Au: These identities are to some degree flexible and changeable.	**6.** "If having sex or playing around in a group all of whom are this kind of person [homosexual], it is OK to do whatever you	**6.** Au: Therefore when Chen was in a predominantly heterosexual context, he assumed a heterosexual identity	**6.** Au: Hu, Gu and Ed also mentioned that away from homosexual venues and homosexual encoutners, they	**6.** Au: In this study, these different meanings are first presented in a developmental perspective. Since	**7.** Au: Some focus group participants discussed a preference for patronizing establishments known	**7.** A part they cho ider cop
7			Secret Language/Polari?	5	1, 2, 3, 10, 11	**1.** Au: Respondents developed a private language in public conversations so as to ward off suspicion.	**2.** "I'm a person who is very much concerned about language, and I think language is very important ebcause people can usually tell	**2.** Au:...the Chinese language (Fukkien particulary) has become the gayspeak, or *Chngyaspeak*', to be more precise, of	**3.** Au: DL was used among the respondents in the same manner that the term *in the closet* is used in mainstream	**10.** Au: When asked how they identified or described their sexual identity, interviewees used a variety of terms. The most common term	**10.** "I like the term *ngzzrk*'...it is not too foreign sounding, nor is too much in your face"	**10.** Au: Terms such as "homosexual" might be considered to have negative connotations because of their association with the	**10.** Just like my gender, the term *ngngngkan* (?) has become a part of my body, part of my essential nature, but I	**10.** "I like to use the term 'someone in the circle' to describe myself. Other terms make me uncomfortable. People	**10.** Au: For this respondent, being "in the circle" had the connotation of being in a secretive and closed circle.	**10.** "I like to use the term 'gay'. Online I will say that I am 'g'. Everyone will understand. These other terms, *ngzzrk*/	**10.** Au: As one respondent explained, the advantage of the term "gay" (or the single letter "g") was that many straight people	**10.** term mys not tog app
8			Homophobia (death threats, abusive language)/Living in fear	6	1, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13	**1.** "Everybody just want to kill gay people"	**1.** "They had this guy who used to keep [host] a gay party every Saturday night there and they found out there were gay people	**1.** It was a nosey assumption that people make because you don't have a girlfriend, because you live on your own...which is what	**1.** "They just say Oh my God, two husband and no wife in the bed. It was a joke with us sometimes."	**1.** "we got to his house but the walls were so thin...I'm so nervous – 'what if someone walks in? What if anybody saw us coming in	**4.** "I was making a controversial gay film for my thesis and my professor hated the film so much he told me that if I were to do that	**4.** "I still feel if I see gay men holding hands and kissing [in public], I'll be afraid for their lives. It would be great if we could do that [without	**5.** "It's hard to be gay no matter who you are, whether you're Asian or not, those cultural baggages exist, whether you're Asian,	**5.** "There's a constant struggle fighting phobias, cultural and sexual phobias, racism, homophobia, challenging the norms	**6.** "We have our own conscience and moral standards...I hope the homosexual population can obtain more rights earlier...homosexuals	**6.** "The outsiders don"t know what happens in our groups. They ascribe the responsibility of HIV/AIDS transmission	**11.** "I was walking down Oxford Street with my partner, it was in the evening so we were just going for a walk and then this kid just	**11.** give they or fr fasc goin
9	Supporter Hostility		Racism (including on the gay scene?)	6	8, 4, 7, 12, 13, 2	**6.** Au: Such double marginalization, according to most of the participants in the groups, had created particular difficulties for	**4.** Au: Two participants described feeling accepted by the White gay community as an Asian, and five reported both negative	**4.** "I've met some nice people and I've met some people who were really just in between, and I have had some negative remarks."	**4.** "To Chinese, I am too American; to Americans, I'm too Chinese. You cannot be accepted by the gay group and you	**7.** Au: When asked if participants felt part of the community, some reported experiencing difficulty integrating into the LGBT	**7.** Au: Participants reported experiencing cultural stigma, lack of LGBT resources and restrictions to express one's sexual identity.	**12.** B: "I have been taken advantage of sexually by some men who I've later come to believe are attracted to black/mixed-race men	**12.** B: "I did notice in the past that some sexual partners reminded me that I was black, albeit harmlessly, but it made	**12.** B: "[He's the man] He would say things like 'fuck me nigger' or 'suck my dick nigger' 'love your white dick nigger' 'love your	**12.** B: "There is that lame 'black stud' assumption. But As I tend to talk to guys a lot before having sex with them, tend to get	**12.** B: "If you are out in a bar or a club and you catch someone looking at you then you are always wondering what the motivation behind	**12.** SA: "I've found over the years that Asian men are something of a novelty, and as such, they're not the populat choice amongst	**12.** all s the sex pref bec
10			Social circles, support networks, organizations, friendships, connections	7	4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 3, 9	**4.** "Asian gay men are very competitive with each other. If I were to bring somebody to a party or to the bar, you can tell that they're	**4.** "I could take my one hand and count how many Asian gay guys I know."	**4.** Au: Eight participants spoke of the importance of friends for social support. Four stated that most of their	**4.** "we have a good number of Asian organizations here, but they're all straight and they have a pretty straightforw ard way of	**5.** "The gay community has stereotypes of the Asian community, which reflects on the gay Asian community. And your Asian	**5.** "I'm more interested in developing and strengthening a queer Asian Pacific Islander community than I am in mainstreaming myself	**5.** "I know a lot of gay white men who feel like they don't have a community...I think there are advantages. It's nice to have a	**7.** "[In particular, in what I have managed to see the gay Latino community here is that there are no such things. Perhaps there	**7.** Au: Participants in the focus groups expressed a desire for a place to "desahogarse" or in other words, place to	**7.** "[What could be a group for gay Latinos? Well, the reason for Latinos and Latino culture, as we are culturally represented	**7.** Au: One participant in group 2 (primarily HIV negative) commented that based on observation there was no Latino gay	**7.** Au: Participants expressed a need for venues to examine issues they face in their daily lives including family, fear and	**7.** com idea asp

APPENDIX 5 – Letter of Ethical Approval

Dear [Research Supervisor]

Re: "The personal experiences of gay Muslim men in relation to their homosexuality"
Application for Ethical Review ERN_18-2132

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project, which was reviewed by the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Ethical Review Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, I confirm that this study now has full ethical approval.

I would like to remind you that any substantive changes to the nature of the study as described in the Application for Ethical Review, and/or any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee's attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review.

Please also ensure that the relevant requirements within the University's Code of Practice for Research and the information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (available at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Links-and-Resources.aspx) are adhered to and referred to in any future applications for ethical review. It is now a requirement on the revised application form (https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-Forms.aspx) to confirm that this guidance has been consulted and is understood, and that it has been taken into account when completing your application for ethical review.

Please be aware that whilst Health and Safety (H&S) issues may be considered during the ethical review process, you are still required to follow the University's guidance on H&S and to ensure that H&S risk assessments have been carried out as appropriate. For further information about this, please contact your School H&S representative or the University's H&S Unit at healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

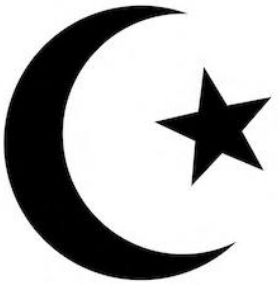
Kind regards

Susan Cottam
Research Ethics Officer
Research Support Group
C Block Dome
Aston Webb Building
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston B15 2TT
Tel:
Email: _____
Web: https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/RSS/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/index.aspx

APPENDIX 6 – Advertising Poster and Leaflet

EXPERIENCES OF GAY MUSLIM MEN

Are you a gay Muslim man?





Would you like to share your experiences with someone as part of a research project?



Are you at least 18 years old and have a good command of spoken English?



If you answered yes to these questions then we would love to hear from you!



If you would like additional information about this research project...

E-MAIL Experienceproject2019@gmail.com

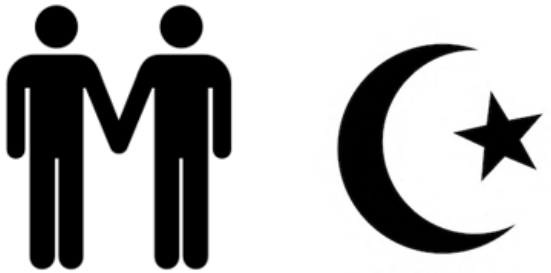
Contact us for more information about this research project!

Experienceproject2019@gmail.com

THANK YOU!

EXPERIENCES OF GAY MUSLIM MEN

RESEARCH PROJECT



ADVERTISING LEAFLET

Introduction

Being a gay and Muslim man can be a difficult and confusing experience for some individuals. There is little research out there that looks at these experiences and we would like to talk to men who have had these experiences.



What would happen if I wanted to join in?

You can firstly contact us, using the contact details on the back page. Then Edd will answer any questions and ask if you are interested in being interviewed. He will then arrange a time and date with you to do an interview or to provide more information. This would usually be during the Hidayah meetings.



What do I talk about?

Anything related to your experiences of being a gay and Muslim man. You are not obliged to talk about things that you don't want to talk about. You may find some parts of it uncomfortable to talk about but you can go at your own pace. It's understandably a sensitive area for some.

What if I decide that I don't want to be interviewed anymore?

That's ok! Just let Edd know and he will stop the interview. He will talk with you afterwards to check that you are OK. He can also recommend some services for additional support should you need it. Also, this won't impact on your membership with the Hidayah. You can still attend the meetings and social groups without any consequences.

APPENDIX 7 – Participant Information Sheet

14th December 2018

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Information Sheet for Participants

Study Title: The personal experiences of gay Muslim men in relation to their homosexuality

Introduction:

You are being invited to take part in the present study. Please take the time to read through the following information. Ask the person who provided you with the information sheet if you have any questions or would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the present study is to hear about your personal experiences as a gay Muslim man. Previous research suggests that gay Muslim men experience a range of challenging emotions when thinking about their sexuality and we would like to hear about your perspective and lived experience. The study is in the form of an interview between you and the principal researcher, which will be audio-recorded.

Do I have to take part? / What's involved?

It is entirely up to you whether you take part in the present study or not. If you decide to take part, you will keep this information sheet and a meeting in the form of an interview will be arranged with you, which last for about one hour. Once the interview has been completed, the audio recording will be transcribed verbatim for the purpose of analysis. No personally identifying information will be recorded in the transcript. Even if you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw from the study at any time up until **two weeks after the interview**, without having to give any reason. Withdrawing from the study will not affect you or have any negative consequences on your access to or support received by Hidayah.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information that is obtained during the course of the study will be kept strictly confidential. No personally identifying information will be included in any write-up of the results of this

study. Quotes will be used in the write-up, however these will be carefully chosen not to reveal any identifying information about yourself or any other participant.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Given the sensitivity of this area is, you may find it upsetting to talk about it during the interview. If this happens, please let the interviewer know and you can either take a break or terminate the interview. We can then take time discussing your well-being and signpost you to services for support, if you so wish.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Although it may be upsetting, the benefit is the opportunity to discuss your experiences of homosexuality openly, safely and in a non-judgmental environment. This could help you make sense of your experiences. Additionally, it would help us understand these experiences so we can consider ways of better supporting gay Muslim men in the future.

What happens to the research data?

The audio recording of the interview will immediately be uploaded to the University's secure server BEAR DataShare. The audio file will then be deleted on the Dictaphone. Only the researcher will have access to this file. He will then transcribe it and, upon finishing the transcription, the audio file will be deleted. The transcript will be anonymised and will be saved securely on the University's secure server, BEAR DataShare, behind a password protected wall. The transcript will be kept for 10 years in the University Archive, as per policy.

What will happen to the results of the study?

This research forms part of a doctoral thesis and this research will be included as part of the thesis submission. The results may be published in a scientific journal. No identifiable information will be released in any write-up of the results. Quotes will be used for illustrative purposes, however carefully selected to ensure that no identifying information is included.

Please ask if you have any questions.

APPENDIX 8 – Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Participant Number:

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The personal experiences of gay Muslim men in relation to their homosexuality

Name of Researcher: Edward Howard, Trainee Forensic and Clinical Psychologist

	Please initial box
1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated 14th December 2018 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the interview and up to two weeks after the interview without giving any reason and without me being affected or this having any negative consequences on my access to or support from the Hidayah.	☐
3. I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview up to two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.	☐
4. I understand that in the write-up of the results of this research my identity will be protected. This will be done by changing my name and removing any personally identifying information about myself or other people from the interview transcript.	☐
5. I agree to provide information that will be used for research purposes only and understand that all the information relating to myself obtained as part of the study will be strictly confidential.	☐
6. I understand that information will be stored in secure electronic files and is subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act.	☐
7. I agree to take part in the study.	☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature

APPENDIX 9 – List of Support Services for Participants

Support Services

If you would like additional support, below are some recommended organisations you can contact.

BAME Health & Wellbeing Hub – BAMEinfo@leeds.gov.uk – 0113 378 4892

This government service provides groups and social activities for BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) individuals in Leeds. They can recommend other services you could use.

COPE - https://www.copementalhealth.com/ - 07380 139 228

A Birmingham-based charity that provides support to BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) communities. They can provide support and recommend other services you could use.

NAZ project - https://www.naz.org.uk/ - 020 8741 1879

A London-based charity with a focus on BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) sexual health. They also provide a free counselling service.

Samaritans – https://www.samaritans.org/ - 116 123

A 24-hour service providing emotional support. You can ring them for free for support to help you explore your thoughts and feelings. You can also e-mail them (jo@samaritans.org) or arrange a face-to-face appointment.

Sane Line – https://www.sane.org.uk/ – 0300 304 7000

Sane provides mental health emotional support during the hours of 4.30pm - 10.30pm every day.

The Mix - https://www.themix.org.uk/ - 0808 808 4994

The mix provides support for under 25s. You can access telephone support, 24 hour e-mail support, one-to-one online chat and counselling services.

You can also speak to your GP who will be able to recommend services near you.

APPENDIX 10 – Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

1.) Tell me a bit about your Islamic faith.
    a. **Prompt:** What's your experience of your faith?
    b. **Prompt:** What does it mean to you?
    c. **Prompt:** What meaning do you attach to your faith?

2.) Growing up, what was your experience of your family's/community's/friends view of gay men?
    a. **Prompt:** How did it make you feel?

3.) What was your awareness of your community's view towards gay Muslim men?
    a. **Prompt:** How did you experience this?
    b. **Prompt:** How did it make you feel?

4.) Tell me a bit about your experiences of being a gay man.
    a. **Prompt:** What was it like when you first realised you were gay?
    b. **Prompt:** How did you make sense of being a gay man?
    c. **Prompt:** What's it like being a gay man today?

5.) What feelings rose as a result of being both a Muslim and a gay man?
    a. **Prompt:** What thoughts did you have about this?
    b. **Prompt:** How did it make you feel?
    c. **Prompt:** What meaning did you attach to this?

6.) How did you cope with these feelings?
    a. **Prompt:** What did you do when you felt x?
    b. **Prompt:** What did you say to yourself when you felt x?

7.) What has been your positive experiences of being Muslim and gay?
    a. **Prompt:** What are the good things about being Muslim and gay?

APPENDIX 11 – Example of Step 2 and 3 of Analytical Process

Interview 1.

Emergent Themes (Objects of Concern)		Original Transcript	Exploratory comments (Experiential claims) Descriptive (normal text), *Linguistic (italic)*, Conceptual (underlined) comments and direct quotes
	1	I: Ok pop it there. Pop it nearer you. So can you tell me a bit	
	2	about your Islamic faith, tell me a little bit about that.	
	3		
Unescapable inherited faith	4	P: Islamic faith is-It comes from my parents. That's how I was	His **faith** was inherited, on par with inheriting genes. Something that can't be rid of easily.
	5	brought up so even though I want to change in myself, hide	
Hiding sexuality	6	it, that sort of thing and get away from religion. I still can't	Trying to hide his **sexuality**? Again, **sexuality** cannot be rid of as it can only be hidden.
	7	do it. I guess for me-and at the same time I don't consider	
Religion is inescapable	8	myself a religious either. It's just the faith still there, it's part	Religion and faith are different. Reinterpretation of the religion?
	9	of me. I do follow religion when I need to-It's hard to	
	10	explain.	
	11		
	12	I:Yeah	
	13		
	14	P:I-I'm-I am Muslim, yes yes.	
	15		
	16	I:Ok	
	17		
	18	[Pause]	
	19		
	20	I: So what does it mean to you then? Your religion, what	
	21	does it mean to you?	
	22		
Perks of following religion	23	P: It means to me a lot. I mean, a lot of good stuff about it, I	**Religion** has lots of good *stuff. Word stuff I interpret as a collection of little things. Lots of little perks when following this religion.*
	24	mean if somebody really wanna know actual Islam is that	
	25	there's a lot of good things about it. So it depends how you	"If somebody really wanna know Islam… (etc) – Infering that **Islam** is interpreted negatively by those naïve to the religion?
Need to follow Islam to understand it	26	how you take it, how you perceive me after-after you know	
	27	actually know about our religion so to me it does mean a lot	There are many many things – I am more than my religion.
Religion is meaningful to him	28	to me and there are many many things I am that's why I	
	29	have more reason to believe in my religion	
	30		

1

APPENDIX 12 – Example of Step 4 of Analytical Process

Themes

Participant 1

Theme	Quotes
Relationship with religion 1. Unescapable inherited faith 2. Religion is inescapable 3. Perks of following religion 4. Need to follow Islam to understand it 5. Unescapable religion 6. Changing approach to practicing religion 7. Loves his life without religion 8. Religion is meaningful to me 9. Religion does not bring comfort	**Relationship with religion** 1. : Islamic faith is-It comes from my parents. 2. I don't consider myself a religious either. It's just the faith still there, it's part of me 3. P: It means to me a lot. I mean, a lot of good stuff about it 4. I mean if somebody really wanna know actual Islam is that there's a lot of good things about it. So it depends how you how you take it, how you perceive me after-after you know actually know about our religion 5. Yes, so-so I can never ever get away from my religion 6. Like I said I'm not really religious anymore. I do follow a religion but when I need to I used offer prayers but no really religious anymore. I'm not going to say sometimes I pray during the day, I don't do it-well I don't know if my family hear that they would probably slap me! [laughs] 7. too. I learnt to love my life without religion. it's not because I'm Muslim and then that's what is making it good about it like good experience positive experienc 8. after you know actually know about our religion so to me it does mean a lot to

APPENDIX 13 – Example of Step 6 of Analytical Process

Participant 1 - Alic Participant 2 - Farhan Participant 3 - Hamza Participant 4 - Imran Participant 5 - Kamran
Pressure to conform to marital expectations ***I am forced to marry and this is not me/I cannot do this - Culture*** **Marriage pressures** Being made to marry Ignoring and lying to avoid being married Family Pressure to marry a girl **Family pressure to marry** Family pressure to marry a female **Pushing back on heterosexual marriage** Inevitability in heterosexual marriage A desire to escape from marriage Family pressure to get married Arrange marriage is outdated practice **The burden of arranged marriage** Parents dictated to him to get married Pushed into marriage Felt sorry for wife for being pushed into marriage Being told who you are going to get married to Pressure from parents to make marriage successful Arranged marriage did not feel right because I am gay No choice but to leave the marriage Strong negative feelings during marriage