

**The Many Coloured Rainbow: Exploring Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+
Individuals with Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds**

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	v
List of Tables	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Declaration	viii
Contribution Statement.....	ix
The Many Coloured Rainbow: Exploring Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+	
Individuals with Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds	1
Overview	1
Defining Terminology	1
<i>Inclusive Gender and Sexual Identity Labelling</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Refugee and Asylum-Seeker</i>	<i>3</i>
LGBTQIA+ Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Experiences.....	3
Identity Theories	4
Acculturation and Identity.....	6
Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Identity, Acculturation and Wellbeing	7
The current study.....	9
Method	10
Design.....	10
Participants.....	10
Procedure.....	13
Personal Reflexivity Statement	15
Data Analysis.....	15

Results	16
Overview	16
“Constantly Stuck in Two Worlds”: Navigating Multiple Identities	18
<i>The Power of Language and Labels</i>	<i>21</i>
Experiences in Countries of Origin have Formative Influences on Identity	23
<i>Family and Childhood Experiences</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Cultural and Religious Beliefs Directly Impact Identity and Wellbeing</i>	<i>25</i>
Gender and Sexual Identity Journey	28
Life as a Rainbow Refugee or Asylum-Seeker	32
<i>Negative Resettlement: Visible Differences and Diaspora Communities</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>“Your Life is Still in Limbo”: Issues with Protection Visas</i>	<i>34</i>
“Feeling Like You Belong Here is Really Important”: Safe Spaces and Faces	36
Discussion	38
Overview	38
Key Findings	39
Implications	43
<i>Theoretical Implications</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Applied Implications</i>	<i>44</i>
Strengths and Limitations	44
Future Research	46
Conclusion	47
References	49
Appendix A: Refugee/Asylum-Seeker Flyer	58

Appendix B: Service Provider Flyer	59
Appendix C: Refugee/Asylum-Seeker Information Sheet	60
Appendix D: Service Provider Information Sheet	66
Appendix E: Consent Form	72
Appendix F: Support Protocol.....	74
Appendix G: Interview Guide	76

List of Figures

Figure 1 <i>Thematic Map illustrating the interrelated relationships between study aims, themes and subthemes</i>	17
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List of Tables

Table 1 *Group One: Refugee/Asylum-Seeker Participant Characteristics* 11

Table 2 *Group Two: Service Provider Participant Characteristics* 12

Abstract

The experiences of LGBTQIA+ people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds, though diverse, can share common ground. Research shows that these individuals often must choose between their culture and their gender/sexual identity, frequently needing to conceal their identities to reduce the threat of victimisation in their country of origin. Research within this cohort is minimal, and in particular, very little research exists examining the impact these experiences may have upon identity and the relationship between identity and wellbeing in this cohort. This qualitative study examined interview accounts from 15 participants, including nine service providers from various industries and six LGBTQIA+ refugees ($n=3$) and asylum-seekers ($n=3$). Reflexive thematic analysis generated five themes, which were viewed through the lens of Narrative Identity, namely: 1) “Constantly Stuck in Two Worlds”: Navigating Multiple Identities, 2) Experiences in Countries of Origin have Formative Influences on Identity, 3) Gender and Sexual Identity Journey, 4) Life as a Rainbow Refugee or Asylum-Seeker, and 5) “Feeling Like You Belong Here is Really Important”: Safe Spaces and Faces. Findings highlighted how cultural systems, both in origin and resettlement countries, influence understandings of identity; particularly how experiences tied to cultural master narratives influence understanding and acceptance of a non-heteronormative identity and, in turn, how that impacts wellbeing. Findings further demonstrated that the emphasis on integration found within acculturation frameworks may not suit this cohort. The research points to the specific support needs of socially isolated LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers and a need for services at the intersection of their multiple marginalised identities.

Keywords: LGBTQIA+; refugees and asylum-seekers; narrative identity; gender and sexual identity; master narratives; acculturation

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published except where due reference is made. I give permission for the digital version of this thesis to be made available on the web, via the University of Adelaide's digital thesis repository, the Library Search and through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the School to restrict access for a period of time.

September 2022

Contribution Statement

[Student name] led the design of this study, including conceptualisation of the project, high-risk human research ethics application, background literature search, design of aims, design of advertisement material, participant recruitment, design of interview questions, collection of interview data, data analysis and authoring of the thesis.

In addition to supervision, [supervisor name] provided participant incentives in the form of a \$40 shopping voucher, and cross-checked themes. Furthermore, [supervisor name] provided feedback in the form of revisions to the text.

The Many Coloured Rainbow: Exploring Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+ Individuals with Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds

Overview

Psychological research with people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds often follows a framework centred around trauma; for example, much literature has explored the relationship between exposure to traumatic events, resulting psychological trauma, and the development of mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Fazel et al., 2005; Steel et al., 2009). In addition, the literature typically combines sub-groups of refugees/asylum-seekers, and very little research has considered specific identity or demographic characteristics, such as gender/sexual identity. Where there is research with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex and/or asexual/aromantic + (LGBTQIA+) refugees/asylum-seekers, it is again typically based on exploration of trauma and negative wellbeing (for a review, see Nematy et al., 2022). Research on the connections between wellbeing and identity in refugee/asylum-seeker populations is in its infancy, including how these populations may understand their gender/sexual identity and its links to wellbeing. Furthermore, little to no research links what is known about the life experiences of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers to understandings of identity or change to identity over time. As such, this study aims to 1) explore understandings of identity for LGBTQIA+ people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds, 2) map the key elements of the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers across pre- and post-resettlement that impact their identity and 3) outline the relationship between identity and wellbeing for this cohort.

Defining Terminology

Inclusive Gender and Sexual Identity Labelling

Terminology is an important consideration in this area of research as identity labels vary culturally, geographically, and generationally (Braquet, 2019; Moreno et al., 2020).

While some terms may feel representative of a community in one instance, their pathologizing or derogatory historical roots can still hold power in others. This is evident in terms such as ‘homosexual’, which has salient clinical roots, or terms like ‘queer’, which, while historically pejorative and often disliked by older individuals, has been reclaimed by younger generations (Braquet, 2019; Davies et al., 2021).

Furthermore, in nominally ‘western’ societies, heteronormativity predominates, which refers to how everyday practices, policies, and interactions frame individuals as heterosexual/cisgendered (Davies et al., 2021). This heteronormativity reinforces the belief that both gender and sexuality are binary, meaning male/female and man with woman, and imposes ‘western’ norms on identities that fall outside this heteronormative framework. However, many individuals from ‘non-western’ countries would not classify themselves following ‘western’ conceptualisations of identity, impacting the terms used (Moreno et al., 2020). As such, it is important to state that terms such as LGBTQIA+ are not universal, and the acronym itself has many variations, including LGBT and LGBTQIA2S+ as common choices, and that in some cultures, this acronym may not be a valid descriptor of expression of non-heteronormative identities (Braquet, 2019; Moreno et al., 2020).

However, for this research, LGBTQIA+ was chosen as an umbrella term for the variety of identities it incorporates (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual/aromantic) with the addition symbol (+) representing any and all non-binary identities (i.e., gender, sexuality, and/or bodily diverse) not represented by the LGBTQIA letters (Braquet, 2019; Davies et al., 2021). This choice was further justified by the fact that participants in this study understood the term more than other terms, such as gender and/or sexuality diverse. The terms gender identity (defined as an individual’s internal

view of their gender, which may or may not resemble their sex assigned at birth) and sexual identity (defined as the language and labels an individual uses to describe their sexual orientation) (Davies et al., 2021), will only be used when referring to that particular aspect of an individual's identity.

Refugee and Asylum-Seeker

This study includes individuals defined as 'refugees' (having had their claim for refugee status as stated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] convention of 1951 and the 1967 protocol approved (UNHCR, 2010)) and individuals defined as 'asylum-seekers' (typically still awaiting approval of their protection claims). However, it is recognised that refugee/asylum-seeker status alongside status as LGBTQIA+ does not represent the totality of an individual's identity, and as such, the terms used are not intended to be essentialising (Baak, 2021).

LGBTQIA+ Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Experiences

The experiences of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers, while varied, do have commonalities. For example, this cohort may experience severe and prolonged physical, verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse, often starting in childhood, within familial, social and community environments (Alessi et al., 2017; Hopkinson et al., 2017; Kahn, 2015; Reading & Rubin, 2011). Indeed, compared to refugees/asylum-seekers persecuted for other reasons (e.g., ethnic, or religious minority status), LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers are at increased risk of experiencing sexual abuse and persecution beginning in childhood (Grungras et al., 2009; Hopkinson et al., 2017). Research shows this prolonged abuse often contributes to the development of traumatic stress and symptom severity (Briere et al., 2008; Cloitre et al., 2009), as well as suicidal ideation, attempted suicide, depression, and substance misuse (Ryan et al., 2009).

Research shows that LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers often must choose between their culture and their gender/sexual identity. As such, they are frequently required to conceal at least some aspects of their identities to prevent or lessen the threat of abuse and victimisation while in their country of origin, which can have profound wellbeing and identity implications (Alessi et al., 2017; Lee & Brotman, 2011; Piwowarczyk et al., 2017). In fact, in a study of LGBT refugees from a wide range of countries, Alessi et al. (2017) found that hiding identity elicited the same feelings of distress as experiences of direct victimisation. Further, this concealment of identity has been shown to elevate distress beyond that linked to the discrimination itself (Zhou et al., 2019). Together, these findings demonstrate the psychological burdens that concealing a stigmatised identity can impose upon LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers (Alessi et al., 2017; Pachankis, 2007).

Importantly, these challenges may not be lessened after resettlement, where LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers may continue to face challenges such as discrimination based on their cultural identity as well as their LGBTQIA+ status. Again, these experiences may lead to ongoing psychological effects, including social avoidance, preoccupation with negative perceptions of their identity, and diminished self-efficacy (Pachankis, 2007). While much is known about refugee/asylum-seeker experiences of discrimination based on race or cultural background (Ziersch et al., 2020), much less is known when the focus is gender/sexual identity.

Identity Theories

Theories of identity within psychology that include a focus on development or change over time are often influenced by the work of Erik Erikson, who proposed a theory of personality and identity development split into eight psychosocial stages, each involving a 'crisis', which once overcome results in a shift in perspective toward one of the two developmental dimensions that define the stage (Erikson, 1950, 1968; Schultz & Schultz,

2016). The fifth stage of the theory, entitled identity cohesion versus role confusion, is posited to occur in adolescence, between the ages of 12 and 18, and involves the resolution of the crisis of identity and is thus most important to this thesis. This stage involves first experimentations with the many social roles available, seeking to consolidate and integrate these roles and perceptions of self into a personal ideology (Marcia, 1980). If successful, according to Erikson, the result is a congruent and cohesive self-identity, but if unsuccessful, an identity crisis is experienced, whereby confusion around roles persists and an individual may drift between experiences without commitment to any one identity (Erikson, 1950, 1968; Schultz & Schultz, 2016).

Marcia (1966, 1980) expanded upon Erikson's theory through the proposition of a spectrum approach. This spectrum involves the individual's commitment and exploration of their identity, resulting in one of the following four statuses: Identity Diffusion (a lack of both exploration of and commitment to alternatives within identity); Identity Foreclosure (commitment to an identity without exploring alternatives); Identity Moratorium (exploration of alternatives without commitment to any); and finally, Identity Achievement (exploration of alternatives and commitment to an identity) (Marcia, 1966, 1980; Schultz & Schultz, 2016).

A third key conceptualisation of identity is posed by McAdams (1988), again drawing upon the work of Erikson, and taking the form of a life-story model. This model, which has evolved over the past 40 years, is now often referred to as Narrative Identity and has been further expanded by various researchers (e.g., see McAdams, 2011 for an overview).

McAdams argued that Erikson's theory of identity as a crisis of adolescence should instead be seen as a life-long articulation of identity through one's life-story (McAdams, 1988, 2001, 2020). Specifically, he suggests that identity itself takes the form of a story, comprising characters, plots, themes and settings, and that people begin a process of reconstructing the past, perceiving the present, and anticipating the future through an evolving, internalised self-

story in adolescence (McAdams, 1988, 2001, 2011). Thus, for McAdams, identity is a way in which the self can be configured to help situate one into a psychosocial niche and provide a sense of purpose and coherence (McAdams, 2001).

Life-stories are, therefore, psychosocial constructions that individuals co-author alongside the social circles and cultural context within which their lives are situated, reflecting the values and ideologies of the time (McAdams, 2001, 2020). In line with this, McLean et al. (2007) developed a sociocultural model that can be used to examine these narrative identities, suggesting that identity broadens and develops as individuals process, edit, and retell their stories (McLean et al., 2007).

While the theories of Erikson and Marcia are key identity theories and models used in much psychological research related to identity and identity development, Narrative Identity was drawn on in this thesis due to its inclusion of change over time (e.g., pre- and post-resettlement), flexibility (important for exploratory research) and previous use in research with both refugees/asylum-seekers (Bek-Pedersen & Montgomery, 2006; Puvimanasinghe et al., 2015) and LGBTQIA+ people (Bradford & Syed, 2019; Cohler & Hammack, 2006).

Acculturation and Identity

The next theoretical concept likely to relate to identity and wellbeing for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers is that of acculturation. Acculturation refers to the process of cultural adaptation and modification that occurs when people of different cultural origins make contact (Berry, 1997; Gibson, 2001). The current dominant thought is that acculturation is a bilinear, multidimensional process where an individual faces two central issues across multiple domains and dimensions; their orientation to the dominant culture and their orientation to their heritage culture (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013; for a review, see Schwartz et al., 2010). Further, an individual may orient themselves to either, both or neither the dominant culture nor heritage culture to varying degrees across different sociocultural

contexts. Integration, when an individual identifies equally with the dominant and heritage culture, is typically associated with greater psychological adjustment (for a review, see Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013).

Schwartz et al. (2006) suggest that identity and acculturation are linked, in that coherence in one's personal identity, the beliefs, values, and goals an individual holds separate to those of their cultural group, may act as a protective factor during the destabilisation that often occurs during resettlement. For refugees/asylum-seekers without coherence in personal identity, identity distress (distress caused as a result of the inability to unite the various aspects of the self into a coherent whole (Guler & Berman, 2019)), may occur due to incompatibilities that may exist between heritage and resettlement cultures (Schwartz et al., 2006). Importantly, LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers may be at increased risk of identity distress due to the multiple interwoven social, cultural, and personal identities they must juggle during acculturation.

Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Identity, Acculturation and Wellbeing

As noted above, Narrative Identity provides a flexible lens through which to view the lives of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and to consider how identity may impact wellbeing. In the general population, Narrative Identity studies have shown that attaining a sense of personal coherency over time is associated with positive psychological wellbeing (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Tavernier & Willoughby, 2012).

In terms of LGBTQIA+ individuals generally, a small body of literature has explored Narrative Identity and wellbeing. For example, Cohler and Hammack (2006) suggest that the gay life-story is fundamentally learned through discourse, with the authors demonstrating, through the life-stories of three gay men from different generations, how social/cultural context impacted the stories they told (Cohler & Hammack, 2006). Drawing from Narrative Identity concepts, they demonstrated how heteronormative 'master narratives' (defined as

stories that are culturally shared and shape the beliefs, values, thoughts, and behaviours of a society (Bamberg, 2004; McLean & Syed, 2015)), place gay identity as a 'counter-narrative'. However, the social changes that occurred during the participants' lives resulted in less contention between the societal master narrative and the participants' counter-narratives, resulting in understandings of 'self' that were less subversive (Cohler & Hammack, 2006). Notably, these three men lived through these changes in 'western' contexts. However, it is likely that the master narratives in some refugees'/asylum-seekers' countries of origin may still emphasise the contested status of identities that are not heteronormative/cisgendered, and hence make it difficult for LGBTQIA+ individuals to develop their identity. Other research has also demonstrated the importance of master and counter-narratives for identity and wellbeing with members of the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly hetero/cisnormative narratives with transgender individuals (Bradford & Syed, 2019).

Very little literature has used Narrative Identity with refugees/asylum-seekers. What research there is has mainly, once again, focussed on trauma. For example, Puvimanasinghe et al. (2015) conducted a study with 25 refugees from two African countries, Sierra Leone and Burundi, and discovered a variety of narrative styles when discussing traumatic events ranging from near silence to detailed disclosure. Both styles of disclosure performed a function in terms of constructing tolerable narrative identities: either through more overt integration (detailed disclosure) or self-protection (silence) (Puvimanasinghe et al., 2015). As such, this study demonstrates different pathways to reconstruction of refugee/asylum-seeker narrative identities upon resettlement.

In terms of Narrative Identity and the specific population of interest in this study, given the experiences that many LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers have in their countries of origin, and the frequent lack of connections to communities in their resettlement countries, it could be postulated that their narrative identity may be stalled or built around cultural

beliefs that situate identity as flawed, defective, sick or even possessed (Alessi et al., 2016). For example, in a study of 26 LGBT refugees/asylum-seekers resettled in the US and Canada, Alessi et al. (2016) demonstrated that participants had internalised the negative messages often found in their communities about their gender/sexual identities. Further, while the integration strategy in acculturation models typically provides refugees/asylum-seekers with the opportunity to reorient their identities and maintain positive wellbeing in resettlement (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013), this approach relies on social inclusion. While refugees/asylum-seekers more broadly often have the social support of their families and diaspora communities in resettlement countries, LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers often lack these social support networks (Kahn, 2015; Lee & Brotman, 2011; Shidlo & Ahola, 2013), thereby reducing their capacity to utilise integration. Overall, then, it is important to examine how co-creating a life-story in an environment that is not conducive to one's identity – and where integration may not be an achievable mode of acculturation - impacts the development of identity and wellbeing for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers.

In summary, while there is a small body of research utilising Narrative Identity with refugees in general, to the author's understanding, there is no current literature with LGBTQIA+ refugee/asylum-seeker identities using this approach. While this study is exploratory, it is clear that Narrative Identity may be an informative lens through which to view LGBTQIA+ refugee/asylum-seeker experiences to provide new insights into the relationship between identity and wellbeing for this cohort.

The current study

Given the lack of research specific to LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers concerning identity and wellbeing, this qualitative, interview-based study aimed to 1) explore understandings of identity for LGBTQIA+ people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds, 2) map the key elements of the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers

across pre- and post-resettlement that impact their identity and 3) outline the relationship between identity and wellbeing for this cohort.

Method

Design

This study employed a contextualist epistemology, with a critical realist stance, which proposes that knowledge is context-dependent, situational, and informed by prior experience (Madill et al., 2000). Being a heterogenous sample of LGBTQIA+ refugees, asylum-seekers, and service providers, the participants' experiences are influenced by various sociocultural systems. Therefore, while their words are taken as representative of their personal experiences, the analysis was conducted with these broader sociocultural systems in mind (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Madill et al., 2000). Furthermore, reflexively, the student is situated in their own cultural system, which will inevitably impact the analysis of themes. Thus, reflexive thematic analysis was used, and analysis followed an inductive approach, due to the exploratory nature of the research, with an analytic focus on both semantic and latent meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019).

Participants

The study consisted of a total of 15 participants. Group One consisted of six LGBTQIA+ refugees ($n=3$) and asylum-seekers ($n=3$) from across Australia (SA, VIC, ACT, NSW, QLD), comprising various LGBTQIA+ identities and ages (ranging from 28 to 44 years, $M = 34.5$, $SD = 6.02$). (See Table 1). For confidentiality purposes some demographic details could not be reported (Saunders et al., 2015). Group Two consisted of nine service providers (SPs) from various professions (see Table 2).

Table 1*Group One: Refugee/Asylum-Seeker Participant Characteristics*

Name (pseudonym)	Country of Origin	Cultural Background/ Ethnicity	Arrival in Aus	Australian Visa Type	Gender Identity	Sexual Identity	Transgender	Religion
Martino	Iran	Persian	2006	Citizen	Male. He/Him	Gay	No	Spiritual
Travis	Iran	Persian	2010	Citizen	Male. He/Him	Gay	No	None
Charlie	Malaysia	Southeast Asian	2015	866	Non-Binary. They/Them	Queer/Asexual	Yes	Agnostic
Baxter	Kenya	Kenyan	2006	Bridging Visa A	Male. He/Him	Bisexual	No	Agnostic
Astaire	Kuwait	Arabian and Persian	2014	Bridging Visa A	Male. He/Him	Pansexual	Yes	Atheist
Aly	Malaysia	Indian	2018	Bridging Visa A	Female. She/Her	Heterosexual	Yes	Hindu

Table 2*Group Two: Service Provider Participant Characteristics*

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Country of Origin	Profession	State	Gender Identity	Sexual Identity	Type of Organisation	Length of time working with LGBTQIA+ Refugees
Kali	32	Australia	Project Officer	VIC	Female	Heterosexual	CALD	2-3 years
Nathanial	30	Indonesia	Peer Support Officer	VIC	Male	Gay	LGBTQIA+ Refugee	3 years
Tatianna	42	Afghanistan	Case Management Supervisor	SA	Female	Heterosexual	Mainstream Refugee	10 years
Rob	40	Australia	LGBTQIA+ Community Worker	SA	Non- Binary	Queer	LGBTQIA+ Community	3 years
Joelle	59	Wales	Project Coordinator	SA	Female	Queer	Mainstream Health	6 years
Zayne	42	Northern Ireland	LGBTQIA+ Community Worker	SA	Male	Gay	LGBTQIA+ Community	8 years
Cameron	33	Australia	Lawyer	SA	Male	Heterosexual	Law Firm	9 years
Amanda	69	Australia	Migration Consultant	SA	Female	Heterosexual	Migration Consultancy	22 years
Violet	61	Australia	Community Development Worker	NSW	Female	Queer	Settlement Service	6 years

Procedure

Full ethics approval was granted by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee on 05 April 2022 (H-2022-055). Participant inclusion criteria for Group One included self-identifying as LGBTQIA+, being a refugee/asylum-seeker, being over 18 years of age, and an ability to read and write in English. Inclusion criteria for Group Two included being an SP (classified broadly as including for example, case workers, lawyers, mental health professionals) with experience working with LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers.

Recruitment commenced with information about the study in the form of a flyer (Appendix A-B) disseminated to mainstream, refugee focussed, and LGBTQIA+ focussed organisations ($n=40$). This resulted in 33% of the final sample, namely five participants from Group Two (e.g., SPs). In addition, social media was used to advertise the study with postings to four pages (with approval), and on the student's personal Facebook page. This returned 20% of the final participant group (Group One $n=1$, Group Two $n=2$). Additionally, snowball sampling was used, with participants asked to share the study flyers within their networks, which resulted in the final seven participants (47%; Group One $n=5$, Group Two $n=2$).

Interested participants were emailed an information sheet (Appendix C-D), which included a list of support services in case any distress was experienced, and a consent form (Appendix E). A support protocol was developed in case of significant distress (Appendix F) but was not required. All interviews were conducted via Zoom, which literature indicates is reliable and beneficial when conducting research with geographically and culturally diverse populations (Ahangari et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2020). LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers received a \$40 shopping voucher for participation.

Semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions (Appendix G). Two pilot interviews were conducted to ensure the questions reflected the research aims: the first with a gay man from a migrant family and the second an aromantic female migrant. These resulted in the addition of some basic identity questions to improve interview flow. Interviews with LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers covered three main areas: experiences in both origin and resettlement country, identity, and wellbeing, while interviews with SPs consisted of questions on their services, and thoughts around identity and wellbeing for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers. Interviews were iterative, such that questions were edited, added, or removed throughout the process in response to the evolving nature of the research.

While approaches to sample size in qualitative studies have often relied on the concept of data saturation (Guest et al., 2006), the idea of ‘nothing new’ arising inherent in data saturation was not compatible with this study due to the reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Instead, the data’s richness and complexity were used as a basis for when sampling could conclude (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2021). Further, the two participant groups allowed for triangulation, comparing the perspectives of those with lived experience and those working with individuals with lived experience (Tracy, 2010).

Overall, interview length ranged from 60 to 156 minutes ($M=98.47$, $SD=32.57$). Interviews with LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers averaged 133.84 ($SD=18.37$), and SPs averaged 74.89 ($SD=9.06$). All interviews were conducted between April and July 2022. Interviews were manually transcribed verbatim by the student to assist in data familiarisation and followed the orthographic method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All personally identifying information was removed, and the participants could choose to review their transcripts following best-practice process to ensure trustworthiness (Tracy, 2010). Eleven participants (73%) chose to review their transcripts (Group One $n=6$, Group Two $n=5$), with one SP

requesting to approve any excerpts used, which was obtained. Participants also chose pseudonyms.

Throughout the process, an audit trail was kept to enhance methodological rigour and ensure transparency and self-reflexivity, per Tracy's (2010) criteria. The audit trail included reflection on literature, interview questions and process, data, participant responses, and self-reflections, and helped inform future interviews, analysis, and interpretation of themes.

Personal Reflexivity Statement

The student researcher is an insider to this research, due to their status as a gender fluid, gay individual, while also being an outsider due to being a white, Australian-born individual. These two perspectives, alongside the student's knowledge of the field, may have influenced the interviews. However, self-reflexivity was practiced through continual introspection, including how the student's positionality as an insider and outsider to the research brought benefits and challenges (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the six stages proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Step One involved familiarisation with the data through manual transcription and repeated re-reading of the interview transcripts. Reflections, initial thoughts, and potential codes were recorded in the audit trail. Step Two involved a systematic and manual coding of each transcript, initially focusing on inductive semantic codes reflecting participants' experiences and understanding of identity and wellbeing. Further examination of each transcript was conducted at this stage to distil latent codes. Step Three involved collating all semantic and latent codes into meta-categories. These meta-categories were then reviewed and refined by the student to begin the establishment of the final themes in step Four, and further defined and named in step Five to generate the essence of each theme. The final stage, step Six, involved selecting extracts that

best reflected the themes while also ensuring resonance and credibility (Tracy, 2010) and producing the final report.

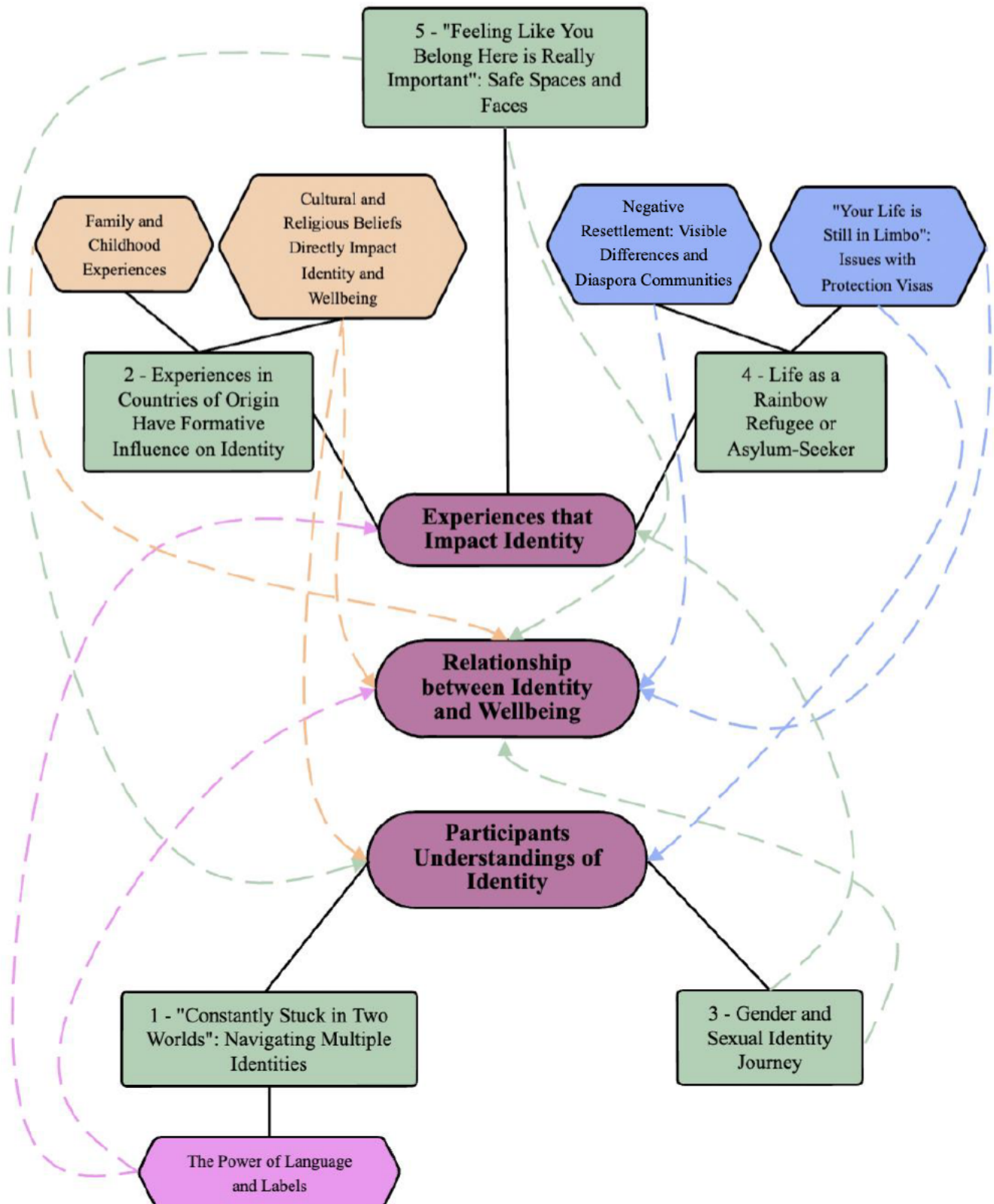
Results

Overview

Reflexive thematic analysis led to the development of five themes relating to the study aims, namely: “Constantly Stuck in Two Worlds”: Navigating Multiple Identities, Experiences in Countries of Origin have Formative Influences on Identity, Gender and Sexual Identity Journey, Life as a Rainbow Refugee or Asylum-Seeker and “Feeling Like You Belong Here is Really Important”: Safe Spaces and Faces. The themes included subthemes, and covered aspects of each aim, as illustrated in the thematic map (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Thematic Map illustrating the interrelated relationships between study aims, themes and subthemes



“Constantly Stuck in Two Worlds”: Navigating Multiple Identities

When responding to questions about identity, LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers described themselves in various ways. For some, their gender/sexual identities were not as salient as other identities, with instead an orientation to a generic identification as “human”. This was the case for Martino, a gay refugee from Iran who had been in Australia for 16 years:

I think we are all humans. I’m a human. These are all boxes. I strive for world and a time in history - we won't see it - that none of these labels and concepts even matter. [When] we don't divide people into these boxes, people don't need even to come out.

Other refugee/asylum-seeker participants incorporated their gender/sexual identity when first describing themselves. This was particularly important for Charlie, a refugee who had been in Australia for seven years and who holds multiple LGBTQIA+ identities, being a transgender, asexual refugee from Malaysia who identifies as queer and non-binary:

I would describe myself as, queer is the first, so I’m queer. Also, since I’m in Australia and I’m brown, I’m very visibly both, both queer and from a culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD] background...the CALD Community rarely has any outspoken queer people talking about it, so yeah...I kind of want to be that link that bridge between both.

As this extract shows, it was important for Charlie to incorporate not only their queer identity but also the fact that they are clearly from a CALD background (“I’m brown”), with both gender/sexual identity and cultural background at the forefront of their identity. This was so important to Charlie that they described combining these identities an active choice, including a desire to “bridge” both communities. Notably, Charlie did not mention refugee status in this initial discussion of identity.

Other refugee/asylum-seeker participants highlighted that their self-identification, and the way they presented their identity to others, had been a journey: often from being embarrassed about their identity – particularly concerning gender/sexual identity – to being comfortable and no longer ashamed. This was the case for Astaire, a transgender, pansexual asylum-seeker from Kuwait, who had been in Australia for eight years. Astaire described a journey from embarrassment about his asylum-seeker identity in particular, to “hav[ing] to explain” his status in the context of resettlement, and in the process also becoming unafraid of sharing his identity as transgender:

Before, I was embarrassed of my story as an asylum-seeker. As I told people I'm an asylum-seeker, I was confronted with the truth that I have to explain why I'm an asylum-seeker...and that's when I started to not be afraid to tell people I'm Trans because I am who I am, it's my story and I'm not ashamed of it.

Not only did the participants' descriptions and identity journeys vary, but their abilities to cope with navigating the multiple identities they held also varied. For example, Martino (refugee, Iran, gay man) mentioned that the way he thought of himself and his identities – including hiding them at times - was influenced by the environment he was in; specifically, he would “try to act straight, and to sound straight” in more conservative or religious environments. However, this wasn't a pleasant experience for him. He mentioned:

Changing my [identity] is a burden it's not comfortable. And I have to add that it wasn't because I would be unsafe, no one would attack me or do anything like that... It was, I just didn't want them to look down at me, and judge me, it was fear of judgment.

However, hiding or altering identities was not always something participants could do. Travis, a gay refugee also from Iran, who had been in Australia for 12 years, mentioned

that he could “never live two lives or many lives, you know kind of be underground” and that while at home in Iran, he “never tried to hide my sexual orientation”. Rather, it was the society that caused the issues:

So, at home, you know it was fine, but in the bigger society, I never felt that belonging, and trying to improve everybody's point of view it was becoming very difficult...it was really bothering me, it wasn't allowing me to live a happy life.

SPs also mentioned that LGBTQIA+ refugee/asylum-seeker clients felt a sense of “living a double life”, especially within diaspora communities in resettlement contexts such as Australia. Here, Rob, a queer, non-binary LGBTQIA+ Community Worker, mentioned:

That double life thing has popped up on occasion. [My clients] say they might go to [cultural] events, be the person they're expected to be. And then after, once they leave, they go back to being who they are. And it's hard, they do find it hard to do.

Further to this, Kali, a heterosexual Project Officer, explained how some clients could feel like they don't belong in either of their “worlds”:

There's that feeling of being constantly stuck in two worlds, both being rejected by their own families and communities, but also not fitting in mainstream Australian society as well...the whole process of migration itself brings up so many stresses, and then if you throw [gender/sexual identity] in the mix, it is quite a few conflicting identities.

Overall, both participant groups discussed challenges with navigating multiple identities and changes to those identities across their lives and migration journeys.

The Power of Language and Labels

As seen in the previous section, both participant groups discussed issues for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers that occurred at the intersection of multiple identities, with those identities changing over time. While LGBTQIA+ refugee/asylum-seeker participants discussed challenges with their gender/sexual and refugee/asylum-seeker identity at times, language itself - and associated labels - were frequently discussed, and thus forms a subtheme. The importance of language and labels is emphasised here by Violet, a queer Community Development Worker:

I think that the pathologization and demonization of LGBTQIA+ people globally have a massive impact...the words that people use and the way that those words are used are incredibly important. And across language and culture, those translations and interpretations can be massively alienating...language is important at three levels, one is the words that we're using, two is how those words translate and three is how does that translation have meaning.

A key component of the discussion of language by participants was the choice (or not) to use labels: relating to any or all components of participants' identities. The use of specific labels was sometimes seen as protective by participants. Interestingly, these labels were often unrelated to their gender/sexual identity, cultural identity, or refugee/asylum-seeker status. Instead – and particularly in participants' schooling years - they were labels associated with other identities. For example, Martino discussed being labelled a “nerd” at school in Iran; a label he saw as deflecting discrimination based on his sexual identity. On the other hand, stigmatised labels related to gender/sexual identity could lead to bullying, with Martino mentioning: “I used to get bullied from time to time, equivalent Persian words of poof, poofter, sissy things like that”.

Importantly in terms of participants' identities as refugees/asylum-seekers crossing cultural boundaries, labels were seen as context-specific. For example, Aly, a transgender, heterosexual asylum-seeker from Malaysia, discussed the need for interpreters to "know what sort of word they [can] use because their choice of words or translation of a word can be traumatizing". She mentioned how there was a slur people could use in Malaysia, that would not seem derogative in other countries such as Australia:

So, they have a specific word they use that could hurt you, which is like really, really, really bad. So, nine, the number nine in Malaysia is another identification of how you could bully a Trans woman, the number nine.

Similarly, SPs mentioned how cultural beliefs in origin countries could impact clients' feelings about using stigmatised 'western' identity labels such as 'gay' or 'lesbian'. For example, Zayne, a gay male LGBTQIA+ Community Worker, mentioned that it might be challenging for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers to describe their identity using these sorts of labels, using the example of a recent client:

For a number of refugees and one recently, just saying the word to another person is quite an intense experience, quite a fearful and quite a scary experience. For this particular individual, it was the first time that they've actually said the word gay out loud, so as you can imagine that was a very, very hard moment for that individual.

Both participant groups said that as LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers progressed through their journeys and sometimes came to accept identities they had previously suppressed, they were more active in choosing labels they felt fit themselves, while others actively let go of labels altogether. For example, Joelle, a Project Coordinator who identifies as queer and has worked alongside refugees/asylum-seekers in various environments,

mentioned this choice to “let go” of identity labels with specific reference to “labels like asylum-seeker and refugee”, stating:

There’s just too much trauma attached to it and stigma. There’s a feeling of not wanting to remain attached to indeterminacy or that they want a kind of a certainty that “I am now this, this where I live, I now have some sense of security and certainty”.

Overall, both participant groups discussed how labels were used differently but often carried specific assumptions associated with social and cultural norms. Labels connected to ‘westernised’ identities were often seen as problematic by both participant groups, as were labels such as ‘refugee’.

Experiences in Countries of Origin have Formative Influences on Identity.

The pre-resettlement experiences of the refugee/asylum-seeker participants in this study were varied, but all participants discussed them as important in forming their identities, particularly concerning their gender/sexual identity. Two subthemes were identified in this regard: Family and Childhood Experiences, and Cultural and Religious Beliefs Directly Impact Identity and Wellbeing.

Family and Childhood Experiences

As part of their pre-resettlement experiences, LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers described their family and childhood experiences as key to forming identities. For example, Astaire disclosed a traumatic childhood, including instances of detainment and sexual abuse, describing how his stepfather: “used to rape me every night, and I could not tell my mother because I did not want to hurt her. And I could not scream because my little sister was sleeping in the same room.” Later he stated that his familial environment prevented him from “hav[ing] the freedom to explore my personality”.

Other refugee/asylum-seeker participants discussed prejudicial family attitudes towards their gender/sexual identity, including Baxter, a bisexual asylum-seeker from Kenya who had been in Australia for 16 years, who said he would be “ostracized” if he told his family of his sexual identity due to their conservative religious views. As such, he highlighted that distance from his family helped his wellbeing:

Being there [Kenya] I'd be too close to [family] and the abandonment would be so real. And God knows, given that I obviously have mental health stuff, ADHD and anxiety, I've always thought that it would've gone so much further, like getting major depression, developing even worse anxiety disorders, maybe suicidal ideations and like go back to drinking.

Both participant groups mentioned that non-disclosure with families was often connected to a “strong respect and desire to abide by your parents’ wishes” (Kali, SP) which can lead to concealing identities from families. For example, Aly (asylum-seeker, Malaysia, transgender, heterosexual woman) mentioned an incident that occurred after realising she couldn't cope with the pressure of concealing her gender identity any longer and went home to get her family's blessing: “they cut my hair, and then they want me to male dress again, they want me to change back”. While this was an incredibly traumatic event for Aly, it was also an identity-affirming moment of realisation once she managed to escape:

I ran away, and then I think, “oh no, I cannot do this anymore, I need to go for my final decision”, which is...where you go for surgery...I say that “okay next time if I go to step in and face my father, I cannot face my father without my changes”.

Even where families were open, the cultures and societies that refugee/asylum-seeker participants came from often prohibited full disclosure of their gender/sexual identity. For

example, Baxter (asylum-seeker, bisexual man) described a trip home to Kenya to see his family, noting that he restricted information to ease relationships:

The thing is that it's hard for an African parent to think about [the gender/sexual identity] of their kid, because it's so far away in the mind. So yeah, the interaction with my family was fine, but I'm pretty good at having relationships with people, which I've learned from my status by being more of a need-to-know basis.

SPs also mentioned this concern with sharing information with Cameron, a heterosexual Immigration Lawyer, explaining that it is often: "not only self-preservation but also preservation of their family members".

Overall, both participant groups felt that families – and the broader social and cultural environments in which they were situated - strongly influenced LGBTQIA+ refugees'/asylum-seekers' identities.

Cultural and Religious Beliefs Directly Impact Identity and Wellbeing

As seen above with families, the cultural and religious beliefs held in refugee/asylum-seeker participants' countries of origin often made it difficult to embrace their gender/sexual identity. For Astaire, these beliefs led to direct forms of abuse. For example, he discussed one incident when he and his stepsisters were dressed in men's clothes, and "a group of Kuwaiti men started calling [them] names":

They started saying sexual stuff like "come suck my dick" and "you're a slut". And then they came and started throwing punches at us, and told us, "Stay on the ground that's where you belong, you are filth", they see us, still they do, like sex objects, even worse than women, even worse than dogs, we're just basically a condom. (Astaire, asylum-seeker, Kuwait, pansexual, transgender man)

These beliefs also affected participants' feelings concerning their gender/sexual identities. For example, Baxter said that the stigmatised labels his culture placed on his sexual identity caused an internal conflict, and he found it difficult to reconcile his identity with the cultural beliefs he was brought up with:

Because I was raised religious, we're taught, well not even just taught, anything which is mentioned as 'gay' as 'homosexual' was always mentioned in a repugnant context or where it's not even part of our society. And that it's just vile...being so young, trying to think about what you're being raised with, all this religion stuff mentioning about sodomy and homosexuality being wrong, plus you having those feelings of being bisexual...reconciling those thoughts, well that's where the conflict was. (Baxter, asylum-seeker, Kenya, bisexual man)

Both participant groups indicated that cultural and religious beliefs and persecution towards gender/sexual identity were key reasons LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers left their countries of origin. For example, Charlie stated: "Because I had started transitioning, I had physical evidence, I guess or physical proof of doing something illegal, being something illegal". Similarly, Joelle (Project Coordinator, queer woman) explained:

It's very difficult if you've had to leave, not because you've been a persecuted community but because you've been a persecuted individual and your community has done the persecuting. There are all sorts of real complexities about what you can invest in, what you have to reject, and what that means for who you are.

SPs further mentioned the impact of cultural and religious beliefs on LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers, often referring to stigma-laden "misinformation":

You know that idea of men having sex with men then they'll get AIDS, and they'll die. That if you're a female and you like other females, then you just need to have sex with men, and you'll be fixed. That type of thing. (Rob, LGBTQIA+ Community Worker, non-binary, queer individual)

For some refugee/asylum-seeker participants, this misinformation felt like “brainwashing”, which continued to affect them even after resettlement. Astaire said:

I still have dreams that I have done the wrong thing, made the wrong decision, that maybe I'm suffering because, as my mother made me believe, that I deserve it, because I played with myself, with my, with my body.

Later in the interview, he went on to say:

This is how much religion is playing a toll on me. I really feel like I don't want to say this, but I might be insane ((pause)). You see how much it's playing a toll on me? That I still think that I might be crazy. The idea of being friends with Trans people like me makes me feel like, makes me feel like, I want to keep myself away. (Astaire, asylum-seeker, Kuwait, pansexual, transgender man)

Here, Astaire highlighted the toll that his religion, and its negative views of his gender/sexual identity, had on his wellbeing, isolating him from the LGBTQIA+ community and leading him to no longer practice his faith stating: “I just don't know what to think about that religion anymore”. SPs, however, mentioned that for other LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers, maintaining faith upon resettlement was important, despite the potential difficulty separating the lack of acceptance they previously felt within these environments from their desire to remain involved. Zayne expounds:

For some refugees, their faith is still integral to them, it's been what's got them through some really difficult times. So, there's that internal struggle of

wanting to have a connection to their faith community, and their beliefs that that particular religion may not be accepting of people who are LGBT. (Zayne, LGBTQIA+ Community Worker, gay male)

Notably, in terms of identity, for some refugee/asylum-seeker participants, the tension between their cultural and/or religious background and gender/sexual identity led to rejection of some cultural or religious beliefs. For example, Baxter explained how he let go of his Kenyan cultural identity for this reason, saying: “Life is too short to hang onto something which is not working and will just cause you pain over and over.”

Overall, many participants indicated that cultural and religious beliefs in some countries of origin, foregrounded heteronormative master narratives, thereby making identity exploration difficult for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers. These beliefs and master narratives created tensions and challenges in terms of navigating multiple strands of identity often amidst stigma and persecution.

Gender and Sexual Identity Journey

Given challenges with cultural and religious beliefs as seen in the previous theme, both participant groups noted that it was often difficult for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers to explore and develop their gender/sexual identities due to a lack of safe places in their countries of origin. For example, Martino said when he was young, he: “literally had not seen any gay person” and “didn’t have any information, any knowledge about sexuality, it was never taught, no one had ever talked about it”. Refugee/asylum-seeker participants said that this lack of information early in their journeys meant they wondered whether they were “sick” (Martino) or “weird” (Baxter). Martino elaborated on this, saying:

I was trying to rationalize it, and I was thinking that life made me a poof, pray to God, and it hurt so much, I used to think by the end of high school that this

is a mental disorder, that I have a mental disorder. (Martino, refugee, Iran, gay man)

Notably in some cases, diverse gender/sexual identities were actually against the law.

As Travis mentioned in reference to experimentation: “whatever I was doing that was ‘me’ was pretty much forbidden in Iran”.

Importantly, refugee/asylum-seeker participants noted that concealing their gender/sexual identity led to negative wellbeing impacts, as seen in Charlie’s account:

I mean the identity itself, not so much, but the impact of having to hide it and having to repress it...yeah that’s where a lot of the anxiety came from and that’s where a lot of the depression came from.

Charlie went on to say that once in Australia, realising they didn’t need to hide their identity to the same extent – and indeed even finding people from their religion – helped their identity journey:

[It] opened the possibility of it being possible if that makes sense. It’s basically like seeing ways that people choose to be themselves within different environments...how individual people balance the need of being themselves and also adhering to a culture or tradition or religion that they find important.

(Charlie, refugee, Malaysia, non-binary, queer individual)

Most refugee/asylum-seeker participants also mentioned that their identity journeys gained momentum after accessing the internet in their origin countries, which was a key transformational tool for identity discovery and exploration. For example, Travis mentioned that when he “started looking up about homosexuality [on the internet]”, he had a moment of identity realisation, stating: “I was like, okay, so I’m more comfortable to be in a same-sex relationship. But yeah, the struggle was within the society.” The internet, then, helped him understand himself better - but did not combat the lack of acceptance in his origin country.

He did, however, mention that continued researching helped him become more confident in his identity:

I started learning about it and then becoming even more confident with my feelings and my emotions...and once I started getting the resources and finding the answer, I was very confident, and I just wanted to be who I was.

(Travis, refugee, Iran, gay man)

For some participants, this increased understanding led to them coming out. While often not possible in their countries of origin, refugee/asylum-seeker participants indicated that it was liberating when it could be done. Martino mentioned how he came out to his best friend, and his friend's positive response of "you're okay, and you're accepted, we're still mates...I don't judge you" impacted him immensely:

In a way, he changed my life, you know [coming out to him] was, it was really great...from that moment on I felt so liberated, I felt so, I don't know, good in my own skin and I felt so confident. (Martino, refugee, Iran, gay man)

For others who couldn't come out in their origin countries, experiences varied greatly. SPs mentioned that the 'westernised' idea of "coming out as a celebration" may not match refugees' feelings and that "for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers, it will take a lot longer if at all, it's a very different process" (Rob). Violet (SP) mentioned her organisation: "spend[s] a lot of time trying to talk to people around this concept of inviting in and creating intimate circles of precious sharing rather than extravagant outward notions".

The internet was not only a tool for enlightenment in origin countries but also a tool for connection upon resettlement. Baxter who, upon arrival in Australia, placed an ad on Gumtree seeking individuals like himself, said:

Getting that attention, it helped me come into myself quicker. Because now I was like, okay, number one, I'm not weird. Number two, there are actually

people who feel the same way as I do and have this sexual preference. (Baxter, asylum-seeker, Kenya, bisexual man)

Finding others like themselves was mentioned by SPs as a way of coming to terms with identity for many LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers upon resettlement. Nathaniel, a gay Peer Support Officer who is a refugee himself, mentioned, “most of our LGBT refugees when they arrive to Australia, they go through experiences of engaging with others and then finding themselves through that.”

This sense of learning through others was also mentioned by Cameron, who hypothesised that he might influence LGBTQIA+ refugees’/asylum-seekers’ identities - or at least exploration of identity - when discussing the types of evidence needed for their protection visa claim:

When you’ve got a client who’s just come to Australia and who potentially doesn’t know what it looks like to express that part of their identity, then it can almost seem like I’m shaping their identity by saying these are the types of evidence that might be produced and so I’d be like, “do you have a Grindr account?” and they’ll be like “what do you mean?” (Cameron, lawyer, heterosexual man)

Overall, both participant groups highlighted that LGBTQIA+ refugees’/asylum-seekers’ gender/sexual identity journeys were complex, often due to the lack of open discussion and stigma from cultural or religious systems in their origin countries. These cultural narratives often negatively impacted wellbeing and led to seeking asylum. Upon resettlement, meeting others like themselves often increased understanding and acceptance of their identities and had positive wellbeing impacts. However, SPs mentioned this was not always the case and that the journey to acceptance can take much longer for some.

Life as a Rainbow Refugee or Asylum-Seeker

As seen above, participants highlighted how challenges navigating identities, and changes to identity, did not cease after seeking refugee status or upon resettlement. Two key subthemes were identified regarding LGBTQIA+ refugees'/asylum-seekers' experiences after resettlement in relation to identity and wellbeing: Negative Resettlement: Visible Differences and Diaspora Communities, and "Your Life is Still in Limbo": Issues with Protection Visas.

Negative Resettlement: Visible Differences and Diaspora Communities

Unfortunately, while often providing opportunities to explore gender/sexual identity, both participant groups indicated that resettlement wasn't always an identity-affirming experience. Some refugee/asylum-seeker participants found that their cultural identities (including their ethnicity) became more (externally) salient than their gender/sexual identities, sometimes resulting in judgement and racism. For example, Martino (refugee, Iran, gay man), said:

Here in Australia, my ethnicity comes first in many ways I would say, unfortunately. Not that there's anything wrong with my ethnicity and that I'm not proud of it, but it's just at the forefront of people's minds and it shouldn't be.

Martino explained that "being a refugee and constantly feeling judged and under a magnifying glass" led to him developing "social anxiety". Interestingly he linked this experience to his sexual identity and suggested that discrimination based on refugee status reignited feelings of judgement for his sexual identity in Iran:

The foundation of it goes back to being gay in Iran and then the experience of migration added, like fed into it...I think when I experienced being judged as a refugee, then, this is my understanding, it was added on top of my...yeah it was a trauma, being gay was a trauma that I kind of half dealt with, half I had

put in a box and put it aside...it's like a, like a, like a scar that pretty much is scratched.

He went on to explain the impact of this judgement:

It has impacted me...it has created a lot of anger, resentment, and anxiety. I have to prove myself; I have to get through the stereotypes...you kind of feel in prison, you know you can't leave, this is all, you have to be here, but at the same time you're not accepted here.

Experiences of judgement around migration appeared to differ depending on various factors, including where in Australia participants lived. Travis (refugee, Iran, gay man) mentioned this specifically, saying that he did have some "unhappy people that actually said things that would have been intentionally to hurt my feelings" but that it wasn't often because he "chose to live in a place [Sydney] that I'm accepted and that's quite diverse".

Another aspect of resettlement mentioned as challenging by both participant groups was diaspora communities. Participants mentioned needing to interact with these communities since it was "harder to engage" (Aly) with other groups of Australians. Baxter explained that you "try and find people from where you're from so that this place doesn't feel like you're by yourself", but that this was not always a positive experience:

It felt fairly isolating...it was always uncomfortable, so I've never been part of that community ever since I came here...it's the stigma and also, I would say it felt like I was being bullied...the Kenyan Community here was really, they kind of ostracized me, they knew, they could feel that I was queer. (Baxter, asylum-seeker, Kenya, bisexual man)

So, for Baxter, it was an active choice not to join his diaspora community due to a "fear of not being accepted" and because "their values didn't align with my values at all". Astaire faced similar experiences - but discussed wanting to be a part of his diaspora - saying:

I wish I could, but they're very judgmental...I want to man, I really, really, really want to, I wish I could, but I also have this fear, I want to make Arabian friends, but I don't trust Arabian men at all...I feel like they won't take me seriously because all my life, these men, they didn't take me seriously.

(Astaire, asylum-seeker, Kuwait, pansexual, transgender man)

SPs mentioned that diaspora communities could impact wellbeing, with Tatianna, a heterosexual Case Management Supervisor, discussing the difficulties refugees/asylum-seekers experience when not being a part of their diaspora community:

It's traumatizing, it's actually traumatizing. Their mental health deteriorates if they aren't included in their ethnic community, because that's their identity, they've been brought up in that community, they've had food in that community, they participate in religious worship in that community, they've got family members in that community, so imagine being excluded from that identity, plus obviously your own identity as LGBT+. It's really detrimental to mental health.

Overall, both participant groups indicated that resettlement could bring new identity challenges. These were particularly regarding diaspora communities holding onto origin country master narratives, and experiences of racism, both impacting wellbeing.

“Your Life is Still in Limbo”: Issues with Protection Visas

One of the salient issues both participant groups discussed concerning resettlement was temporary visas and the impact these could have on identity and wellbeing. The three asylum-seeker participants who were still on temporary (bridging) visas mentioned feelings of “limbo” and “uncertainty”. For example, Aly, who had been on a bridging visa for four years, said:

Your life is still in limbo, you don't know what's going to happen, maybe the government will come back to me and reject my case and I have to go back to my origin, it's a lot of battles emotionally, physically, mentally, psychologically everything as a person. (Aly, asylum-seeker, Malaysia, transgender, heterosexual woman)

For Astaire, this fear of being deported led to significant psychological distress:

I had a suicide attempt again, I woke up in hospital and I was faced with the debt of the ambulance, and I was homeless...I told myself that's what I deserve because I spent the money all around the place, I didn't save, I didn't think about the future, because I was afraid, I thought that I was going to be forced back to Kuwait that's why I was enjoying my freedom before that happened. (Astaire, asylum-seeker, Kuwait, pansexual, transgender man)

In addition to limbo and fear of repatriation to countries of origin, both participant groups mentioned issues with the protection visa process, which was seen to have key identity impacts. For example, Amanda, a heterosexual Migration Consultant, discussed how the process prevents individuals from "completely identifying out of fear", with specific reference to the problems this can cause for transgender refugees/asylum-seekers:

There's the fear that they can't transition until they know they're safe...and then with the [claim] taking like three or four years for the first process, and then if they get refused, it'll be another three years waiting for the Tribunal, it's a pretty long time in someone's life, when you're dealing with those issues, to put everything on hold.

Cameron (lawyer, heterosexual man) discussed how the process itself could "encourage someone to focus on the parts of their identity that they think are supportive of their claims and to neglect or not focus on parts of their identity that I think would not

support their claims”. So, in a way, the process may directly impact one’s gender/sexual identity. Cameron went on to explain that “there may be a sense that compels them to choose a narrative that’s not necessarily reflective of their identity”.

Overall, issues of racism and misunderstandings of refugees/asylum-seekers were seen by both participant groups as impacting identity and wellbeing by reopening old wounds, which were further exacerbated when they were separated from their diaspora communities due to homo/transphobia. Additionally, protection visa uncertainty was particularly salient for asylum-seekers and could impact their identities by preventing them from fully embracing who they were.

“Feeling Like You Belong Here is Really Important”: Safe Spaces and Faces

While the above theme highlighted negative aspects of resettlement, participants also emphasised how resettlement could bring positive experiences. For those who couldn’t be fully open about their gender/sexual identity in their origin countries, one of the principal changes they experienced was how – in general – Australian society didn’t judge them for their gender/sexual identity. Baxter mentioned:

A big part which has stayed until today is that people didn’t really care if I was attracted to men or if I tried to hook up with a guy...that did help pretty soon on, it’s such a big benefit of being in a society like this here in Australia.

(Baxter, asylum-seeker, Kenya, bisexual man)

Almost all refugee/asylum-seeker participants mentioned the importance and benefit they received from LGBTQIA+ safe spaces when they arrived in Australia. For example, Baxter mentioned how “being around similar people and feeling like you belong here is really important” and that LGBTQIA+ spaces are where he feels “most comfortable”. For Baxter, meeting people like himself and having them reach out and contact him improved his wellbeing resulting in him feeling “immediately less isolated and more accepted”.

SPs echoed how meeting other LGBTQIA+ individuals upon resettlement can reduce refugees'/asylum-seekers' feelings of isolation:

Especially people who felt quite isolated in their identity previously, they're like "I'm the only one who feels this way or is this way" and then meeting other people who are similar or the same in some regards is quite affirming. (Zayne, LGBTQIA+ Community Worker, gay male)

Alongside the ability to meet others like themselves, participants could finally fully embrace their identity and experiment, doing things they felt they couldn't do in their origin countries. Travis explained:

At the time, I was fully identified as gay and I would think about it every day and I started trying things that I wanted to try, dye my hair, different looks. And you know, just going through different phases and a lot of things that I couldn't have done back in Iran. (Travis, refugee, Iran, gay man)

SPs mirrored this excitement around experimentation:

For the Kenyan, it was that she wanted to be able to go to nightclubs where she was with her community because even though there are some underground and parts of that in each of these communities, they are very dangerous. (Cameron, lawyer, heterosexual man)

Other participants highlighted the importance of safe spaces related to other aspects of identity, especially considering the discrimination many participants said they felt, as noted in themes above. For example, Amanda (SP) said that it was: "important and helpful for the ones that have come from religious backgrounds, [to] find a safe religious place".

What was clear from the participants' responses is that while safe spaces are important, the key mechanisms through which these functioned were belonging, acceptance and community. Violet (SP) summed this up, saying: "I don't know that safety actually

exists, but what I do think is that, and the constant and consistent feedback we get is that people's experiences and lives are massively enhanced by community and belonging."

Alongside safe spaces, participants also felt safer in their gender/sexual identities in Australia due to the governmental protections, as Travis said, "being protected by the law helps". Charlie also mentioned more than just safe spaces: "knowing that there are support systems or safety nets, I guess to fall back on, that makes it a little bit easier to breathe."

Overall, the broader societal and cultural acceptance of LGBTQIA+ identities positively impacted the participants' ability to accept who they are and begin to assimilate their gender/sexual identity into their sense of self. This was particularly assisted by the safe spaces and faces that LGBTQIA+ communities present.

Discussion

Overview

This study is one of the first to explore LGBTQIA+ refugees'/asylum-seekers' understandings of their identities, and relationship between identity and wellbeing. The findings indicated that understanding and experiences of the diverse range of LGBTQIA+ refugees'/asylum-seekers' identities (e.g., gender/sexual, cultural and religious, and experiences as a refugee/asylum-seeker) – interacted in complex ways and were typically strongly influenced by broader social and cultural environments. Participants indicated experiences in line with current research, specifically cultural stigma/persecution and experiences of bullying or exclusion from their diaspora communities (Fox et al., 2020; Kahn, 2015; Piwowarczyk et al., 2017). However, distinct from previous research this study begins to map how these experiences impact identity. In particular, the study foregrounds the role of language and labels in influencing understanding and presentation of identity and how this cohort may co-create Narrative Identity within broader cultural systems. The study also

has implications for key identity and migration theoretical frameworks, including potential gaps.

Key Findings

Key results of the study show that the refugee/asylum-seeker participants navigated multiple identities throughout their migration journeys. Research has shown how holding multiple identities can increase psychological distress (Nematy et al., 2022). Further, it was clear from participant accounts that formative identity experiences in origin countries were often situated in cultural systems where LGBTQIA+ identities were either vilified or illegal. Therefore, the stories participants told were often negatively framed, such as thinking they had a mental disorder, potentially due to co-authorship of Narrative Identity inside these social and cultural systems (McAdams, 2001, 2020). However, upon arrival in Australia, which typically has more open attitudes to diverse gender/sexual identities, participants co-authored stories with a more positive valence, such as “I’m not weird” (Baxter). In particular, the safe spaces and communities that refugee/asylum-seeker participants found upon resettlement were beneficial in re-writing these narratives. Pairing this impact of differing cultural systems with participants juggling multiple identities elicits the question of whether the insistence on integration within acculturation frameworks is appropriate for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers, and further problematises current theories of acculturation (Persky & Birman, 2005).

Schwartz et al. (2006)’s argument that an individual’s strong and stable personal identity may act as protective throughout the acculturation process offers a possible way to understand the relationship between identity and wellbeing. This study supports this argument by showing that where participants had strong personal values and beliefs, the lack of connection with diaspora communities in resettlement contexts had less negative impact. For others, however, who indicated a less established personal identity, the inability to

connect with their diaspora community had a much more deleterious impact. In particular, the inability to separate personal identity from the stigmatised language used against LGBTQIA+ identities in some origin countries was shown to have negative impacts on wellbeing.

Language and labels had a pervasive impact throughout the participants' journeys. Some participants embraced their gender/sexual identity label(s), whereas others displayed an aversion to categorisation, supporting prior findings with LGBTQIA+ individuals (Oswald et al., 2021). In countries of origin, the language used around participant identities was often stigmatised. Results demonstrated that stigma connected to 'western' identity labels could cause distress and prevent LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers from feeling comfortable identifying with these labels. This distress and contestation around gender/sexual identity labels is reflected in the literature (Lee & Brotman, 2011; Mulé, 2021). Furthermore, the study showed the way a concept is translated is critical, particularly regarding the cultural stigma that may exist within a 'westernised' term and how this may translate. While extant literature supports challenges around language and labels for LGBTQIA+ individuals (Oswald et al., 2021) and LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers (Mulé, 2021), this study provides a new contribution to the LGBTQIA+ refugee/asylum-seeker literature in the form of protective labels countering stigma which could be utilised in applied settings to assist in re-orienting identity in this cohort.

Applying the lens of master and counter-narratives provides a useful way of considering language and labels (Bamberg, 2004; Hammack, 2008; McLean & Syed, 2015). The study found that in many cases, the master narratives in countries of origin were heavily heteronormative - so much so that counter-narratives of LGBTQIA+ identities were often either non-existent or pathologized. Individuals whose identities do not align with the master narrative are often required to explain their deviation, which can be done through adopting a counter-narrative (McLean et al., 2018). However, without established counter-narratives

with which to do so, understanding their deviation, and hence their identity, was difficult for the refugee/asylum-seeker participants. Further, the cultural and religious beliefs in the participants' countries of origin acted as narrative resources to construct the internal narratives they told themselves (Hammack, 2007). These internal narratives could then be seen to influence the formation of their narrative identity, and when these beliefs were heavily stigmatised, this could result in identities of being "insane" (Astaire) or "vile" (Baxter). On the other hand, labels that weren't stigmatised to the extent that LGBTQIA+ labels were, such as "nerd" (Martino), were often found to be protective, and it could be postulated that labels such as this positioned the participants into the master narratives of the country (Bamberg, 2004; Bradford & Syed, 2019), which provided a lens through which others could see them as 'normal'. Once participants arrived in Australia and were introduced to LGBTQIA+ counter-narratives demonstrating acceptance and a sense of belonging, they were often able to reorient their sense of identity to reflect these narratives. However, if they found themselves caught in racist counter-narratives upon resettlement this could negatively impact their identity and wellbeing.

Stigma connected to gender/sexual and cultural identity cut across multiple themes as a ubiquitous aspect of LGBTQIA+ refugees'/asylum-seekers' journeys. The study demonstrated that stigma could result in fear and internal conflicts between one's gender/sexual identity and the cultural and religious beliefs of the country of origin. This stigma often resulted in concealment of identity, leading to distress, depression, and anxiety, as discussed by previous researchers (Alessi et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2019). Indeed, Zhou et al. (2019) showed that self-concealment could increase levels of distress above the impact of discrimination. Further, the concealment of stigmatised identities, alongside the introduction of new stigmatised identities upon resettlement, through racism or stereotypes about refugee status which are commonly found in the literature (Munro et al., 2013), was shown to impact

participants' wellbeing. Findings demonstrated that judgement connected to cultural identity in Australia might lead to new experiences of negative wellbeing by reigniting past experiences of gender/sexual identity judgement. This indicates that some LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers move from a cultural system that vilifies their gender/sexual identity into a new one that vilifies their cultural identity, which is mirrored in current literature (Mulé & Gamble, 2018). Findings showing continuation of vilification into resettlement and the resulting psychological ill-health in the form of social anxiety and avoiding social connection, reflect literature on the psychological implications of concealing a stigmatised identity (Pachankis, 2007).

While both participant groups discussed resettlement in reference to different identity challenges, significantly, both groups mentioned the importance of and positive effect that LGBTQIA+ safe spaces and faces had upon resettlement. Findings demonstrated how acceptance in these safe spaces, whether in person or via the internet, can help reduce isolation and that these spaces are identity-affirming. These findings solidify the importance of finding community within LGBTQIA+ spaces that research in the field is beginning to emphasise (Fox et al., 2020).

Another finding particularly salient to the asylum-seeker participants related to the negative impact of temporary protection visas (TPVs), as found in previous research (Newnham et al., 2019; Steel et al., 2011). For example, Newnham et al. (2019) found that asylum-seekers on TPVs were five times more likely to report high or very high anxiety and depression scores compared to those with permanent residency. While the literature is clear on the effects of TPVs on asylum-seekers persecuted for other reasons, there is little to no research on the impacts of TPVs on LGBTQIA+ asylum-seekers. This study showed that LGBTQIA+ asylum-seekers encounter unique stressors intrinsically connected to their identity. Findings demonstrated how the fear of being sent back resulted in suicidal ideation,

and homelessness and can prevent people from completely identifying with their true gender/sexual identity. This, paired with the current body of research showing the links to negative wellbeing (Newnham et al., 2019; Steel et al., 2011), further reinforces why TPVs may not be the solution for LGBTQIA+ asylum-seekers.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

It was clear from this study that LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers cannot always experiment with roles and identity in their origin country. As such, the theories of Erikson and Marcia - being staged-based, heteronormative, and focussed on role experimentation (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Schultz & Schultz, 2016) - are unsuitable for this cohort. Indeed, future research would benefit from considering the suitability of these theories with any cohort whose identities are persecuted. This study points to Narrative Identity as the most useful framework, particularly due to emphasis on co-creation and how cultural systems and their impact are incorporated into the understanding of identity. Given that Narrative Identity is based on the facts of an individual's life but that these facts are understood through the lens of society and culture, one only has so many ways, or narrative resources, to build their identity (McAdams, 2011). As such, it is integral to understand how the narrative resources available to LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers throughout their journeys may impact the construction of their narrative identities, which provides another avenue for future research.

As discussed in the introduction, integration is often seen as the most adaptive form of acculturation (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013), whereby people maintain connections with their heritage culture while also adopting the dominant culture in their new context. However, the results of this study suggest that this requires problematising. For example, it was clear from participant accounts that continuing identification with heritage culture was challenging in cases where that culture held negative attitudes towards their gender/sexual identity; and

this was further challenging where diaspora communities maintained those attitudes in Australia. As such, the concept that integration is the most protective acculturation method may need further interrogation and research for this cohort.

Applied Implications

A key finding that has utility in terms of practical application is that LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers experience marginalisation across multiple identities. It is therefore important that resettlement support for these individuals provides a safe space that is open and accepting of all identities across gender, sexuality, culture, religion, and refugee status to reduce the compounding effect of multiple marginalised identities (Nematy et al., 2022). Moreover, not all LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers emphasise their gender/sexual identity, and many don't have connection to their diaspora communities. However, it was clear from participant accounts that safety and belonging are paramount. Therefore, organisations should offer safe spaces for engagement in cultural and religious celebrations, as suggested in recent research (Alessi et al., 2020). Research has also shown that social support groups tailored to LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers upon arrival can help reduce social isolation, promote resilience, and increase access to resources (Logie et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important that Australian settlement services provide these social support groups or be aware of groups outside their organisation for referral purposes.

Strengths and Limitations

The paucity of literature in this field is mainly focussed on trauma and its effect on mental health of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers and, for the most part, is conducted in Canada and the United States (for a recent scoping review, see D'souza et al., 2022). Whereas this thesis, while covering aspects of trauma, was more holistically focussed, placing understandings of trauma as just one aspect of individuals' identities, and centred on individuals resettled in Australia. Triangulation of participant groups augmented the

credibility of the analysis by bringing together data from different perspectives (Carter et al., 2014; Tracy, 2010), and the even split between refugees and asylum-seekers strengthened this study, as asylum-seekers are at increased vulnerability and often less likely to participate in research (Ziersch et al., 2020).

Furthermore, many studies in the field have predominantly comprised cisgender gay male participants, resulting in an underrepresentation of other gender/sexual minorities and their experiences (for a review, see D'souza et al., 2022). A key strength of this study was the variation in participant demographics allowing for representation of a wide range of underrepresented identities. While this is a strength, these identities were only represented once (apart from transgender), and therefore this study cannot draw conclusions about any one identity or feature of experience, such as the extent of childhood trauma. Therefore, future research still needs to increase representation of these identities. However, there are no official prevalence estimates of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers (Shaw & Verghese, 2022). Therefore, it is possible that the demographics of this study mirror those of the broader Australian refugee/asylum-seeker population. Furthermore, the recruitment of transgender and bisexual refugees/asylum-seekers can be challenging, with bisexual claimants being less likely to be granted asylum because of sexual orientation (Rehaag, 2008; Sin, 2015), and transgender refugees/asylum-seekers, due to the binary gendered discourse in most legal systems, often finding themselves invisible (van der Pijl et al., 2018). Therefore, including bisexual and transgender representation in this study is a further strength.

While the study incorporated a wide range of cultural identities encompassing the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, a limitation was that no refugees/asylum-seekers from Eastern Europe participated. Given the current socio-political climate of LGBTQIA+ oppression in Eastern Europe (ILGA-EUROPE, 2022), it is important to represent individuals from this region. Furthermore, the requirement of English competency due to time and funding meant

that a proportion of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers were not represented in this study, and potentially these individuals may have different experiences and understandings of their identity.

It is further integral to state the limitation intrinsic in categorising the plethora of human experience and identity across time and cultural space into 'westernised' boxes in the form of LGBTQIA+. However, open-ended questions were utilised to ensure the participants' label of choice was stated before mentioning a 'western' paradigm of label choices.

Future Research

This thesis showed evidence for the importance of understandings of master and counter-narratives across the journeys of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers. As master narratives provide both the material and the frame through which development of narrative identity can occur, future research with this cohort would benefit from the utilisation of the 'master narrative framework' developed by McLean and Syed (2015) to distil further how master narratives in participants' countries of origin may impact identity and wellbeing, as well as how master and counter-narratives upon resettlement might interact and assist or contribute to these issues.

As Narrative Identity was deemed the most appropriate lens to analyse the results, future research could benefit from conducting 'Life Story Interviews' with this population (McAdams, 1993) as this was not possible in the time frame for this study. This could clarify how individuals in this cohort co-create their identities throughout their lives and journeys. Given the paucity of literature in the field, applying a variety of identity theories as lenses through which to view identity could be beneficial. In particular, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel et al., 1979) and Social Categorisation Theory (Turner et al., 1987) could be of use to better understand how being othered in their countries of origin and then possibly further othered by two perceived in-groups in resettlement (diaspora and host LGBTQIA+

community) may impact the identities and wellbeing of this cohort. Furthermore, given the difficulties both participant groups discussed around identity labels, future research could benefit from a Social Identity approach to examine how individuals in this cohort manage to identify with an in-group while holding negative beliefs around 'western' labels.

Results also suggest that acculturation frameworks may not be entirely appropriate for this cohort. The insistence that integration results in the greatest psychological adjustment (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013) implies that LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers must hold onto their heritage culture, but the results showed that this might be challenging. Therefore, future research should focus more on how the cultural systems in both origin and resettlement countries position these identities and how that may lead to constructions of identity within individuals from this cohort. As Narrative Identity is a psychosocial construction between the individual and the social and cultural systems within which they live (McAdams, 2001, 2020), it is integral to focus on how this impacts LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers throughout their lives and how they can be most appropriately assisted throughout resettlement.

Conclusion

Findings from this study provide novel insights into knowledge concerning the exploration and understanding of identity for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers in Australia. Importantly, this study includes the voices of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers themselves, and thus the findings capture the lived experiences of this cohort. The study points to two key theoretical findings underscored by the importance of further understanding how cultural systems influence LGBTQIA+ refugees'/asylum-seekers' identities and, in turn, affect wellbeing. Firstly, the study demonstrated how master and counter-narratives throughout this cohort's journeys influence identity and wellbeing, and secondly, how an emphasis on integration in acculturation frameworks may not fit the lived experience of

LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers. This further reinforces the importance of considering cultural systems and their impact on wellbeing within applied settings, with particular implications for how best to support socially isolated refugees/asylum-seekers who do not have access to their diaspora community due to cultural and/or religious beliefs or stigma. Furthermore, the study points to the need for services sitting across the intersection of LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers multiple marginalised identities.

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Appendix A: Refugee/Asylum-Seeker Flyer

Researchers from the University of Adelaide are
conducting a study called:

**Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+ people with Refugee and
Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds**

If you:

- Are a refugee or asylum-seeker
- Identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex
and/or asexual + (LGBTQIA+)
- Are over 18
- Can read and write in English

Then we would like to invite you to chat with us about
your identity and wellbeing.

Interviews will take around 60 minutes and can be done
on zoom, skype, teams, phone or face-to-face (if you
are in Adelaide)

You will receive a \$40 voucher for your time

If you would like further information or a copy of interview questions, please contact:

[student name]

e-mail: [student email]

[supervisor name]

[supervisor phone number]

Human Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: H-2022-055

Appendix B: Service Provider Flyer

Researchers from the University of Adelaide are
conducting a study called:

**Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+ people with Refugee and
Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds**

If you are any of the following:

- A service provider experienced in working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and/or asexual + (LGBTQIA+) refugees or asylum-seekers
- A mental health professional (e.g., psychologist or social worker) experienced in working with LGBTQIA+ refugees or asylum-seekers

Then we would like to invite you to an interview about
your perceptions of the needs and experiences of
LGBTQIA+ people with refugee and asylum-seeker
backgrounds, particularly in relation to identity,
psychological wellbeing, and support.

If you would like further information, please contact:

[student name]

e-mail: [student email]

[supervisor name]

[supervisor phone number]

Human Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: H-2022-055

Appendix C: Refugee/Asylum-Seeker Information Sheet**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: LGBTQIA+
people with refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds**

PROJECT TITLE: Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+ people with Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER:
H-2022-055

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: [supervisor name]

STUDENT RESEARCHER: [student name]

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours)

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in contributing to this important area of research. You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

This research project aims to explore the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and/or asexual + (LGBTQIA+) people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds. We are especially interested in your understandings of your identity and wellbeing.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by [student name]. This research will form the basis for [student's pronoun] degree of Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) at the University of Adelaide, under the supervision of [supervisor name].

Why am I being invited to participate?

You are being invited to participate if you are a refugee/asylum-seeker, identify as LGBTQIA+, are over 18 years old, and can participate in the interview in English. We would like to talk to you to make sure that the voices of LGBTQIA+ refugees are heard in research.

What am I being invited to do?

You are being invited to participate in an interview of around one hour. Interviews can take place at a location suitable to you if you are in Adelaide, or over the telephone or through videoconference if you are interstate or if you prefer this option. In the interview, [student name] will ask some questions about your gender/sexuality and cultural identity, your experiences of your identity before and after you came to Australia, and your well-being.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?

Around one hour

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

We recognize that some of the questions we ask about your identity and wellbeing may make you think about things which are upsetting for you. However, every effort will be made to minimise the possibility of distress, and there is a list of supports that you may wish to access at the end of this Information Sheet. These include telephone helplines, online forums, and organisations relevant to LGBTQIA+ people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds. If you experience significant distress, we will follow up with you to make sure you are alright. You can also choose not to answer questions, or to end the interview at any time.

What are the potential benefits of the research project?

The goal of this project is gain greater understanding of how LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers experience their identity and how this might affect their wellbeing. There will be no direct benefits to participants, however, you will also receive a \$40 shopping voucher as a thank you for your time.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time until the start of the data analysis phase (September 2022).

What will happen to my information?

Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed (typed up). Your name and any identifying information will remain confidential and will be removed from the typed-up versions of the interviews. However, anonymity cannot be entirely guaranteed despite the precautions in place. If you wish, you can be provided with a copy of your individual transcript and you are welcome

to ask for any parts to be removed if desired. Further, direct quotes may be incorporated into the report, but when this is the case pseudonyms will be used, and other identifying information will be removed, to ensure confidentiality. Your name and identifying information will not appear in any publications or reports. Only the named researchers above will have access to the interview transcripts, for the purposes of analysis. The data will be stored on secure University of Adelaide drives for 5 years.

Your interview data will contribute to [student's name] honours thesis, together with other participants. We may also present the results of the study at conferences, and in academic publications. A short report of the study will also be made available to national support organisations, and we will send you a copy of this report if you wish. The data may be used by the researchers for other studies in the same area.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

Should you wish to ask any further questions about the project, please contact [student name] via email: [student's email]) or [supervisor name] (phone: [supervisor phone number] or email: [supervisor email])

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number H-2022-055). This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. If you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on

Phone: +61 8 8313 6028

Email: hrec@adelaide.edu.au

Post: Level 4, Rundle Mall Plaza, 50 Rundle Mall, ADELAIDE SA 5000

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?

If you are interested in participating, please contact [student name] ([student email]) or [supervisor name] ([supervisor phone number]).

Yours sincerely,

[student name & supervisor name]

[student email]

Participant Support Services

Support organisations that may be able to assist you if you experience any distress during the “Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+ people with Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds” project:

1. Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS)

STTARS provides flexible and culturally sensitive services to promote the health and wellbeing of people who have been tortured or who have suffered refugee-related trauma prior to their arrival in Australia.

Phone: 8206 8900

Address: 81 Angas Street Adelaide

2. QLife

QLife is a counselling service for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and/or asexual.

Phone: 1800 184 527 (available 3pm to midnight) or online webchat

Website: <https://qlife.org.au/>

3. Migrant Health Service

The Migrant Health Service can help with mental health needs in person.

Phone: 8237 3900

Address: 21 Market Street Adelaide

4. Lifeline

Lifeline is a telephone support service, so you can talk with someone on the telephone if you are feeling distressed or upset.

Phone: 13 11 14

Website: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

If you cannot speak English well, or feel more comfortable speaking in another language, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50 and ask them to call Lifeline for you on 13 11 14.

5. Assistance and Crisis Intervention Service

The assessment and crisis intervention service can help in a mental health emergency.

Phone: 13 14 65

Appendix D: Service Provider Information Sheet**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET: Service
Providers**

PROJECT TITLE: Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+ people with Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER:
H-2022-055

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: [supervisor name]

STUDENT RESEARCHER: [student name]

STUDENT'S DEGREE: Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours)

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in contributing to this important area of research. You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

This research project aims to explore the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and/or asexual + (LGBTQIA+) people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds. We are especially interested in their understandings of identity and wellbeing and your perceptions of how they deal with any issues related to these areas. Further, discussion around current services and where services may be lacking may allow for the development of more appropriate support.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by [student name]. This research will form the basis for [student's pronoun] degree of Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) at the University of Adelaide, under the supervision of [supervisor name].

Why am I being invited to participate?

You are being invited to participate if you are a service provider experienced in working with LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers, are a mental health professional (e.g., psychologists or

social workers) experienced in working with LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers, are over 18 years old, and can participate in the interview in English.

What am I being invited to do?

You are being invited to participate in an interview of up to one hour. Interviews can take place at a location suitable to you if you are in Adelaide, or over the telephone or through videoconference if you are interstate or if you prefer this option. In the interview, [student name] will ask some questions about service provision, barriers to accessing or providing support, experiences working with LGBTQIA+ people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds and thoughts around their identity formation and wellbeing.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?

Up to one hour

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

We recognise that an interview may be difficult to accommodate among your current commitments or a busy schedule. Hence, we have provided telephone and zoom interviews as an option, allowing for the interview to be completed at a time and location which suits you.

We further recognize that some of the questions asked may relate to negative experiences with support or service provision. To help you if you do feel distress, there is a list of supports that you may wish to access at the end of this Information Sheet.

In addition, if you are very distressed the researchers will follow up with you to make sure you are alright. You can also choose not to answer questions, or to end the interview at any time.

What are the potential benefits of the research project?

The goal is to improve our understandings of how life experiences influence identity and wellbeing in this cohort alongside evidence to ensure the best psychological care can be provided to LGBTQIA+ people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds. Further, discussion around current services and where services may be lacking may allow for the development of more appropriate support for LGBTQIA+ people with refugee/asylum-seeker backgrounds.

There will be no direct benefits to participants.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time until the start of the data analysis phase (September 2022).

What will happen to my information?

Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Your name and any identifying information will remain confidential and will be removed from the transcribed versions of the interviews. However, anonymity cannot be entirely guaranteed despite the precautions in place. If you wish, you can be provided with a copy of your individual transcript and you are welcome to ask for any parts to be removed if desired. Further, direct quotes may be incorporated into the report, but when this is the case pseudonyms will be used, and other identifying information will be removed, to ensure confidentiality. Your name and identifying information will not appear in any publications or reports. Only the named researchers above will have access to the interview transcripts, for the purposes of analysis. The data will be stored on secure University of Adelaide drives for 5 years.

Your interview data will contribute to [student's name] honours thesis, together with other participants. We may also present the results of the study at conferences, and in academic publications. A short report of the study will also be made available to national support organisations, and we will send you a copy of this report if you wish. The data may be used by the researchers for other studies in the same area.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

Should you wish to ask any further questions about the project, please contact [student name] via email: [student email]) or [supervisor name] (phone: [supervisor phone number] or email: [supervisor email])

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number H-2022-055). This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project

or wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. If you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on

Phone: +61 8 8313 6028

Email: hrec@adelaide.edu.au

Post: Level 4, Rundle Mall Plaza, 50 Rundle Mall, ADELAIDE SA 5000

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?

If you are interested in participating, please contact [student name] ([student email]) or [supervisor name] ([supervisor email]).

Yours sincerely,

[student name & supervisor name]

[student email]

Participant Support Services

Support organisations that may be able to assist you if you experience any distress during the “Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+ people with Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds” project:

1. Lifeline

Lifeline is a telephone support service, so you can talk with someone on the telephone if you are feeling distressed or upset.

Phone: 13 11 14

Website: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

If you cannot speak English well, or feel more comfortable speaking in another language, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50 and ask them to call Lifeline for you on 13 11 14.

2. Assistance and Crisis Intervention Service

The assessment and crisis intervention service can help in a mental health emergency.

Phone: 13 14 65

3. QLife

QLife is a counselling service for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and/or asexual.

Phone: 1800 184 527 (available 3pm to midnight) or online webchat

Website: <https://qlife.org.au/>

4. Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS)

STTARS provides flexible and culturally sensitive services to promote the health and wellbeing of people who have been tortured or who have suffered refugee-related trauma prior to their arrival in Australia.

Phone: 8206 8900

Address: 81 Angas Street Adelaide

5. Migrant Health Service

The Migrant Health Service can help with mental health needs in person.

Phone: 8237 3900

Address: 21 Market Street Adelaide

Appendix E: Consent Form

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

CONSENT FORM

1. I have read the Participation Information Sheet and agree to take part in the following research project:

Title:	Identity and Wellbeing in LGBTQIA+ people with Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Backgrounds
Ethics Approval Number:	H-2022-055

2. I have had the project, so far as it affects me, and the potential risks and burdens fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions I may have about the project and my participation. My consent is given freely.
3. I have been given the opportunity to have a member of my family or a friend present while the project was explained to me.
4. Although I understand the purpose of the research project, it has also been explained that my involvement may not be of any benefit to me.
5. I agree to participate in the activities outlined in the participant information sheet.
6. I agree to be audio/video recorded Yes No
7. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time up until the start of the data analysis phase (September 2022).
8. I have been informed that the information gained in the project may be published in a book/journal article/thesis/conference presentations/report etc.
9. I have been informed that in the published materials I will not be identified, and my personal results will not be divulged.
10. I agree to my information being used for future research purposes as follows:
Research undertaken by these same researcher(s) Yes No
11. I hereby provide 'extended' consent for the use of my data in future research projects that are:
- (ii) in the same general area of research (for example, further projects stemming from the data gained during interview process): Yes No

12. I understand my information will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except where disclosure is required by law.

13. I am aware that I should keep a copy of this Consent Form, when completed, and the Participant Information Sheet.

Participant to complete:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Support Protocol

Protocol for supporting research participants: Providing support to participants at interviews

It is possible that participants in the study may seek advice or support from researchers. Participants may also become upset at the time of an interview. In such a case, we will:

- Ensure that the participant is clear about the role of the researcher and that as a researcher, we are unable to provide direct advice but may provide some information about services or assist in finding further information or avenues for support.

If a participant becomes upset or seeks information, support or referral, the researcher will:

- Acknowledge the participant's concerns and/or distress
- Give them an opportunity to talk about what is upsetting them, and listen supportively and empathetically
- Remind the participant that they can stop participating at any time
- Ask the participant if they have support, how it is going and, if appropriate, talk about other ways they might get support – for example from family or friends
- Talk about how services might be able to support the participant and what services are available
- Refer to the support organisation sheet provided to all participants (which can be found at the end of each information sheet – Appendix C & D) and:
 - encourage the participant to seek further support if desired, and leave this information with participant
 - refer participants (with consent) to organisations that are available and with whom the research team have working relationships
 - encourage participants to contact their preferred primary care provider
- Emphasise that personal details will not be disclosed to anyone and will only be used by researchers to make contact again (e.g., to pass on information regarding services or to follow-up, as appropriate, to see if they have been able to access a service) if necessary

- In cases of significant distress speak to students' supervisors ([supervisor name]) about the participant's situation/problem – always seek the participant's permission to do so first. HREC will also be informed of any instances where a participant becomes upset or distressed.
- At the earliest opportunity, the researcher will record details of concerns, course of action/exactly what happened and what support was offered and/or taken up. Record using participant ID/pseudonym stored separately from the participant's contact details.

Appendix G: Interview Guide

GROUP 1: LGBTQIA+ REFUGEES/ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Semi-structured questions

Experiences

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself?
- Can you share some of why you came to Australia?
- How have you found the resettlement process?

Identity

- How would you describe yourself?
- How would others describe you?
- Growing up, how do you think your family viewed you?
- How did you present yourself to the world when you were younger?
- How do you present now?

- How would you describe your identity?
- How would you describe your gender and or sexual identity?
- How would you describe your cultural identity?

- Could you tell me about how any of these identities have changed at different times in your life?
- Can you tell me a little about the process of coming to understand your identity?

- Can you tell me about any differences you have experienced between your cultural identity and your gender/sexual identity?

- What makes you feel the most comfortable to be yourself?

- How does your refugee/asylum-seeker identity come into play here in Australia?

- To sum up, can you tell me if anything feels different for you here, in Australia?
 - What experiences have you had here?
 - Does one part of your identity stand out more here in Australia than it did in your home country?

Wellbeing

- How would you describe your health and wellbeing?
 - Prompts:
 - Can you discuss any differences with your health and wellbeing now and when you were living in your country of origin?
 - Can you tell me a little bit about your health and wellbeing journey from your origin country, to during resettlement, to now in Australia?
- What do you think are some of the top factors that affect your psychological wellbeing either positively or negatively?

Demographic information required

- Country of Origin
- Age
- Visa Type/residency or citizenship status
- Relationship Status
- Gender Identity
- Have you ever identified as transgender? (Yes/No)
- Sexual Identity
- Religion
- Cultural background/Ethnicity
- When did you first arrive in Australia?
- When did you leave?

GROUP 2: SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Semi-structured Questions

Service related

- Can you tell me a bit about your service and what its role is?
- How do LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers feel about accessing services?
 - How do they interact with you as an authority figure?
 - What makes it easiest for them to feel comfortable?
- Have any LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers mentioned their experiences with other services?
- Do you have any experience working with LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers in detention?
- Could you discuss a little bit about whether there are any differences/challenges associated with getting refugee status based on gender identity/sexuality?

Identity

- From your experience working with LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers, how would you describe the process of their:
 - Questioning of their Identity?
 - Their formation of identity?
 - Have you witnessed any change in their identity over time?
- What things influence a case in claiming asylum/refugee status?
- From your experience, does the visa process have any impacts on identity?
- Have any LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers you have worked with, described challenges they have experienced around their identity?
 - Were there any differences they mentioned between their origin country and here in Australia?
- Have any LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers mentioned any differences or challenges between their cultural identity, their gender/sexual identity, and their identity as a refugee/asylum seeker?
- Have you experienced any differences for individuals on different visa types?

- How would you assist an LGBTQIA+ refugee/asylum-seeker who has approached you about identity related issues?
 - Is there any particular service or organisation that you refer LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers to for assistance in this area?

Wellbeing

- What factors do you believe affect LGBTQIA+ refugee/asylum-seeker psychological wellbeing either positively or negatively?
- From your experience, what makes it easiest for LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers to feel comfortable talking to someone about their experiences?
- From your experience, does the visa process have any impacts on wellbeing?
- What changes to current service provision could be made to promote positive psychological wellbeing and greater mental health outcomes for this population?

Demographic information gathered from providers

- Age
- Religion
- Profession
- Cultural background/Ethnicity
- Sexual Identity
- Gender Identity
- Organisation you are employed by (will not be named in thesis)
- Length of time you have had experience in area providing support to LGBTQIA+ refugees/asylum-seekers