

THESIS

WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT PRIDE:
A CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

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Current research regarding LGBTQ+ Pride emphasizes Pride in one's identity or identification with the LGBTQ+ community (Shiota et al., 2006; Testa et al., 2015; Hidalgo et al., 2019; Perrin et al., 2020; Rendina et al., 2019). This understanding of Pride does not acknowledge the historical significance of how Pride became a construct within LGBTQ+ research, with its creation paralleling the events of the Stonewall Riots; an event that triggered a large increase in LGBTQ+ advocacy, acceptance, and research (Davidson, 2021; Hood, 1998; Thorstad, 1995; Horne et al., 2010). Discourse within the LGBTQ+ community draws attention to the multifaceted nature of the emotional experience of Pride (Reddit thread: "What does Pride mean to you?" r/lgbt). Therefore, how LGBTQ+ Pride is defined in research potentially minimizes the construct, contributing to a conceptual misalignment between researchers' definitions of Pride and the LGBTQ+ community's experience of Pride. The purpose of the present study was to gain a wholistic understanding of the experience of Pride by LGBTQ+ individuals as both the social construction of historical events of Pride, and as the definition and emotional experience of LGBTQ+ Pride. To address this conceptual misalignment, this study used constructivist grounded theory to evaluate how Pride is conceptualized within the LGBTQ+ community. Analysis of 7 semi structured interviews resulted in a theory of how Pride is created, and experienced, within the LGBTQ+ community.

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INTRODUCTION

The LGBTQ+ Community

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (trans), Queer, Intersex and Asexual/Agender community has historically embraced a wide range of identities, leading to a shorthand abbreviation that itself speaks to its diverse representations – LGBTQ+, where the “+” is added to include all other sex and gender minority identities (Thelwall et al., 2023). The LGBTQ+ population has grown rapidly in the United States as evidenced by rates more than doubling since 2012 (with the community contributing to only 3.5% of the U.S. population in Gallup’s first measure of the community in 2012) (Jones, 2026). Most recently, survey data from Gallup in 2025 showed that 9% of adults in the United States population identify as LGBTQ+, with most individuals identifying as Bisexual (58.6% of LGBTQ+ adults 5% of U.S. adults), and lower identification rates from Lesbian (16% of LGBTQ+ adults, 1.4% of U.S. adults), Gay (17.4% of LGBTQ+ adults, 1.6% of U.S. adults), Transgender (12.1% of LGBTQ+ adults, 1.1% of U.S. adults), and Other LGBTQ+ (5.8 % of LGBTQ+ adults, 0.5% of U.S. adults) subgroup populations (Gallup, 2025). The community is largely composed of younger adults, with 23% of adults under 30 years old identifying as LGBTQ+, and is expected to increase as members of Generation Z continue to reach adulthood (Jones, 2026). Rates of LGBTQ+ subgroup identification are generally consistent within various race/ethnicity groups but differ greatly within political affiliation groups with 14.2% of Democrats identifying as LGBTQ+, and 1.9% of Republicans having LGBTQ+ identification (Jones, 2026). The community is widespread, spanning each of the 50 states (US Trans Survey, 2022).

LGBTQ+ is an umbrella term that represents identities outside of gender and sexuality binaries, meaning any individual who is not heterosexual, cisgender and/or heteroromantic

(Stone et al., 2023). This includes individuals who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (Trans), Queer and other sex and gender minorities. Individuals who make up the various identities in the community share unique experiences of life, love, sexuality, and identity that do not conform to binary expectations that have been normalized by society over time.

The LGBTQ+ community endorses experiences that fall outside the narrow range of what society considers normal, resulting in documented hardships such as: significant disparities in mental health (Lu et al., 2025, Pratt-Chapman, 2025), physical health (Grammer et al., 2025; Min, 2023, Riggle, 2025), access to care (Connors et al., 2020, Grammer et al., 2025), likelihood of experiencing violence (Balsam et al., 2005; Burt & Dorsch, 2026; Kassing et al., 2021; Ray et al., 2021; U.S. Department of Justice, 2018), and denial of civil rights (Beyrer, 2020, Cobb, 2026, Quinan, 2025). The range of disparities reflect marginalized status for the LGBTQ+ Community, despite their significant population size within the United States.

I will refer to the LGBTQ+ Community, queer people, and sex and gender minorities (SGM's) interchangeably. It is currently appropriate to use the word "queer" to designate an umbrella term for identities outside of gender and/or sexuality binaries (American Psychological Association, 2015; Castillo & Pineda, 2025; Keber, 2025). The movement to reclaim the term "queer" started in the late 1980's and early 1990's and was led by activists (i.e., Queer Nation's slogan: "We're here, we're queer, get used to it" (Daily News, 1990)), and scholars (i.e., Michael Warner in *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993)). Queer Theory developed in the 1990's and embraced the use of the word queer as a response to expansion of identities previously understood through lesbian and gay studies, a paradigm developed after emergence of LGBTQ movements in the 1970's (Weeks, 2000; Castillo & Pineda, 2025). The use of the word queer has been recognized to be reshaped by lexical reappropriation- the act of changing the meaning of a derogatory term,

into one of empowerment and reclamation (Castillo & Pineda, 2025). Following semantic shifts throughout sociolinguistics, queerness once was used as a synonym to “strange” or “peculiar”, and is now and is now not only an umbrella term, but “a dynamic, context-bound concept deeply entangled with ongoing struggles over identity, legitimacy, and representation.” Herein, I explore the social construction of LGBTQ+ Pride and embrace the use of the word queer as a result of historical efforts to destigmatize the idea of queerness, and the accompanied acceptance of identities outside of sex and gender binaries.

Study Purpose

LGBTQ+ Pride (henceforth referred to as Pride when in reference to the LGBTQ + experience unless explicitly stated otherwise) is a concept that has become the subject of research on marginalized populations due to its positive effect on resilience and association with positive biological, psychological and social outcomes (Testa et al., 2015; Dickens & Robbins, 2022; Cohen & Huppert, 2018; Orth et al., 2020). Research has described various aspects of Pride, but no one study has successfully captured the multifaceted nature of Pride, including how it has been conceptualized as including aspects of identity Pride, self-acceptance, community consciousness, and celebration and normalization of sex and gender minorities. This has caused a significant discrepancy between how researchers operationalize Pride (i.e., as Pride in identity) and how the LGBTQ+ community experiences Pride (i.e., as an emotional experience; and event including a range of emotional experiences).

The current study used Constructivist Grounded Theory to bolster the voices of the LGBTQ+ community in creating a definition of Pride that accurately reflects the community's nuanced and multifaceted experiences. The creation of an understanding of Pride directly from

the LGBTQ+ community intends to minimize the conceptual misalignment seen in researcher's current conceptualization of Pride in comparison to the Queer community's experience of Pride.

Pride: A Societal and Individual Resource

Harm to the LGBTQ+ community functions in a parallel nature on societal and individual levels. Societal harm is perpetrated through institutions, and systems driven by societal norms such as cisgenderism and heterosexism. This societal harm can be seen through actions perpetrated on the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, such as anti-LGBTQ+ legislation or attacks from the government that perpetrate false narratives about the community. This harm has a trickle-down effect, and impacts individuals within the LGBTQ+ community, causing negative biological, physical, emotional, and social outcomes. Individual level harm (i.e., microaggressions, hate crime, etc.) often results in an experience of shame (Paterson et al., 2018; 2019). Shame is understood universally as negative self-conscious emotion, experienced as a result of discrimination, prejudice and stigma (that stems from the societal norms of cisgenderism and heterosexism) (Scheer et al., 2020). Self-conscious emotions have a mediating effect on minority stress, with the presence of shame having an amplifying effect (Scheer et al., 2020; Ruben et al., 2025), and Pride having a reducing effect (Breslow et al., 2015; Cao et al., 2024; Matsuno & Israel; 2018). Pride also operates on societal and individual levels within the queer community. On a societal level, it is often referring to an event within the month of June, meant to draw attention to LGBTQ advocacy, history, celebration, and visibility of identities, and as a vehicle for connection of intergenerational community members to come together in solidarity. On an individual level, Pride is an individualized emotional experience, which is composed of nuanced and variable emotions, dependent on an individual's life experiences, socialization, and environment. This study's main purpose is the develop a thorough

understanding of what emotions Pride is composed of for LGBTQ+ individuals, what allows these emotions to be experienced, and barriers to accessing them.

Current research regarding LGBTQ+ Pride does not acknowledge the societal construction of how feelings of Pride are experienced and discussed within the community. Pride is instead often described using its synonym “proud” and is typically in relation to an individual’s identity (Del Conte et al., 2026; Hidalgo et al., 2019; Perrin et al., 2020; Rendina et al., 2019; Soulliard et al., 2025; Shiota et al., 2006; Testa et al., 2015; Tinlin-Dixon et al., 2025). This definition of Pride created within the research field is helpful to quantify Pride but does not embrace the nuanced experience of Pride described by LGBTQ+ community members. The LGBTQ+ community embraces the social construction of Pride events, and the accompanied social construction of an experience of emotions that Pride encapsulates. The current study addresses the conceptual mismatch present between how researchers conceptualize and quantify individual experiences of Pride, and the storied experience of Pride from LGBTQ+ individuals that reflect both community and individual aspects.

The LGBTQ+ community has faced threats and harms at both the societal and the individual levels (i.e., Levengood & Hadland, 2022; Nadal, 2017; Lu et al., 2025; Meyer, 2003; Meyer, 2015). At the individual level, harm refers to damage to individuals in the community and the negative effects to one’s personal life and well-being. This includes impacts to mental and/or physical health, relationships, financial stability, and sense of safety incurred due to an LGBTQIA + identity (Balsam et al., 2005; Kassing et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2025; Pratt-Chapman, 2025; Ray et al., 2021). On the other hand, the LGBTQIA + community is impacted at the societal level by traditional societal norms, with pressure to conform to heterosexuality, cisgenderism, and monogamy. Within this paper, when harm is widespread and impacts the

norms, functions, and structures of the LGBTQ+ community, I will refer to this as “harm at the societal level.” This may include disruption of specific systems, institutions, and collective wellbeing of the community in its entirety as a result of a threat (Connors et al., 2020). These levels intersect as societal harm to the community are imposed onto individuals and influence people’s daily lives and functioning (Levengood & Hadland, 2022; Tinsley, 2023). For example, the societal expectation of cisgenderism enforced through institutional level legislation (The White House, 2025), has widespread effects on the gender expansive portion of the LGBTQ+ community. This harm can be evaluated further on an individual level through the examination of potential negative mental health outcomes (such as increased fear regarding lack of safety) it contributes to (Klein et al., 2025; Linville, 2011; Mora, 2025). It is important to examine harm on both levels as their antidotes vary. Individual level harm may be treated through personal resources such as access to other community members, clinical treatment, relocation, or experiences of positive emotions, which contribute to resilience building (Clark et al., 2025; Machuca, 2026; Meyer, 2015; Testa et al., 2015). Societal level harm is combatted by community empowerment, implementation of positive policies and institutional support, increased education and awareness and rebuilding environments to create safe spaces for targeted communities (Coley & Das; 2020; Muehlenkamp & Nagy, 2025; Poteat & Day, 2025; Wagaman, 2015). Harm to the LGBTQ+ community is perpetrated through societal norms of heterosexism and cisgenderism, and contributes to the negative psychological, social, and biological outcomes, as well as disparities in mental and physical health (Pratt-Chapman, 2025; Kassing et al., 2021).

Minority Stress Theory

Both individual level and societal level harm to the LGBTQ+ community are best understood through minority stress theory. Minority stress comes from specific experiences of stress that are unique to holding a minority identity status. Within the LGBTQ+ community, the minority stress model posits that discrimination and victimization are the cause of these stressors (Chang et al., 2021). Minority stress is additional to the typical life stressors experienced by individuals with nonminority identities and is in the form of social stress caused by prejudice and discrimination from holding stigmatized identities (Frost & Meyer, 2023).

The minority stress model is a framework through which we understand the role of stressors unique to individuals who hold minority identities (Meyer, 1995). Stressors typically evaluated through this model emphasize stigma, prejudice and discrimination. The minority stress model separates the experience of these stressors into distal and proximal subcategories.

Distal stressors refer to external events such as being the target of discrimination, on both individual and institutional levels (i.e., harm caused by an individual or by a structure, organization, or institution). Distal stress may be caused by discriminatory policies and laws (Klein et al., 2025; Hatzenbuehler, 2016; Mora, 2025), major life events such as being a victim of anti-LGBTQ+ violence (Burt & Dorsch, 2026; Meyer et al., 2021), chronic stressors such as relationship strain caused by familial rejection (Boruchovitz-Zamir et al., 2025; Frost et al., 2019; Grossman et al., 2021; Vance et al., 2023), and more “typical” experiences of discrimination, such as microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2016; Papa & Parmenter, 2025). Proximal stress is the resulting internal conflicts that arise after exposure to a distal stressor/external influence (Meyer et al., 2015). Proximal stressors are related to one’s evaluation of an event (distal stressor) and directly reflect the internal experience and emotional reaction caused by the

experience of prejudice and discrimination (Meyer, 2003). Within the context of LGBTQ+ individuals, proximal stress typically falls within three categories: internalized homophobia, anticipated rejection, and identity concealment (Douglass & Conlin, 2020; Meyer, 2015). The proximal and distal stressors parallel the experiences of LGBTQ+ threats experienced at the individual and societal level, as societal level threats cause harm to individual community members, and distal stressors (external events) cause proximal stress (internalized negative outcomes). Heterosexism and Cisgenderism are societal expectations that provide a basis for LGBTQ+ experiences of minority stress. These social norms are the driving force of the act of “othering” sex and gender minorities.

Causes of Minority Stress

Heterosexism is a culturally constructed belief that heterosexuality is the norm, and that non-heterosexual behavior and expression should be decentralized and othered (Herek, 2004). Cisgenderism refers to the denial and disparagement of gender identities that do not align with one’s sex assigned at birth (Lennon & Mistler, 2014). These forces are conveyed, embraced and enforced through both subtle and overt forms of discrimination throughout societal institutions. Heterosexism and Cisgenderism are the driving forces of minority stress and stigma risk factors hypothesized to cause the relationship between stress and psychopathology. Discrimination of LGBTQ+ individuals can be broken down into three subsections; criminalization and punishment of homosexuality and gender nonconformity, denial of rights to LGBTQ people, and levels of intolerance queer people face (Lee & Ostergard, 2017).

Intolerance of Queerness

The effects of intolerance of queerness can be seen in negative psychological, biological, and societal outcomes (Myers et al., 2020; Salerno & Boekeloo, 2022; Sutter & Perrin, 2016;

Flores et al., 2022; Marshal et al., 2011; Mora, 2025; Toomey et al., 2018) and are perpetrated through the societal norms of cisgenderism and heterosexism. The type, intensity and level (individual or societal) of these effects is dependent on the form of discrimination or prejudice. Individual level effects of discrimination and victimization are a current focus of LGBTQ+ research (Myers et al., 2020; Kassing et al., 2021; Espelage et al., 2018, Salerno & Boekeloo, 2022, Denysshchen & Evans, 2022). The effects of individual level discrimination and victimization include increased suicidality (Moe et al., 2026), reduced quality of life (Mays & Cochran, 2001), moderate to severe psychological distress (Salerno & Boekeloo, 2022), and poor mental health outcomes (Sutter & Perrin, 2016) in LGBTQ+ adults.

Intolerance of LGBTQ+ people is often thought of as overt displays of discrimination and prejudice (Lee & Ostergard, 2017). While it is true that LGBTQ+ individuals face higher rates of violent forms of discrimination (Flores et al., 2022), most discrimination to the queer community is perpetrated in more “subtle” ways, such as microaggressions. Microaggressions are defined as “everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership” (Sue, 2010, p443).

On an individual level, harm to LGBTQ+ individuals is reflected in reported rates of hate crimes. The U.S Department of Justice reported the crime rates based on sexual orientation and gender identity to be the third and fourth most common reported hate crimes in the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018; Uniform Crime Reporting Program, 2024). The National Crime Victimization Survey determined that LGBTQ+ community members are nine times more likely to experience a violent hate crime than non-sex and gender minorities (Flores et al., 2022, Meyer & Flores, 2025). In 2022, it was reported that 1

in 5 hate crimes were triggered by anti-LGBTQ discrimination; these numbers were reported to be highest in black transgender women (HRC, 2023), reflecting the Eurocentric and anti-trans attitudes embedded in societal expectations. More recent statistics from the FBI's latest annual crime report reflected similar statistics, with hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity accounting for 21.2% of hate crimes committed in 2024 (Luneau, 2025). All rates reported regarding violence and assault against LGBTQ+ individuals are most likely an underrepresentation of the actual victimization of LGBTQ+ community members due to issues regarding underreporting (Pezzella, Fetzer & Keller, 2019). These numbers continue to grow despite an estimation that half of all victimizations not being reported to authorities (Flores et al., 2022).

More generally, SGM are also more likely to be victims of violence compared to individuals with nonminority sex and gender identities (Kassing et al., 2021, Meyer & Flores, 2025). Balsam et al. (2005) found that rates of sexual assault for bisexual and gay cisgender men were close to 10%, while this rate is less than 2% for heterosexual cisgender men. Similarly, cisgender heterosexual women reported sexual assault rates of 7.5% while SGM women reported sexual assault rates of 15%.

SMG identifying people begin experiencing the effects of intolerance of queerness in adolescence (Goldbach & Gibbs, 2017; Marshal et al., 2011; Perez-Brumer et al., 2017; Toomey et al., 2018; Haas & Lannutti, 2024, McNeil et al., 2017, Miranda-Mendizábal et al., 2017). In comparison to their majority community member peers, these effects include more negative behavioral health outcomes (Goldbach & Gibbs, 2017), disproportionately high rates of suicidality (Marshal et al., 2011; Perez-Brumer et al., 2017), and higher rates of suicide attempts (Toomey et al., 2018).

Criminalization and Punishment of Homosexuality and Gender Nonconformity

Within the course of writing this document, the Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v Hodges*, the landmark case which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide (Yurcaba & Sopelsa, 2025), was challenged on the grounds of religious freedom. Ultimately, the Supreme Court decided to decline reviewing this challenge (PFLAG, 2025). This challenge was one of many heteronormative pieces of legislature proposed intending to minimize recognition and rights of sexual identity minorities. Recent increase in criminalization and punishment of homosexuality and gender non-conformity is reflected in a record setting number of proposed anti-LGBTQ legislature (Simonoff et al., 2020). Legislature that attacks SGM's fall under the following categories: anti-conversion therapy, anti-transgender bathroom bills/locker room ban, bans on transgender healthcare, curriculum censorship, forced student outing, gender marker updates on identification documents, LGBTQ+ erasure laws, non-discrimination, religious refusals, restrictions on drag, school anti-bullying, sports ban for trans students, student pronoun refusal laws, and "Don't Say LGBTQ+" Laws (HRC). Anti- LGBTQ+ legislation has profound effects on LGBTQ+ individuals, including impact on their safety, visibility, and mental health (Mora, 2025).

The effects of these bills are seen through evaluation of health outcomes for sex and gender minorities as they are reported to experience poorer mental and physical health and have less access to preventative care (Dilley et al., 2010). These disproportionate rates of mental and physical health disparities are emphasized in states that lack laws against discrimination based on gender and sexuality (Hasenbush et al., 2014). Research documenting the LGBTQ+ communities' higher rates of negative health outcomes often attribute these statistics to poor access to care and insurance coverage, theorized to be caused by stigma and discrimination

(McKay, 2011). Additionally, even in states where health care is accessible it is often not culturally competent, and providers often do not have training or knowledge of the specific health care needs of LGBTQ people (Mayer et al., 2008; Obedin-Maliver et al., 2011).

Currently, laws intending to minimize and erase LGBTQ+ individuals' perceived existence cause damage to the community on a societal level, as it effects the potential safety and visibility of the community as a whole (Pomeranz, 2018). Effects of these laws include increased health disparities (Pomeranz, 2018), and higher risk of suicide attempts in LGBTQ youth (Krantz et al., 2024). Individuals in the community are more likely to experience minority stress caused by discrimination, prejudice, internalized stigma, rejection (or expectation of rejection), and identity concealment (McConnell et al., 2018), often times caused by societally or governmentally structured barriers to minority identity visibility, acceptance and more generally, permission to exist.

Effects on the Trans Community

Although SGM individuals experience increased discrimination in comparison to heterosexual individuals, statistics reflect increased anti-trans discrimination in comparison to discrimination against sexual minorities (Flores et al., 2020; Flores et al., 2022; HRC, 2023). The largest survey of trans people in the United States (US Trans Survey, 2022) highlighted the negative outcomes that are experienced disproportionately by trans people, including poverty (34% of respondents, compared to 12.4% in the general US population), unemployment (18% of respondents, compared to 2.3% general US population in 2022), homelessness (30% in respondents, compared to 019% in general US population in 2022), and mistreatment from medical staff within the last year (48% of respondents). Due to an increase in cisgenderism being a driving force for much of anti-LGBTQ+ attention, I find it important to draw some specific

attention to current attacks made through legislation on the trans community (Atwood & Morgenroth, 2024; Barbee & Gonzales, 2022).

Denial and Restriction of Rights

A website providing tracking of anti-trans legislation (Translegislation.com) is one of many resources the LGBTQ+ Community uses to monitor the progress of proposed bills that negatively impact trans people. These negative impacts range from decreasing legal recognition of trans identities, blocking access to basic healthcare, attacks to trans students in educational settings, and minimizing the ability and right for trans individuals to exist in public spaces (“Trans Legislation Tracker”, 2025). Attacks on trans rights are not new on a legislative level, as 2024 was the fifth consecutive year of a record-breaking number of anti-trans bills considered (“Trans Legislation Tracker”, 2025). This statistic has increased rapidly since we saw proposed anti trans bills triple from 2022 to 2023 (Choi, 2024).

Gender Affirming Care

Bills intended to restrict access to gender affirming care (GAC) for trans youth are considered some of the most harmful due to the negative health outcomes associated with restricted access to GAC (i.e., increased risk of a depressive disorder (Witcomb et al., 2018). Research indicates that gender affirmation has positive effects on mental health in trans youth (King & Gamarel, 2021; Fontanari et al., 2020; Glynn et al., 2016). Trans individuals who engage in hormone therapy experience improved quality of life and psychological functioning (White Hughto & Reisner, 2016). A cross-sectional analysis of medical charts found that older youth who experience gender incongruence reported higher rates of suicide attempts, anxiety and depressive disorders, current suicidal ideation, history of self-harm, and use of psychoactive medication than younger gender incongruent youth (Sorbara et al., 2020). The researchers

attributed this to gender affirming treatment being implemented after or during late-stage puberty (Sorbara et al., 2020). This finding is consistent with results of studies on gender affirming care, which show that implementation of GAC is more beneficial when provided earlier in life (Lee & Rosenthal, 2023).

Attacks on Trans Community from President Donald Trump

One current example of punishment of homosexuality and gender nonconformant can be seen in the negative political attention due to President Trump's insistent denial of the rights and existence of queer people (The White House, 2025). His previous presidency led to increased violence, stigma and discrimination, causing negative effects to LGBTQ+ people on both community and individual levels (BBC News, 2016; Cahill & Pettus, 2020; Haas & Lannutti, 2024; Faderman, 2017). This negative political attention has caused documented increases in negative societal and individual outcomes LGBTQ+ community members (Brown & Keller, 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2018; Haas & Lannutti, 2024, Russell & Richards, 2003).

Executive orders come directly from the President and are meant to direct agencies on how to operate. President Donald Trump has put forth numerous executive orders encouraging federal agencies to enforce cisgenderism, including instructing federal institutions to recognize only "male" and "female" sexes and alignment of these sexes to match biological markers and sex assigned at birth (The White House, 2026). President Trump's inauguration speech introduced this executive order, where he is quoted as saying "As of today, it will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders, male and female" (Stoddard, 2025).

President Trump's anti-LGBTQ rhetoric is well documented during both of his presidential elections, and his first presidential term. In his inaugural address on January 20th,

2025, Trump referred to trans individuals in a negative manner six times, despite their estimated population of 1% of the United States (Yurcaba, 2025). In an effort to abide by President Trump's executive order "Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government", the National Park Service website dedicated to the Stonewall National Monument has removed all references to transgender and gender nonconforming people (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2025). The website now only recognizes the presence of "LGB" sexual identity minorities at the pivotal riot that is understood to have launched the LGBTQ+ rights movement (Sarnoff et al., 2015; Stonewall). This narrative is false and is an example of erasure of individuals who were present at Stonewall who held more marginalized identities, such as well-known advocates, and transgender women of color: Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera (*Marsha Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and the History of Pride Month*, 2021). This example of erasure reflects both Eurocentric and anti-trans attitudes seen in newspaper articles that originally reported the events that are now known as the Stonewall Riots. The LGBTQ+ community is not new to experiencing harm from the government, and these attacks (likely due to their widespread effects on all sex and gender minorities) typically cause an increase in advocacy within the queer community (Lewis, 2019).

Minority Stress and the Emergence of Pride

Historically, when a group of individuals with minority identities experience perceived oppression, inequitable systems, denial of rights, and criminalization of minority identities, acts of resistance form to protect rights and demand change (Essex, 2022). Intolerance of queerness, criminalization and punishment of homosexuality and gender nonconformity, and denial of rights, are the themes present that triggered the creation of what we now know as Pride. Pride was born as a response to violence and injustice against LGBTQ+ community members that

experienced victimization firsthand at the events occurring at the Stonewall Inn on June 29th, 1969. Stonewall was not the first event of LGBTQ+ advocacy and resistance, but it was one that triggered a nationwide movement. Since that event, The LGBTQ+ community has continually come together to face societal level injustice as a collective front, especially during Pride Month, held in June (Tandon & Rao, 2021). Many in the LGBTQ+ community will attend a Pride event during the month of June in an effort to celebrate how far the community has come, to honor community members that have paved the way, and to partake in collective action, as a means to stand together in the face of adversity (Keating, 2021).

Individuals in the community are more likely to experience minority stress caused by discrimination, prejudice, internalized stigma, rejection (or expectation of rejection), and identity concealment (McConnell et al., 2018), making “being out”, and holding LGBTQ+ identification, an act of courage. Experiences of discrimination cause damage to individuals mental, physical and social well-being, but these effects have been seen to increase or decrease depending on what self-evaluative emotions are present in the individual. Shame and Pride are the two self-conscious emotions this paper will focus on, due to their significant mediating effect on the experience of negative outcomes after experiencing discrimination, stigma or prejudice (Goffnett et al., 2021; Mereish & Poteat, 2015; Smith et al., 2020, Carlisle et al., 2026).

Pride is an influential emotion within American society, especially for individuals with minority identities. Due to its self-evaluative nature, it influences the way in which individuals understand their social status in relation to others. Pride is a buffer for the negative effects previously described caused by the societal norms of cisgenderism and heterosexism. Individuals who experience feelings of Pride are less likely to experience the harm caused by discrimination, stigma and prejudice due to Prides contributions to resilience (Testa et al., 2015).

Self-Conscious Emotions as Mediators to Minority Stress

The experience of self-conscious emotions (i.e., Pride, shame) has demonstrated a mediating effect on experiences of stigma and discrimination and potential negative psychological outcomes (Carlisle et al., 2026; Goffnett et al., 2022; Mereish & Poteat, 2015; Seabra et al., 2025). These self-conscious emotions guide an individual's interpretations of their social context, dictate the behaviors appropriate to navigate situations in real time, and connect these events to the physical sensations they cause in the body (Barrett, 2017).

Shame and Pride

Shame and Pride function to notify people of their social status and are therefore a key element of American culture (Lewis, 1992; Tangney & Dearing, 2003). Pride and shame are both self-conscious emotions that involve self-evaluation (Tracy et al., 2010). Feelings of Pride or shame are the outcome of an individual judging an aspect of themselves against a societal norm, creating an assessment of their value. When someone perceives themselves as failing to meet a societal standard, this often produces shame; when their evaluation creates a perception of succeeding at a societal norm, this produces feelings of Pride (Lewis et al., 1992; Tangney & Dearing, 2003). It is evolutionarily beneficial to seek high status due to its created proximity to valuable resources; therefore people attempt to align their actions with those that would create feelings of Pride rather than shame. In American culture, people with non-minority identities are awarded with higher social status, and more access to resources (Scheff, 2003). This creates an emphasis on the importance of social identity that is intertwined with the concepts of Pride and shame. Both shame and Pride can be identified through unique combinations of behaviors, affect, cognitions, and sensations. These emotions are increasingly relevant to individuals in the LGBTQ+ community due to historical and current cultural pressures.

Shame- the Amplifier of Minority Stress for LGBTQ+ Community

Generally, stigma, discrimination, and social prejudice can lead many LGBTQ+ individuals to experience shame and social isolation (Hallman & Duhamel, 2016; Mereish & Poteat, 2015; Meyer, 2003; Yadegarfar et al., 2014; Tinlin-Dixon et al., 2024). Shame is one of the most frequent responses to community and individual level harm, further driving additional negative outcomes. Shame is the core emotion felt when one is perceiving a social threat. It is comprised of a continuum of negative feelings ranging from mild embarrassment to severe humiliation (Budden, 2009, p.1033). It is the self-conscious emotion conceptualized as the opposite to feelings of Pride, and it is typically felt in relation to perceived inferiority, failure, judgment or undesired exposure (Budden, 2009, p.1033). Past research shows that feelings of shame can be triggered by social ostracism, rejection, and experience of prejudice (Gilbert, 1997). The manifestation of shame in LGBTQ individuals is typically a result of occurrences of intolerance, social ridicule, physical danger, and/or psychological implications associated with stigmatization (Meyer, 2003).

Shame often stems from experiences of stigma, as stigma signifies that the bearer is of low social standing (Scheff, 2000). The experience of shame stems from negative self judgement after a perceived violation of social expectations (Saraiya & Lopez-Castro, 2016). Shame has been constructed through American societal norms make individuals with minoritized identities that their identities are something to be hidden, rather than something to be celebrated (Goffnett, Routon & Flores, 2022).

Within the general population, shame is closely related to depression, anxiety, self-harm, and substance use (Câdea & Szentagotai-Tătar, 2018; Kim et al., 2011; Luoma et al., 2019; Sheehy et al., 2019). Shame is significantly correlated with anxiety, depression, self-harm and

substance use (Goffnett et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2011; Lopez-Castro et al., 2019; Sheehy et al., 2019). Due to the LGBTQ+ communities increased likelihood of experiencing traumatic events, they have an increased likelihood of experiencing shame (Scheer et al., 2020). Shame caused by traumatic events is associated with worse mental and physical health (Scheer et al., 2020). In sexual minority youth, shame has been shown to cause negotiation of their identities in order to avoid potential shaming experiences (McDermott et al., 2008). These negotiations of identity do not decrease the negative effects of shame as potential experiences of internalized transphobia and homophobia that stem from these experiences cause increased anxiety and depression (Bockting et al., 2013; Rood et al., 2017, Scheer et al., 2020). Numerous studies have indicated that certain emotions (such as shame and Pride) mediate the relationship between the negative effects of stigma-based stressors and mental and physical health within sexual minority adolescence (Goffnett et al., 2022; Mereish & Poteat, 2015). Scheer et al. (2020) suggest that shame may be malleable through psychosocial interventions, such as community focused efforts that illicit emotions that oppose shame (i.e., Pride).

Pride- a Buffer to Minority Stress

Research on minority stress now encourages evaluation of how to circumvent the negative effects of minority stress on the individual, such as shame (Meyer, 2015). This has created an emphasis on evaluation of resilience factors, which has been historically lacking in psychology (Luccassen et al., 2022). Research has identified community connectedness (Frost & Meyer, 2023), social support, and Pride (Perrin et al., 2020) to contribute to resilience for SGM's. LGBTQ+ Pride is a potential intervention at the societal level due to its contribution to experiences of community consciousness, and positive visibility of marginalized identities (Weinhardt et al., 2021). These experiences directly combat the stigma, prejudice and

discrimination experienced in social institutions. Pride functions as a potential protective factor from psychopathology, opposing shame, which has been shown to contribute to psychopathology (Cândeia & Szentagotai, 2013; Gilbert & Andrews 1998). Pride is well established as a resilience factor within gender minorities (Testa et al., 2015) and is typically evaluated on an individual level (i.e., Pride in one's identity, rather than Pride in one's identification with their community). Individuals report experiencing feelings of Pride on both individual (Testa et al., 2015; Perrin et al., 2020) and community levels (De Hooze & Van Osch, 2021; Salice & Sanchez, 2016), but evaluation of community level experiences of Pride are lacking in research on the LGBTQ+ community. Instead, these descriptions of Pride are found in LGBTQ+ individuals' colloquial descriptions of Pride.

Pride descriptions in Current Literature

In research on Pride as a resilience factor, Pride is often defined as an individual's positive attitude and feelings towards their gender identity (Testa et al., 2015; Soulliard et al., 2025). Pride is embedded in scales related to resilience due to its buffering effect on minority stressors (i.e., "Gender Minority Stress Resilience" scale by Testa et al., 2015; "Dispositional Positive Emotions Scale-DPES by Shiota et al., 2006; "Gender Minority Stress and Resilience Measure for Adolescence"- GMRSR-A by Hidalgo et al., 2019 ; "The Sexual Shame and Pride Scale-SSPS by Rendina et al., 2019). The items used to describe Pride in these scales commonly refer to it using its synonym: proudness (DPES, Shiota et al., 2006, GMSR-A, Hidalgo et al., 2019; SSPS, Rendina et al., 2019). These definitions and scales, although helpful to quantify LGBTQ+ Pride as a form of resilience, neglect to address the nuanced feeling and emotional experience of Pride by LGBTQ+ individuals.

Where Pride Comes From

Feelings of Pride have been shown to come from engagement with the SGM community, with continued interaction with the community maintaining LGBTQ+ individuals' feelings of Pride (Telander et al., 2017). Other documented sources of Pride include affirmation from other communities, and celebration of LGBTQ+ identities (Lewis & Hermann, 2023). Current understandings of Pride note that experiences of visibility and celebration of minority identities create opportunity for sex and gender minorities to positively evaluate their identities position in society, contributing to achievement of higher social status, resulting in feelings of Pride (Goffnett et al., 2022).

Benefits of Pride

In addition to Pride's positive contributions to resilience, Pride has positive associations with self-esteem, self-efficacy & pro-active coping (Dickens & Robins, 2020), and negative associations with social anxiety (Cohen & Huppert, 2018), depression (Orth et al., 2010b) and neuroticism (Redina et al., 2019). Furthermore, Pride is correlated with lower social anxiety and less symptoms of depression within adult populations (Cohen & Huppert, 2018; Orth et al., 2020). In adolescence, low rates of Pride and higher rates of shame is associated with poor health compared to adolescence with strong Pride and low shame.

Conceptual Misalignment/Ontological Mismatch of LGBTQ Pride as a Concept

Pride, the self-conscious emotion, differs in some ways from the experience of feelings associated with LGBTQ Pride (Tracy, Robins & Tangney, 2007; Testa et al., 2015). Pride was first described in psychological literature dating back to the early 20th century (James, 1890). In the early 21st century, Pride became distinct in the category of emotions related to the self, and researchers Tracy and Robins increased psychology's understanding of the functionality of Pride

through their dissection of Pride into authentic Pride (related to feelings of accomplishment and increased self-worth), and hubristic Pride (related to arrogance and egotism) (Tracy & Robins, 2004; Tracy & Robins, 2007). LGBTQ Pride is related to traditional accounts of authentic Pride but necessitates inclusion of group identification (Salice & Sanchez, 2016). LGBTQ Pride keeps the main tenet of “Pride” as it is traditionally defined (such as by Tangney & Tracy, 2012) as it is defined as a self-evaluative emotion, and effects LGBTQ+ individuals in all of the traditional ways that Pride has been researched to effect people. Despite this similarity, LGBTQ+ Pride varies in what causes it to be felt, the process it takes to access the emotion, and the accompanied emotions that encapsulate the full emotional experience of LGBTQ+ Pride. Much of LGBTQ+ focused research is categorized under terms related to “Pride” due to the close association of the word Pride to the queer community (i.e., Blackburn & Todd, 2023; Weinhardt et al., 2021). This research does not always reference the psychological concept Pride, and instead addresses positive experiences (i.e., Weinhardt et al., 2021, Blackburn & Todd, 2023) or positive emotions occurring within members of the LGBTQ community. These studies speak to the cultural perception of Pride, as they often measure resilience, LGBTQ+ stigma, and quality of life (Weinhardt et al., 2021).

There appears to be a conceptual misalignment between the way LGBTQ+ Pride is measured and defined within most psychological research, and the way it is experienced within LGBTQ+ community members. Conceptual misalignments create a misrepresentation of phenomena we intend to observe, diminishing potential understanding of the construct and our ability to articulate it (Knott & Alejandro, 2024). Knott and Alejandro (2024) suggest the use of linguistic approaches to encompass the socio-political context of concepts. This evaluation comes with the risk of exposing a potential vagueness or looseness of a concept (Mitrani 2021)

but prioritizes a deliberate analytical exploration of a concepts depth and breadth (Wilkins & Kessler 2021). This type of reconceptualization recognizes how a concept has been used by individuals throughout time, and acknowledges the socio-political behaviors of people when relevant to the concept intended to be analyzed (Mills, 2000). Knott and Alejandro (2024) suggest the steps of reconceptualization to be as follows: identify conceptual misalignment, recognize the semantic field in which the concept is situated, acknowledge existing sub-types of the concept, then consider hybrid sub-types (this step leads to potential blurring of attributes from other concepts within the semantic field).

This study addresses this potential conceptual misalignment through creation of theory through Constructivist Grounded Theory Methodology, after evaluating the socially constructed semantic field it is embedded in, acknowledging both psychological concepts and colloquial concepts that exist as subtypes and hybrid sub-types of Pride. Confirmation or rejection of the breadth of Pride as a construct came from constructivist grounded theory analysis of LGBTQ+ community members descriptions of Pride.

The Social Construction of LGBTQ+ Pride

Pride, the emotional experience, is a concept intertwined with Pride, the march/and parade occurring on the anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising. Pride also denotes LGBTQ+ Pride Month, held in June, meant to raise awareness to and celebrate the LGBTQ+ communities' efforts to promote equality and draw attention to LGBTQ+ history and current issues faced by the community (Bruce, 2013; Ong, Lewis & Prayang; 2025). It is a time meant to bring unity, visibility and solidarity to community members; it is often marked by feelings of affirmation and community connectedness (Tinlin-Dixon et al., 2025). LGBTQ+ Pride Month is also a time of memorial to recognize and celebrate the lives of community members who have passed due to

hate crimes, anti-LGBTQ+ violence, suicide and HIV/AIDS. It is important to acknowledge the history of the word “Pride” in relation to the LGBTQ+ community to understand how its conceptualization has developed.

Pride the Event and Pride the Month

Pride, the event, began in the United States (Peterson & Wahlstrom, 2018). It is recognized and celebrated on the anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, a raiding of the Stonewall Inn in the 1960’s. The Stonewall Inn is a known gay bar which was often the target of police raids due to their reputation of ignoring anti-LGBTQ+ laws in the 1960’s (Library of Congress). Police frequently made arrests based on laws such as New York Penal Code 240.35, Subsection 4, which stated that individuals were forbidden from wearing more than 3 articles of clothing that do not match their gender assigned at birth (Redburn, 2022). Other laws enforced at this time made it illegal to serve a gay person alcohol, a law enforced until 1966 (1969 Stonewall Riots, History.com). These laws were in place due to a common perception from majority community members that gay bars were disorderly. The forementioned laws are a few examples of legislature that prohibited LGBTQ+ people from functioning in a normal fashion, as their majority community member peers functioned. These limits on normal functioning would be challenged after police officers entered the Stonewall Inn on June 28th, 1969.

Although arrests at Stonewall were a normal occurrence, this evening was different due to both patrons and bystanders joining together to riot against the institutional targeting of their identities. A riot squad and fire department were eventually deployed to rescue officers trapped inside of the bar, and to put out fires set by rioters (Britannica.com). The first Pride march was held on the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, on June 28th, 1970 (Peterson & Wahlstrom, 2018). At this time, what we know as Pride, was called “the New York Christopher

Street Liberation Day.” Due to the success of the first Christopher Street Liberation Day, other large cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago began to plan their own Pride celebrations in 1971 (Peterson & Wahlstrom, 2018). The events spread in popularity throughout the country, and then worldwide.

The Stonewall Inn was a pillar to the gay community because of its acceptance of various community members despite their typical negative perception even within their own community (Graves, 2018). For instance, Stonewall allowed drag queens' entry and became a location that homeless or runaway gay youths came to for shelter. It was one of the few locations that allowed queer people to dance with one another (History.com). Few newspapers reported the events that occurred on June 28th, 1969. The New York Times allotted less than one column to discuss the police raid from the previous day. It was titled “4 Policemen Hurt in ‘Village’ Raid”. The article referred to the rioters exclusively as “young men” despite the diverse gender presentations present at the Stonewall Inn during the raid.

The first Christopher Street Liberation Day was a significant gathering of thousands of LGBTQ+ individuals protesting the illegality of their sex and gender identities (Fosburgh, 1970 pg. 29). In The New York Times article published the following day, Michael Brown, a founder of the Gay Liberation Movement was quoted as saying “We’re probably the most harassed, persecuted minority group in history, but we’ll never have the freedom and civil rights we deserve as humans unless we stop hiding in closets and in the shelter of anonymity” (Fosburgh, 1970). He directly addresses the need for gay people to “stop being ashamed” and stated that the march “is an affirmation and declaration of our new Pride.” These quotes are the beginning of a colloquial reference to the concept that is the emotional experience described when LGBTQ individuals discuss queer Pride.

Given the storied history of Pride, the event, and the parallels to current discrimination and threats against the LGBTQ+ community, it was anticipated that current descriptions of Pride will also include refusal to be ashamed, references to celebration, visibility, and activism, and feelings of proudness on behalf of individual identities and group identification.

Current Conceptualizations of Pride from LGBTQ+ Community Members

While the effects of Pride are increasingly researched, LGBTQ+ Pride as a construct is almost undeveloped in nature. In research, Pride has been frequently defined through its synonyms, it is often measured by the degree to which one would agree that they experience “proudness” of either their personal identities, or their identification with the LGBTQ+ community (Chang et al., 2021; Gorska & Bilewicz, 2015; Woodford et al., 2018). Some LGBTQ+ focused Pride research presents more nuanced understandings of Pride; such as research by Testa, Hararath, Peta and Balsam (2015) which describes identity Pride to include three facets addressing one’s comfortability, avoidance of potential shame, and feelings of exceptionalism in relation to an identity. This project’s goal is to increase understanding of what the LGBTQ+ community experiences when they are referring to the word “Pride.”

LGBTQ+ Community members have described their experiences of Pride in ways that align with numerous psychological and academic concepts, such as identity Pride, self-acceptance, belongingness, and refusal to feel shame (Limitless, thread” What Does Pride Mean to You?”; Reddit thread: “What does Pride mean to you?” r/lgbt). Researchers have established understandings of important life factors to be multi-dimensional, but Pride has not been explored through this lense, potentially due to Pride not being valued within the study of emotions, or a lack of evaluation of Pride as it pertains to LGBTQ+ individuals. Pride is typically seen as one

dimensional, and is placed in the category of positive emotions, but when explored thoroughly, we may understand Pride to be multifaceted and nuanced in nature.

Identity Pride/LGBTQ Pride/Gender Identity Pride

Identity Pride is one of many research based psychological concepts identified by LGBTQ+ individuals when describing their experiences of Pride (Limitless, thread” What Does Pride Mean to You?”; Reddit thread: “What does Pride mean to you?” r/lgbt). Cass (1979) conceptualizes identity Pride to include acceptance of one’s identity and satisfaction from embracement of that identity. Testa et al., (2015) introduced a measure of identity Pride specifically for gender minorities that includes three criteria: does the identity make the individual feel special or unique, does the individual feel comfortable sharing their identity, and does the individual prefer to have the identity known by others despite their potential to accept or rejecting them due to the presence of the identity. Cass (1979) conceptualizes identity Pride to include acceptance of one’s identity and satisfaction from embracement of that identity. Identity Pride comes from immersion and communal attachment (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013). Affirmation of one’s identity also increases the likelihood that they will experience identity Pride (Fredrikson-Goldsen et al., 2017). People who experience identity Pride are empowered to engage with their identity community, leading to feelings of self-worth and identity affirmation (Dunn & Burcaw, 2013).

LGBTQ Pride is a concept often referred to, or measured in research, but not defined (Lawrence et al., 2024). Measures, such as the four question, 4-point scale used by Lawrence et al., (2024) indicates that Pride is understood to be synonymous with proudness. Other Researchers explore the effects of “gender identity Pride” (Bockting et al., 2023; , defined as

“feelings of positive regard related to one’s identity as part of the gender minority community”
(Conn et al., 2023).

Self-acceptance

Self-acceptance of a minority sexuality includes both a positive association with the acceptance of oneself, and both comfort and embracement of one’s sexual identity (Rotosky, Cardom, Hammer, Riggle, 2018). Some researchers suggest that self-acceptance of minority sexual identity is one of the major identity tasks for LGBTQ+ individuals (Elizur & Mintzer, 2001). Self-acceptance of a minority sexuality is a process that includes normalizing one’s sexuality by rejecting internalized negative attitudes, enhancing self –worth, embracing openness about one’s sexuality, and fostering deeper participation and connection within the sexual minority community (Cass, 1979; Elizer & Mintzer, 2001). This process is strengthened by increased access and connection to self-accepting LGBTQ+ peers (Elizer & Mintzer, 2001; Meyer, 2003).

Some LGBTQ+ Community members have described their experiences of Pride to include feelings of self-acceptance, as seen in the following quotes from descriptions of Pride on online forums:

“Pride means acceptance and authenticity of self. It's a time when people can gather and accept themselves and each other and maybe just for a moment be able to breathe a sign of contentment.” (Limitless, thread” What Does Pride Mean to You?”)

“As I'm early in my journey Pride to me means being able to accept myself, and rejecting the norms I grew up with so I explore myself with no internal fear.” (Reddit thread:

“What does Pride mean to you?” r/lgbt)

Refusal of Shame

One of the more common descriptions of emotions in relation to LGBTQ found in colloquial references to Pride include references to “refusing to be ashamed” of an identity (Reddit thread: “What does Pride mean to you?” r/lgbt). This is an emotional process that is distinct from feeling Pride, although potentially on the same emotion continuum if we are to consider Pride and shame as opposite emotions. Refusal to feel shame involves resisting the feelings of inadequacy or worthlessness that shame often imposes. This emotional process is often a defense against negative judgements imposed by society. The presence of Pride is typically expected to include reference to affirmative emotions, it goes beyond rejection of negativity, and embraces feelings of self-worth, empowerment and joy. We may position refusal of shame to be indication that one is on a trajectory to access feelings of Pride as the concept rejects the opposition of Pride, but does not fully embrace Pride.

Community Consciousness

Psychological research has recently emphasized the ability of social connection of similar identity community members as a strength-based concept causing numerous positive outcomes. This concept has been referred to using many terms such as group-based social connection (Haslam et al., 2022), in-group solidarity (Markovsky & Lawler, 1994), and group cohesion (Forsyth, 2021). The current research will recognize this phenomenon as community consciousness (Frost & Meyer, 2011). For LGBTQ+ individuals, connection to the community can produce a sense of belonging (Herek & Glunt, 1995). Community consciousness is the product of involvement in the community and comes from a sense of membership and connection. Additionally, it is a source of emotional (e.g., love), tangible (e.g., information) and intangible (e.g., advice) social support (Herek & Glunt, 1995). Community consciousness

involves the process of identifying as a member of a social group, which has been shown to provide people with meaning and purpose (Steffens et al., 2017), self-esteem (Jetten et al., 2015), and increased wellbeing (Jetten et al., 2017). Community consciousness can be a protective mechanism to protect against effects of stigma and negative life events (Frost & Meyer, 2011).

“I’m proud of the community the people before us and ourselves have built to stand up against bigotry and keep fighting every single day. I’m proud everyone who dares to be different in their own way.” (Reddit thread: “What does Pride mean to you?” r/lgbt).

“Pride is love. Love of myself, love of myself, love of my family. For who we all are inside. & by family I don’t mean blood, I mean you all, my community. You are my siblings, my parents, my children. You are my Pride” (Reddit thread: “What does Pride mean to you?” r/lgbt).

Celebration and visibility, contributing to normalization

Repression is another negative effect of heteronormativity. Repression takes on many forms on both individual (i.e., individual experiences of physical or verbal violence) and community levels (i.e., criminalization of same sex marriage, and pathologization of same sex desire) (Rosiek, 2016). Experiences of violence and erasure on interpersonal, social and institutional levels influence an individual’s likelihood of hiding the parts of themselves that do not align with expectations set by heteronormativity and cisgenderism (Rosiek, 2016). This form of chosen avoidance of attention to sex and gender minority identities is referred to as “being in the closet.” Coming out of the closet is potentially an act that increases interpersonal visibility. When straight people know queer people, they have tend to have positive attitudes them (Herek & Glunt, 1993). These positive attitudes are present regardless of race (Herek & Capitanio, 1995;

Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006) and gender (Herek, 1988). Doric Wilson, a participant in the Stonewall riots stated:

That's what happened Stonewall night to a lot of people. We went, "Oh my God. I am not alone, there are other people that feel exactly the same way." (Davis et al., 2011). LGBTQ+ community members continue to reference celebration and visibility in their descriptions of Pride (Limitless, thread: "What Does Pride Mean to You?"; Quora thread: "How do you explain the concept of Pride to someone who is not part of the LGBTQ+ community?").

Advocacy and awareness

At its heart, LGBTQ Pride is an act of activism (Breslow et al., 2015), due to its socially constructed roots stemming from queer peoples experience at the Stonewall riots. Pride is more than just a celebration, it is a political expression meant to fight for human rights (Tinlin-Dixon et al., 2024), and a time of memorial and embracement of older generations of LGBTQ+ individuals who bravely started the Pride movement (Tinlin-Dixon et al., 2024). Pride is a time for the LGBTQ+ community to come together for collective action to resist social injustice (DiFulvio, 2011). Collective action has been defined as an act by an ingroup member, representing the group, meant to improve the conditions experienced by the group (Wright et al., 1990). This collective action may take place on individual levels (such as critical dialogue), institutional levels (i.e., engagement in advocacy organizations) and societal levels (i.e., protests or parades meant to demand social change, visibility, and celebration of minority identities) (Becker et al., 2013).

Research shows that sex and gender minorities participate in activism more than cisgender and heterosexual individuals (Swank et al., 2020), potentially due to their exposure to minority stressors (Frost et al., 2019). In LGBTQ+ minority youth, interpersonal minority stress has been found to predict increased participation in activism (Frost et al., 2019). This effect is

similarly found within sexual minority women exposed to gendered heterosexism (Friedman & Ayres, 2013). Research has found that participation in activism is a resilience factor for transgender youth. Resilience leads to increased self-satisfaction and increased ability to transcend challenging circumstances (Asakura, 2017; Craig et al., 2015; Matsuno & Israel, 2018; Singh et al., 2011). In the general population, participation in community is positively related to well-being, and more specifically associated with psychological empowerment (Israel, Checkoway, Schultz, & Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, & Checkoway, 1992). Some individuals find activism to have healing effects, influencing increased meaning in life (Earnshaw et al., 2016). The positive effects of activism have potential to counteract the negative effects of minority stress for sexual and gender minorities (Job et al., 2023).

Current Study

Methodology

In order to understand the emotional experiences of LGBTQ+ Pride, I utilized qualitative research methods, such as data collection and analysis through Constructivist Grounded Theory, to bolster the voices of LGBTQ+ community members by developing an understanding of Pride that reflects their nuanced experiences of Pride. I chose Constructivist Grounded Theory as it embraces epistemological and ontological perspectives that allow the phenomenology of Pride to be constructed from the standpoint of the community it aids, and recognizes the position I have as a researcher studying a community I hold identification in.

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) differs from its traditional Grounded theory (GT) in many ways but keeps many of the same tenets as to continue to allow theory to be grounded in data. Traditional GT positions the researcher as a “neutral observer” and requires them to be open to discovering the theory that evolves from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss &

Corbin, 1994). CGT differs as it holds the belief that reality is individually constructed through one's involvement in the world (Charmaz 2000). There is an inherent sense of non-neutrality in this perspective of reality. Both theories aim to develop and enhance theories related to social phenomena (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 1990), but there is variability in the steps they take to do so, as well as positionality of the researcher.

Constructivist Grounded theorists maintain the core processes of traditional Grounded Theorists, as they adhere to the procedures created by theorists Glaser & Strauss, such as simultaneous data collection, use of a constant comparative method, coding and memo writing, theoretical coding, theoretical saturation, and attendance to theoretical sensitivity (Charmaz, 2014). Both CGT and its predecessor traditional GT encourage the researcher to follow the patterns the data unveils, and to recognize their biases and preconceptions about the data. In traditional GT, a researcher's preconceptions are not blatantly acknowledged, as there is an expectation that a researcher's prior knowledge or assumptions will be set aside, to uncover the objective truth within the data. CGT encourages researchers to acknowledge their preconceptions as it is believed that it is inherent for a qualitative researcher to take part in the creation of the theories that are the product of qualitative data analysis. Due to its epistemological and ontological beliefs being rooted in social constructivism, CGT endorses the idea that reality is constructed through one's engagement with the world, and hence, a researcher enters their participant's world and is engaged in the process of co-construction of reality based on their interactions and relationship with each participant (Charmaz, 2014).

GT embraces a post positivist perspective and endorses the belief that there is an objective reality, but that this reality can only ever be imperfectly understood (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, Mills et al., 2006). Grounded theory posits that reality is objective but can only be

imperfectly understood and interpreted, constructivist grounded theory believes that reality is subjective not absolute, and truth is relative to social and individual contexts. CGT differs from GT due to its recognition of a relativist epistemological position (i.e., integration of societal and cultural context in evaluation of a construct), acknowledgement of the multiple standpoints created by differing realities for both the researcher and participants; implementation of thoughtful and critical thinking in regards to how the researchers own background, values and life circumstances interact with interpretation of qualitative data; and positioning of research purposefully within the “historical, social and situational conditions of its production” (Charmaz, 2017).

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) is an adaptation of traditional Grounded Theory that edits the ontological and epistemological perspectives to include the ideas of relativism and subjectivism, with traditional grounded theory rooted in ideas of post positivism and pragmatism (Mills et al., 2006). The relationship between participants and researcher is uniquely viewed as reciprocal and the theories created from data are therefore co-constructed. In its original form, Grounded Theory viewed participants purely as a source of data from which they must discover an objective truth, rather than co-creators of knowledge (Collins, 1998). Through the perspectives of Strauss and Corbin, Grounded Theory has grown to acknowledge the inherent constructivist nature of the interview process as they state, “The interplay between researcher and the actors studied – if the research is intensive – is likely to result in some degree of reciprocal shaping” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). CGT takes this a step further, and acknowledges that the interview process is not neutral or context free; it is an interaction in which the data

created is negotiated mutually and within context (Collins, 1998; Hand, 2003; Fontona & Frey, 2000).

My decision to utilize CGT is grounded in the idea that Pride is a nuanced, ever changing emotional experience shared by LGBTQ+ community members in specific moments of time and space. I employ a constructivist research paradigm (theoretical framework) that informs the ontological (the nature of reality) and epistemological (the nature of knowledge) viewpoints from which my methodology stands. The ontological perspective of constructivism is subjectivism and holds that truth is not objective and shared by all, but instead there are multiple versions of truth (as many as there are individuals), and that sometimes these truths are shared based on social construction that occurs through relationships and shared experience. The nature of how truth is created is epistemologically relativist, meaning that one's worldview and experience of reality is dependent on historical and social context (Gergen, 1985).

To address the concerns of traditional grounded theorists, related to inflated importance of the researcher's interpretation rather than the participants voice, I engaged in participant validation. The process of participant validation involved sharing my codes, describing the coding process, and checking my interpretation of the data with the participants. This process allowed the participants to ensure that the codes and subsequent theory accurately captured their voice. Despite acknowledgement of my pre-existing knowledge, and identities through which I experience the world, authenticity of data was prioritized throughout the study process.

Practicing Reflexivity

Reflexivity is at the basis of transparent qualitative research and involves various processes that encourage researchers to increase their awareness and accountability of their subjectivity (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Coming from an emic perspective, it is important for

me to document and track how my role and perspective as a queer researcher influences how I interact with the data. I did this in multiple ways throughout the study process, including personal memo-writing, sharing a positionality statement, and engaging in participant validation. These methods allowed me to be critically conscious of my biases and where and how my pre-existing knowledge challenged my ability to be impartial towards the data. Reflexivity was a process embedded in the design of this study, as I constantly documented decision making processes as they related to methodological, contextual, personal, and interpersonal factors of the study (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). This process was multifaceted and nuanced, to allow for deep examination of my process as a researcher throughout the duration of study and analysis.

Positionality Statement

CGT encourages researchers to practice reflexivity through acknowledgment of identities and lived experiences in an effort to be forthcoming with world view and potential biases (Charmaz 2017). It would be wholly dishonest for me to ignore how my social identities and experiences are not only relevant to this research but are a motivation to engage in the study of queer experiences and processes. I identify as gender queer/nonbinary, lesbian, Puerto Rican, and White. As many queer people experience, through the act of self-discovery, I have identified with different sexuality and gender identities throughout time. My relationship to queerness started from an outside perspective, through the lens of values embedded in Christianity, Heterosexism and Cisnormativity. I went on a similar journey as described by many of my participants and was very conscious throughout the duration of data collection and analysis, of the ways in which my journey through LGBTQ+ identification shapes and creates my worldview.

I benefit from my Whiteness, I “pass” as cisgender, and benefit from living in a generally accepting community, with access to resources. It is my hope that my honesty in this positionality statement is a representation of the process of self-reflection that this research requires, and that I have constantly, and will continue to, engage in.

Participants

Participants self-identified as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. All 7 participants reported having non-heterosexual sexuality and/or minority sexual identity. Participants answered screening questions identifying them as 18 years or older and being fluent in English (Screener in Appendix A; Recruitment Documents). Out of 7 participants, 5 were recruited at local Pride events, and 2 were recruited through convenience sampling methods.

All 7 participants identified as nonheterosexual, with 2 identifying as bisexual, 3 as pansexual, and 2 as lesbian. Out of 7 participants, 5 identified as gender identity minorities, self-identifying as nonbinary/transfemme, agender, fluid, trans woman, and womanish/lesbian. The remaining 2 participants identified with their sex assigned at birth and identified as women. The participants’ pronouns and names were asked at the beginning of the interview process and were used consistently throughout the interview process. The participants ranged in age from 22 to 46, with the average age of participants being 31 (median = 29, no mode) (see Table 1).

Table 1.
Demographics

Category	Subcategory	Count	%
Sexuality	Nonheterosexual	7	100
	Bisexual	2	29
	Pansexual	3	43
	Lesbian	2	29
Gender	Cisgender	2	29
	Gender Minority (identification not aligned with sex assigned at birth)	5	71
	Nonbinary/Transfemme	1	14
	Agender	1	14
	Fluid	1	14
	Transgender	1	14
	Lesbian	1	14
Sex Assigned at Birth	Female	4	57
	Male	3	43
Race	White	7	100
Age	20-29	4	57
	30-39	2	29
	40-49	1	14

Note: This table provides demographic information for the 7 participants. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Originally, I had intended to use stratified sampling methods to create a participant pool that had comparable LGBTQ+ subgroup populations to the LGBTQ+ Community as it is reported within the United States. This was challenged by widespread acknowledgement of the difficulties to quantify these populations (Singer & Deschamps, 2017) due to complexities that

come from measuring fluid identities (i.e., fear of consequences of disclosure, self-identification varying resulting in inconsistencies, etc.) and was ultimately unsuccessful due to lack of equivalent subgroup population recruitment and participant responsiveness. Despite these challenges, the participants represent diverse identities within the LGBTQIA+ community, but are primarily White, and do not reflect the diversity that comes from intersectional identities as seen within the LGBTQ+ community as a whole in the United States.

Procedure

Current definitions of Pride (i.e., identity Pride described by Testa et al, 2015) state that individuals who experience identity affirmation are more likely to experience Pride. Further, environments where there is engagement with the SGM community are anticipated to create feelings of Pride and other related concepts (Telander et al., 2017). Pride events may elicit these emotions and therefore were the primary recruitment locations for this study. Gathering qualitative data is necessary in this research to understand the experiences, attitudes and behaviors associated with the construct of Pride. Due to the lived experience of Pride being the center of this project, in depth one-on-one interviews about a participant's perception of Pride is the most beneficial way to collect the qualitative data necessary to understand nuances in personal understandings. Constructivist grounded theory analysis is a beneficial guiding approach to this research due to the project's intention to enhance theory and understanding of a social phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Participants were recruited at local Pride events such as those hosted by The Lyric, a locally owned independent movie theatre and event hosting center in Fort Collins, Colorado. Other events where recruitment occurred included Music City Hot Chicken Pride and Pride Dance Labs at Impulse Dance Studio. These events ranged from a fundraiser for an LGBTQ+

community members gender affirming care and a burlesque show, to family friendly Pride events which included concerts from local bands and performances from drag artists. Willing individuals scanned the QR code located on the study poster that led them to the recruitment documents that were completed through Qualtrics, a survey software (See Appendix A for the Screener, Consent Agreement, and Demographics Questionnaire). Interest in the study was determined by interaction with the study poster, and participants were recruited based on their expressed interest. Recruitment forms that were incomplete or that met exclusion criteria (individuals who did not identify as LGBTQ+ and/or were not 18 years of age or older) were deleted from the Qualtrics survey. Participants were randomly picked from the sampling pool, and were invited to participate in the study via email (Please see “Pride Study Emails” in Appendix B). Once all eligible participants from the sampling pool were contacted for participation, it was decided that more participants would be needed to reach saturation, and so convenience sampling occurred through posts to social media of the study poster (Appendix C). Participants were contacted and scheduled for 1-hour long interviews via email. Interviews were conducted over Microsoft Teams, and were audio recorded and transcribed. All identifying information was deleted from the transcription, and the audio recordings were deleted immediately upon completion of transcription. Upon completion of the interview process, participants were sent a \$25 virtual Visa gift card. Interviews were then coded using CGT methodology, analysis steps, and techniques. Out of 7 participants, 5 were contacted to participate in a participant validation process. Four participants agreed to partake in participant validation, which occurred through email communication.

Sources of Data

Data came from Qualitative Interviews between Researcher and Participants. These interviews were transcribed using three coding processes: Initial Coding, Focused Coding, then Theoretical Coding (defined on pg. 51, 42 and 53 respectively). The Theoretical Codes are the source of the final findings, which compose the conceptual map “LGBTQ+ Pathways to Pride” (Figure 1), and are summarized in the results section. As suggested by Charmaz (2021), this study used Memo Writing as a tool to document and analyze my own thoughts about the data as it was being coded. Participant Validation was a process that helped ensure credibility, trustworthiness, and accuracy of the studies findings.

Transcribing Interviews

Interviews were automatically transcribed during the time of the interview via Teams. Transcriptions were then reviewed and edited based on comparison to the audio-recorded interview.

Memo Writing

As suggested by Charmaz (2006, 2015), throughout the analytical process, I wrote memos to document the various ideas I had about new or emerging themes, how lines of data, codes, and categories relate to one another, tracking decisions related to analysis, and engaged in personal reflection. memos show the path through which your theory is developed (Charmaz, 2015), they keep the researcher engaged in the data, present the researcher with a way to analyze their own thought processes, and to dive deep into meaning making, and making sense of the data (Charmaz, 2014). I used the following kinds of memos to track thoughts on analysis, theory building, and personal reflection:

- Analytical Memos: These memos served as documentation of interpretation of the data.

Here I wrote my thoughts about what is happening in the data, what the participant is telling me, and questions that developed through the analysis process. Within these memos I also documented how codes were working together, interacting, and developing into processes.

- Personal Memos: Personal memos served as a place to practice self-reflection, and document my thoughts about potential biases, and personal reactions I had to the data.

Memos drove me to read and re-read the data through different analytical lenses. For example, a memo titled: “Emotion Amplification in Positive and Negative Directions” caused me to reread data and their associated codes to increase their acknowledgement of processes that Participants view to be the cause of their emotional reactions. Examples of what this memo-writing process entailed are found in Table 2 below.

Table 2.
Examples of Memos

Memo title/topic	Type	Summarized Content/Purpose
Emotion Amplification in Positive and Negative Directions	Analytical	Experiences of Pride or shame or fear do not appear to end when engagement with majority or LGBTQ+ community ends, they persist and shape subsequent emotional states
Value/Worth of Pride	Analytical	Emotional worth of Pride potentially increasing when expecting it to be scarce (i.e., in face of adversity)
Reflection: Varying Degrees of Privilege	Personal	Documented personal reflection of privilege associated with not internalizing effects of minority identity status
Reflection: Lesbian Bias	Personal	Reflected on a participant's disclosure of being left out in spaces where people are male-centered, and if this was a benefit or hinderance for the participant. Included my own assessment of being left out of these spaces

Note: This table provides examples of memos, the content they entail, and their purposes, as documented during data analysis.

Data Analysis Strategies

The purpose of co-occurring data collection is to develop and extend different lines of thought through multiple interviews, to create concrete themes. Throughout the whole data analysis process, I used a constant comparative method (i.e., comparison of data to data, codes and categories; codes to data and categories, and categories to data and codes) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This constant comparison is meant to bring variation of content, perspective, and experiences of the participants to the forefront, to be noted to develop a nuanced understanding

of the data. Constant comparison brings ideas to the surface that may be developed and evaluated further along in the analysis process (Charmaz, 2015)

Semi-Structured Interviews

Use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to slightly modify interview questions based on the data that was already collected, as a means to keep the data grounded in the directions provided directly from participants sharing. CGT follows an iterative data collection and analysis process and encourages researchers to allow collected data to refine future interview questions as a means to deepen insight and “chase the data” (i.e., allow the data to unfold naturally rather than directing discovery towards any particular direction) (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012).

Interviews for this project were separated into two distinct phases, the first of which strictly followed Grounded Theory tenets of reflexivity, allowing continuous meaning making to occur throughout the data collection and analysis, and editing and redirecting questions to allow this process to unfold naturally, and aligned with participants responses. Questions were edited and switched out with new questions to reflect inclusion of emotional experiences described in previous interviews. An example of this is themes of “acceptance and belonging” developed in Interview 1, influencing the inclusion of those topics in future interviews, and discussion of adversities influence on Pride in Interview 2 influencing the integration of those topics in future interview questions. The semi-structured interview guide can be found in Appendix F. It shows a design intended to understand the concept and emotional landscape of Pride, understand Pride through description of lived experiences, explore nuances and barriers to Pride, and encourage reflection on what constitutes as Pride. Follow up prompts were used strategically as a means to

deepen, clarify, and explore themes. Semi structured interviews embraced an iterative process to meet the requirements of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014).

Phase II of each Interview involved deviating from true CGT methodology by asking questions about specific emotional experiences to clarify the inclusion or exclusion of certain psychological concepts and LGBTQ+ processes in the final created theory. This allowed evaluation of the participants reality, driven by preconceived information stemming from LGBTQ community members sharing in online spaces, and conceptualizations of Pride defined by Researchers in the past (Bockting et al., 2013; Cass, 1979, Conn et al., 2023; Gorska & Bilewicz, 2015; Testa, et al., 2015). Questions in Phase II directly targeted specific concepts that did not arise in the interview naturally, to evaluate if they have a position in the participant's story. An example of which can be seen in Interview 1: "... does shame have any connection to your feelings of Pride?", and Interview 3 "... does celebration and having your identity visible within the community have a connection to your feelings of Pride?" These questions were influenced by knowledge from queer researchers who have established certain concepts, such as belonging, visibility and self-acceptance, to be at the forefront of experiences of positive emotions related to identity for LGBTQ+ community members (Herek & Glunt, 1993; Kohut, 1984; Rotosky et al., 2018). The number of questions and engagement with Phase II was also dependent on Participants robustness in responding to questions, and time restraints due to Participants consenting to, and being paid for 1-hour of their time.

Initial Coding

My coding process began by carefully reading each transcript along with notes taken during the interview process. I coded each transcript line by line, using gerunds (words ending in "-ing") in my codes as a way to preserve the actions and processes the data. This process intends

to maintain the researchers' focus on what is happening in the data, rather than simply observing the content of the participants' story (Charmaz & Keller, 2016). Lines of data were labeled with in vivo codes, short phrases describing what was happening in the data, sometimes using the participants' own words. These phrases stayed close to the true data and reflected the processes and ideas that the participants described. I commonly used language directly from the participants in this phase to ensure that I was staying grounded in the data (Roze des Ordens et al., 2019). Due to the unique and personalized experience of Pride each participant described, these codes varied widely but later developed into broader codes and categories through future coding processes.

It was in my initial coding process that I began to see that my data was not only about the emotional experience of Pride, but the journey to unlocking that experience. Examples of initial codes can be found in Table 3.

Table 3.*Examples of the Coding Process*

Data Excerpt (participant quote)	Initial Code	Focused Code/Category	Theoretical Code
“Like I don't feel confused, but definitely in terms of so I've had to navigate a lot of like compnet and so as part of that, there has been a lot of stress in terms of like.. how can I be sure that, like, I'm not into men?”	Identifying emotion	Societal expectations causing questioning of identity	Societally constructed constraints
	Navigating compnet		
	Feeling stressed		
	Questioning sexuality		
“To have an opportunity to pursue being my authentic self, coming out as trans. Everything sort of retroactively made sense.”	Allowing authenticity pursuit	Permission to explore authentic identity	Identity congruence/coming out as source of Pride
	Coming out	Identity congruence	Self-acceptance allowing self-exploration
	Understanding self		
“And I tried to do gay male in a way that felt safe and acceptable to me without having any actual, like, vulnerability and community in it. It was still like “gay light” because it could be.... I was essentially still in straight spaces, still in cis and heteronormative spaces, I just also happened to be gay.”	Performing prescribed “acceptable” identity	Identification for purpose of safety and acceptance	Authenticity negotiation based on risk assessment
	Feeling safe from vulnerability	Lacking authenticity/concealing identity for survival	
	Missing out on community	Accessing spaces, missing community	
	Accessing cis and het spaces due to identity concealment		
“But it is like Pride in standing up to something, trying to change everyone or erase something. And so that Pride has come in like expressions of like, you know, it's not just two genders like. Where like I exist, if nothing else, you know?”	Pride in standing up for personal existence	Pride in advocating against erasure, and for recognition of existence	Pride as Resistance and Resilience
	Refusing to be erased		
	Having Pride in advocating		
	Fighting societal norms		

Note: This table provides examples of how data was coded through the initial, focused and theoretical coding stages.

Focused Coding

I then engaged in focused coding, a practice where I reviewed all of my initial codes, compared, combined, and categorized them. This process involves grouping numerous initial codes, and synthesizing them into codes that have more significance, direction and centrality in regard to the theory that is emerging (Charmaz, 2015). Comparison of initial codes with one another, and focused codes with initial ones, allowed a developing centrality of the data to emerge. The product of focused coding are categories. These categories were then examined for their properties, to develop an understanding of how they emerged, how they were maintained, and how they related to other categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1990; 2015). Documentation of these examinations were stored in Memos, and later used to create the emerging theory.

I engaged in constant comparison throughout the focused coding process. I allowed patterns to prevail, held onto, and expanded initial codes that best accounted for the data, and documented gaps in the data that focused coding brought my attention to. For example, a participants statement: “So it kind of turned towards excitement more in college when I could have conversations about it [her sexuality] with people”- was initial coded using the label: exciting to explore sexuality; then focused coded as: allowing exploration. This led to a memo questioning: is this public exploration of sexuality indicating self-acceptance? Focused coding allowed me to move towards theory development, as the codes that emerged were more conceptual than codes developed in the initial coding process.

Theoretical Coding

Theoretical coding was the final step in my analysis process (before reviewing, editing and reorganizing codes). This step allows illumination of core categories. Core categories are

identified through assembly of an analytical story; they bring to light the ‘invisible string’ that is underlying processes within the data. Glaser (1978, p. 72) described theoretical codes as “how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory.” Theoretical codes tell the story of your data; they collect pieces of information (what is happening in your data) and relate them to one another to unveil the processes underlying the participants’ experiences. These codes can bring to the surface many different coding families (Charmaz, 2015). For example, in this study I was able to clarify the contexts in which Pride emerges, and various particular natures where the phenomenon tends to exist. Further, I was able to identify underlying emotions and recognition of certain contexts that allowed the experience of Pride to change. Theoretical codes were created by viewing the patterns of processes described by participants, often blatantly documented in memos, but connectively discovered throughout the data itself.

Core concepts/categories are the final product of the theoretical coding process. These categories tie together the processes and concepts that build theory (Giles et al., 2016). They account for the largest variance in the data, and account for nuance found in developed concepts. It is through constant comparison that core categories emerge to capture the variation seen within the processes described within participants’ stories and statements. Core categories are the highest summarization of combinations of focused codes and describe the essential processes seen and shared within participants experiences.

Participant Validation

Participant validation is a process through which my codes were deepened, confirmed, and corrected by the participants themselves. During this portion of the study, I sent 4 participants a synthesized chart of findings and themes created from their interviews. This

involved sending direct quotes from their transcripts, associated codes and memos, as well as descriptions of my interpretations of the data created during their interview. This process allowed the participants to validate the codes that created the resulting theory of this study, by identifying potential inaccuracies and misinterpretations. The purpose of this process was to emphasize the importance of the final categories and constructed theory coming directly from the participants' experiences, rather than the researchers' interpretations of data. Aligned with CGT tenets, it was of great importance for the potential power imbalance between researcher and participants to be minimized, the process of participant validation helps balance power dynamics.

Participants used this process to provide nuance and clarify their statements and correct the researchers interpretations of the data. Examples of these communications from participants include the following:

- Participants sharing context of certain statements (i.e., (paraphrased) "This is a feeling that has changed over time due to a more thorough understanding of my queer identity" in regard to descriptions of shame and fear felt upon discovering LGTBQ+ identification).
- Participants sharing that a code did not exactly fit their experience: In a few instances, participants described a theoretical code ("Acceptance from the Community Functions as Authorization for Authenticity"), to be a slightly inaccurate depiction of how the community affects them. This led to the code being edited to Community Engagement to more accurately describe the way engaging with the community leads to positive feelings, rather than having acceptance be an extra process described by a code.

Participants reported that acceptance is a natural state within the community, and it is not

an identifiable process that changes a participant's authenticity; it is instead the decision to engage with the community that is the process that causes change in outcome.

- Participants providing nuance to their statements: Participants used the participant validation process to deepen their statements, sometimes sharing their internal thought process behind identifying certain emotions.

Theoretical Sampling and Saturation

Theoretical sampling is an iterative process through which future data is sought after to complete understanding of categories emerging in the collected data (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Essentially, after initial insights are made, data collection is driven by the emerging theory. Data is essentially “chased”, allowing increased nuance and understanding of the concepts and processes at the heart of the participants stories. Theoretical sampling was achieved through frequent editing of semi-structured interviews to allow increased introspection to the most salient and consistent patterns and themes that emerged throughout previous interviews. Questions became more focused throughout the interview processes (Charmaz, 2012), allowing for increased introspection. This process is abductive in nature (Charmaz, 2012), meaning that it is a generative process, that moved from empirical observations, iterative data collection and analysis (via coding and memoing), to development of theoretical explanations that infer the most plausible theoretical explanations for findings (Rosenthal, 1994; Strubing, 2007; Charmaz, 2012).

Theoretical saturation is reached when further inquiry about the data no longer reveals new properties or characteristics (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Theoretical saturation is dependent upon the thoroughness of the iterative process, unlike data saturation, which is when a researcher asks the same questions in every interview, eliciting similar responses from each participant

(Charmaz, 2012). Theoretical saturation is not fully dependent on interview questions changing rapidly, if the same questions are causing various themes and categories to emerge. My process to reach theoretical saturation included decisions to allow participants to describe their authentic emotional experiences without introducing the concept of Pride, focusing questions to include more specificity throughout the semi-structured interview process, and using the iterative process to ensure both depth and breadth of the data collected. Further, I collected data until saturation was ensured, as I viewed that data lacked variability after the 5th interview was completed, but did not determine saturation until completion of interview 7 to ensure breadth and depth of the data collected.

Rigor and Trustworthiness of the Data

Due to the unique nature of constructivist grounded theory analysis, Charmaz and Thornberg (2021) suggest a specific set of criteria in order to evaluate the quality of a study. She recommends that this criterion includes credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness. Credibility is defined as “having sufficient relevant data for asking incisive questions about the data, making systematic comparisons throughout the research process, and developing through analysis” (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). Before beginning the data collection process, I made sure to prepare myself by having an understanding of constructivist grounded theory, the concepts that were core to create the understandings the data presented to me (such as ideas regarding social constructivism, subjectivism, and relativism), as well as an understanding of current research and colloquial conceptualizations of Pride, and where/why these ideas of Pride were established. This knowledge allowed me to create questions that allowed the concept of Pride to be developed through the participants’ storytelling.

Originality accounts for new insights, and new perspectives to view a social process or observed problem (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). This study attained originality by being the first to evaluate Pride, how it is attained and experienced, through qualitative interviews from LGBTQ+ community members. Resonance is equivalent to external validity, as it accounts for the constructed concepts having the ability to provide insights to other community members who were not participants in the study itself (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). Resonance is attained when there is good fit between data-gathering strategies and access to participants' true experiences. This means there should be an editing process on the questions posed to attain both breadth and depth of the concepts being discovered, and the final theory created should portray the full emotional experience of the concepts studied. To make sure I achieved resonance, I captured various stories of meaning in my collection of data, edited my semi-structured interview questions to reflect directions of data collection, and used a process of participant validation to ensure I captured nuances in participants stories. Usefulness refers to how a study may establish foundational knowledge for application purposes, reveal pervasive processes, and provide clarity to the everyday lives of participants. The theory established gives new insight to processes LGBTQ+ community members experience on an ongoing basis, such as recalibrating one's comfort and ability to appear as their authentic selves based on perceived safety and risk. I am hopeful that the definitions of Pride created from this study may be the basis for clinical practices and understanding of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Although I place significant value on the study holding positive evaluation based on standards set specifically for the analysis method utilized, the present study also reflects quality in criteria proposed by Glaser (1978, 1998), in his development of grounded theory. Glaser evaluated a theory based on workability, relevance, fit and modifiability. Workability ensures

that a theory ‘works’ to explain the behaviors demonstrated and described within relevant subject matter. Relevance is based on how relevant the theory developed is to the people affected by the subject matter. Fit is based on if and how the theory provides a lense through which one can understand the subject area of the research. Modifiability refers to the ability for the theory to be modified as new data is incorporated and discovered.

Results

Analysis of interviews with LGBTQ+ community members resulted in 3 core categories, and 8 subcategories. The core categories connected major themes with the data, and the subthemes defined the processes, context, and variation that composed the main themes. The theory that emerged was two-fold; it described the journey each participant took to have access to Pride, as well as how Pride itself is experienced in nuanced and multifaceted ways. The Path to Pride is one that community members endorsed experiencing cyclically, with the cycle restarting in new environments or new social interactions. All participants endorsed each core category (Risk Associated with LGBTQ+ Identification, Authenticity Based on Risk Assessment, and Pride is a Multifaceted, Nuanced Emotional Experience Composed of Individual and Community Aspects).

The Path to Pride began with participants recognition of societally embraced social norms, and how breaking these norms comes with fear and shame caused by potential or perceived risk. This starting point of recognition of socially constructed constraints and feelings of shame or and/or fear, operate as both contextual and intervening factors as they are societal conditions that influenced a participants decisions and behaviors, as well as a mediating factors that constrained the relationships between a participants authenticity negotiation, and ability to access self-acceptance; as well as self-acceptance leading to coming out. These factors are a constant background noise to the data collected and are deeply influential in the LGBTQ+ journey towards or away from Pride. The described starting point from which participants began their journey through LGBTQ+ identification to Pride, is labeled as “Risk Associated with LGBTQ+ Identification.” The societal norms of cisgenderism and heterosexuality are the pre-

existing conditions that influence a community members' ability to access Pride and are the core influence on a participant's experience of risk associated with LGBTQ+ identification.

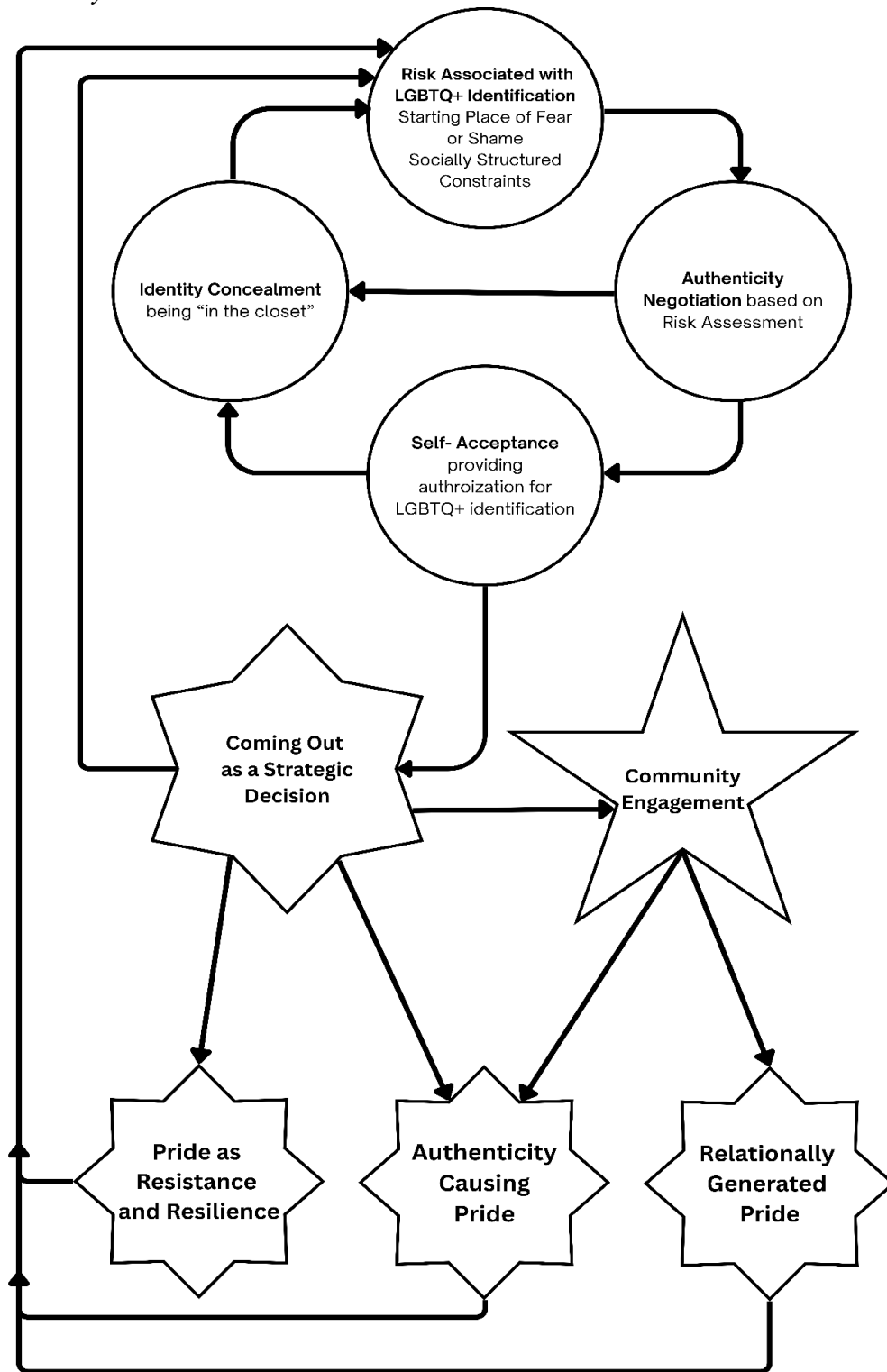
The main actions/decision making points the participants described themselves as facing, included a negotiation of authenticity based on a risk assessment, and coming out as a strategic decision. These actions were dictated by the participants emotional experiences of shame and/or fear, caused by societally based constraints. The process of authenticity negotiation resulted in either self-acceptance, leading to coming out, or identity concealment, typically for the sake of the safety, comfortability, or with consideration for the participant's readiness to face and accept their own LGBTQ+ identity. The decision to come out was described by participants to result in potential increase in risk associated with one's identity, increase in acknowledgement of existing risk, or Pride experienced through various emotional experiences. Being out was a decision made with consideration to perceived acceptance, risk, safety, and perception of access to other queer individuals in any given space. Being out gives queer people access to engagement with the LGBTQ+ community but also has social consequences due to identification with a minority group currently at the face of adversity and scrutiny.

Meaning making frames are the lenses through which we understand the significance of certain events. These frames help people give emotional meaning to their experiences. The frames through which participants understood their actions were applied to decisions around identity concealment, being out, and acceptance. Identity concealment was viewed as prioritization of safety and comfortability over authenticity. There was a sense of loss described in Participants descriptions of deciding to conceal their LGBTQ+ identity. Being out was understood as an act of resistance, a difficult decision that follows an act of self-acceptance. Acceptance was discussed as a permission to exist authentically. The processes of acceptance

and coming out both acted on individual and community levels, as participants described a process of recognizing their identity, suppressing it due to societal constraints, perception and safety and risk, finding acceptance for oneself, and then undergoing a process of coming out to oneself (final act of self-acceptance) then to others.

Pride was described as a multifaceted, nuanced, individualized emotional experience. Pride was broken down into three subcategories: Relationally Generated Pride, Authenticity Causing Pride, and Pride as Resistance and Resilience. In the process model, Pride is situated as a consequence of accepting one's LGBTQ+ identity and making a decision to come out. When felt in the face of adversity, with acknowledgement to current and historical minority placement of the LGBTQ+ community, Pride was defined as Resistance and Resilience. When Pride was felt after engagement with the LGBTQ+ Community, it was defined as Relationally Generated Pride. Either pathway to experiencing Pride was identified to cause Pride from Authenticity.

Figure 1.
Pathways to Pride.



Risk Associated with LGBTQ+ Identification

All participants described a sense of risk associated with their identification with the LGBTQ+ community. This sense of risk came in various forms, including fear of lack of safety, a need to be resilient to tolerate associated risk with LGBTQ+ identification, recognition of expectations for individuals to be cisgender and heterosexual, and accompanied acknowledgement of anxiety caused by breaking social norms. Risk was the starting point from which the participants described their journey to identification with the LGBTQ+ community. Acknowledgement of risk is what drives future risk assessments that determine the degree to which queer individuals are comfortable being “out” in certain spaces. Responses coded under “Risk Associated With LGBTQ+ Identification” fit into both emotionally descriptive categorization (reports of fear or shame) or contextual categorization (acknowledgement of norms at the core of our society).

Societally Structured Constraints

Societally structured constraints are the root cause of risk associated with LGBTQ+ identification. Feelings of shame and/or fear are a reaction to constraints the community feels due to systems of oppression and power our society embraces, such as expectations of cisgenderism and heterosexuality, the patriarchy, and white supremacy. These structured were acknowledged both blatantly, and subliminally, through disclosures of challenges such as facing societal norms embraced in current legislation, acknowledgement of widespread negative attention to the LGBTQ+ community, discussion of messages embracing cisgender and heterosexual norms from childhood, and emotional reactions to internalization of societal expectations. Some participants described how societal norms were taught and reinforced:

- Participant 4: “I did attend a Christian high school, so we were told honestly kind of mixed things about homosexuality and if it was OK or not. And then in my senior year we have like a seniors only kind of class. And one of the speakers definitely mentioned like homosexuality is bad, it's against the Bible, and then tried to use all of these misunderstood statistics to justify that.”

Participant 5 discussed their experience of confusion stemming from internalization of societally structured social norms of cisgender and heteronormativity in the following statement:

- Participant 5: “Like I don't feel confused, but definitely in terms of so I've had to navigate a lot of like comphet and so as part of that, there has been a lot of stress in terms of like... how can I be sure that, like, I'm not into men? Only because I do feel like I kind of grew up seeing men specifically in media. I just saw them.... They're shown to you as like, this is what you're supposed to be attracted to. This is like... love is supposed to be like this. Oh, when someone does that, it's hot to you. And that person's a man. And I just never really questioned that part of it. So then, you know, 10 years after realizing I like women, I was like, wait a damn minute. I don't like men at all! So that was like confusing and frustrated and odd, but I don't know exactly what emotion I would put on that. I think it's been a long journey.”

When asked about barriers that prevent feelings of Pride, participants responded:

- Participant 1: “I think it's like barriers are more like it's not just like my LGBTQ identity, but more like just me as a person, as a woman, like the barriers are broader than that... Oh my gosh. The patriarchy. There you go. That's the barrier.”
- Participant 3: “I mean, definitely just blatant disrespect from people. I mean, when I came out at work, it was, you know, like I mentioned, blue collar is a bit of a rough

career to be in as a queer person, cause it's a lot of people going around constantly being like let's go Brandon or like whatever, you know, just spouting off their nonsense and obviously like I'm not going to be * * *** ***** it. So you kind of just have to sit there and listen, all these guys just be blatantly like... you know, supporting somebody who really wants to trample all over that. So I'd say that's definitely a big, a big one is just when people are just accidentally and blatantly disrespectful.”

- Participant 4: “Kind of just the state of this country. It's very unfortunate that it's big in the government now to be against this community and it's scary to think of what could happen to those who are outwardly in the community. It makes me fearful for the children because already I know there's a level of suppression and it just feels like this community has always never been in a good place, even when, like, just gay marriage was officially like on the books for being OK legally. It was like a lot of people were still against that and were still fighting for it. And now there's a chance sometimes it could be reversed. Like it is scary when you know that this government, this administration, could just change so many things right now that are still already not where they should be.”

These statements paint the various ways embracement of cisgenderism and heterosexuality cause harm to LGBTQ+ individuals.

Starting Place of Shame and Fear

Due to societal understandings of acceptable identification created by colonialized and patriarchal norms, queerness is commonly villainized, erased, diminished, and disparaged by majority community members. These viewpoints are often internalized by queer people, causing feelings of fear when they recognize their LGBTQ+ identity.

- Participant 7: “I definitely had some gay moments in my childhood, and I grew up in the Bible Belt. So all of these people around me were going to mega churches. No one was gay. There were no gay adults. I feel very passionate about being a gay adult in a young person's life, because I didn't have that. And it would have saved me like years of anxiety and intrusive thoughts and like repression. And so, all through middle school, like maybe 6th grade, I was getting really anxious about being gay. I would pray a lot that God would make me straight. And I was like really confused. It was really like anxiety inducing.”
- Participant 4: “I can remember really my first like gay thought, like around the age of 12 and the immediate feeling of having to suppress it. Um. I think I associate it with fear because the word suppression to me kind of equals fear, but there's definitely a lot of shame just kind of brought on, I think, growing up in the Christian religion like that is a really big part of it, unfortunately.”

Participant 6 echoed this experience of negative emotions associated with first discovering LGBTQ+ identification:

- Participant 6: “I do remember my first like experiences of my own queerness being this like taboo attraction to others and just like the... not just the feeling of like “Oh, I find this person attractive. Like, oh, there's anxiety.”

Participant 4 further identified where her feelings of fear came from, and how they were experienced:

- Participant 4: “Yeah, I realized that as someone who grew up in a very heteronormative household, that that was pretty much what I was exposed to. I wasn't really exposed to homosexuality. So, when I started experiencing feelings towards other girls my age or

interest in women, it was very confusing for me. I didn't understand because it felt a bit stronger than oh, I just want to be friends with them. So, it was initially very scary, and I didn't really know who to talk to because I just assumed, based on the media my parents exposed me to, that it was not OK, even if it was never explicitly said to not be OK.”

The recognition that a natural attraction or experience of self that does not align with cisgender and heterosexual social norms causes fear and/or shame in LGBTQ+ individuals. Breaking social norms comes with consequences, such as not being accepted, being ostracized and excluded from certain spaces, and potential risk of safety. Knowledge of these consequences comes from previously mentioned societal embracing of rules and regulations that prevent widespread approval of queerness. While this experience of shame or fear began at the point of recognition of LGBTQ+ identification, the outlined process is circular, and this place of fear or shame is a mental state LGBTQ+ community members begin each new space or interaction from, due to recognition of societally structured constraints, such as possible consequences for breaking social norms.

Participants spoke to the fear felt due to risk associated with LGBTQ+ identification:

- Participant 2: “It causes me fear that I get to walk into those crowds. Every time I went to the event, I did have that moment of like, is this safe? Is there clear exits? Is this going to be a place where, you know, it's just something that goes into my mind every time when I went to the Denver Pride and there was like 10s of thousands of people, I almost didn't even want to go in until we saw that they were doing security checks at the door. And that's was like, OK, now I can feel safe in this space. And it's really like, once I get over that aspect of it, it's really great. It's just that aspect of it that can be really difficult of trying to break away from that association of violence towards our minority group, so.”

- Participant 2: ““But I mean, when I was a kid, I just did not know what being trans was. The only, the only actual, like interaction I had with trans people was through the media making fun of them. And that was just the kind of the world I grew up in in the 90s, and fortunately it's not that way anymore, but I think there is.... There's still some shame there, I think. I think a lot of it is just mostly fear of not being accepted and just wanting that safe space”
- Participant 2: “If I was living in Georgia, I probably wouldn't go to Atlanta Pride or, you know, like Macon Pride or something like that. I just wouldn't feel safe.”
- Participant 6: “You can be a ball Buster and go out there and be like, I don't fucking care. I'm making out with my girlfriend. We're both trans here in the middle of this Western bar.... but you probably are not going to be received very well, and you are probably going to have a safety concern of some kind on your hand, and you have to go in knowing that.”
- Participant 7: “And I never ever again want to feel the way I did when I was younger, I felt like so awful and anxious and confused and I wish that I could help her now.”

Authenticity Negotiation Based on Risk Assessment

Authenticity negotiation based on risk assessment is the core process described by participants. This process is one that occurs in every new space or interaction, because risk is not a fixed/static state. This risk assessment is a process in which community members acknowledge signals of acceptance or disapproval, interpret these signals, and then use this information to determine the degree to which they can be authentic in a given space. Signals of disapproval or acceptance did not determine the action that a participant would take, as comfortability and internal permission to be out is a complex decision, which includes consideration of many

factors (such as consequences of being out, safety risks, and being out in a space causing forced outness elsewhere due to who embodies a space). Degrees of authenticity also looked different on an individual basis, and included processes such as identity concealment, deciding to refrain from engaging in spaces that seem unaccepting, only disclosing certain identities, or refraining from engaging in public displays of affection with queer partners. Negotiating one's authenticity was key in the participants' experience leading towards or away from Pride.

Participants speaking to their experience of negotiation in different spaces:

- Researcher: "OK, as you think about your identity in the LGBTQ+ community, what emotions come up for you?"

Participant 2: "Yeah lets do it. Um, like in the Fort Collins Community?"

Researcher: "If that's what comes to mind, yes, but also if you want to answer for Fort Collins community and then just like as the LGBTQ+ community, like as a, you know, worldwide whole."

Participant 2: "As a worldwide whole, OK, yeah, 'cause it definitely differs on the different levels. Fort Collins locally, it feels as far as emotions, it's. I don't know if acceptance is really an emotion. What's the emotion behind that? Or just feeling like I belong. There's been a few events that I've been to in Fort Collins that have been really fantastic. The Fort Collins events are typically smaller scale, so it's not usually big corporate events or anything. It's usually just people getting together that just want to hang out with each other. It's not someone trying to sell anything, you know, it's just a local get together and those have been fantastic. Talking more on the global scale as far as like how do I feel about identifying with that group, it's a little more apprehensive. Especially when we're looking at like current politics and stuff, it's definitely a bit of fear

that's involved with it. I do have some desire to remain anonymous in certain situations and overall. So yeah, I would say like in a in an overall sense, it's as far as how I feel belonging to that community, I kind of feel detached from the global community just because I don't feel like I can really engage with it being an American in 2025, but locally, like it helps to reach out and get in touch with people around me and remember that, you know, there are people around that are that aren't so in the news about everything big awful, so.”

In this snippet of dialogue, the participant discussed navigating authenticity in different theoretical spaces. These spaces were the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, and their local LGBTQ+ community. Due to current widespread negative attention to the LGBTQ+ community, the participant disclosed fear for engaging in the community in a global sense, which may lead to them not being out in all spaces. Due to perceived acceptance in their local community in Fort Collins, CO, they expressed increased comfortability with authenticity in the form of outward expression of identity congruence (presenting externally as one’s authentic identity).

Acceptance Functions as Authorization/ Perceived Permission to Exist

Participants described acceptance on both individual and community levels to function as authorization to embrace various processes within the LGBTQ+ identification journey. Self-acceptance was a process participants described as occurring before their decisions to “come out.” Self-acceptance was identified through disclosures of recognizing one’s relation to queerness, suppression of that identity due to fear and/or shame, and then eventually embracing their queerness. Self-Acceptance was described as an internal permission to exist authentically, even if that permission did not extend to presenting as one’s authentic self externally. This

process involved recognition, understanding, and compassion. Examples of descriptions of Self-Acceptance functioning as permission to exist authentically include:

- Participant 2: “I feel like, I don't know if there's common for a lot of other people, but I came out during COVID and it's kind of a place where it felt safe to be with yourself and really like away from the world and it seemed like a good place to go through that.”

Participant 2 described self-acceptance to be a core part of the emotional experience of Pride, when they shared:

- Participant 2: “This I want to say Pride feels like.

Um.

It's almost like home or family. Like it feels like finally belonging, but to yourself in a way... like it feels like...”

Participant 2 then went on to describe moving to 20 different cities within the past 10 years, in search of a place where they would feel at home. They shared that they had big dreams for each new place, but felt stuck each time they arrived. They eventually discovered that it was not a location they were trying to outrun, but a reality that they would not feel at home until they accepted themselves for who they truly are. During the pandemic, they were forced to stay in one place, and decided to change who they were so they could finally be at home. Their journey to self-acceptance was beautifully summarized in the following statements:

- Participant 2: “What it it was during the pandemic when I was really kind of doing a lot of self-exploration, figuring out who I was and started taking hormones that that really clicked in where it it was like the longest I lived anywhere for a long time because it didn't felt it didn't feel like I was running away from something.

“And so Pride for me really felt like I don't have to do all that worrying anymore. I don't have to do running around anymore. I don't have to be trying to find a place where I don't feel like I can sit and relax and feel at home. Like that has been something that I've felt this past year is where I can just. If I go out to a Pride event and come home, like I'm just still glowing about it and it's it's something that I can bring into this space and be happy about like so for me.

Yeah, I guess simply it feels like home.”

- Participant 7: And so, all through middle school, like maybe 6th grade, I was getting really anxious about being gay. I would pray a lot that God would make me straight. And I was like really confused. It was really like anxiety inducing. And so, I was like, no, no, no, no. And I was like identified as straight the rest of middle school and all through high school until junior year, I was like getting into it a little bit. I was like, oh, “I wish I was gay.” I was saying shit like that. And then COVID hit and I was, I don't know if it was like I had more time to think or whatever, or a combination of a lot of things. But I was like, OK, I definitely like girls. Like, I'm rocking with this. And then. I just came to the realization that I didn't like men. I think the experience of realizing you like girls is really different than realizing you don't like guys and it's like. You're like, how do you even describe it? I don't know. But it's I was just like, OK, I'm a lesbian.
- Interviewer: “We’ve talked a lot about Pride, and I want to directly get to the root of like, what does Pride feel like?”

Participant 5: “Definitely like confident and maybe not... Yeah, secure. Maybe not secure in your external world, but very much secure within yourself. That I think is really

important to me. I think it's difficult to be proud if you aren't feeling like certain or even just any kind of surety.”

Community Engagement

Participants described positive communal experiences of acceptance that came from their engagement with the LGBTQ+ community. The community was described as embracing and accepting. Being in spaces where one was surrounded by community members was sometimes described as having a neutralizing effect on typical negative experiences associated with having a minority identity (such as ostracization, sense of vulnerability, diminished authenticity, and identity concealment). When surrounded by other community members, Participants shared that they felt ‘normal’, their identity no longer was an external aspect of themselves to be observed, judged or even taken into consideration by others. Instead, their identity was allowed to exist within themselves, giving them permission to just be.

- Participant 2: “So when I get to be in these spaces where I'm accepted and just treated like anybody else, I think that's a big thing. A big part of it is just not only being treated as if like I don't need special treatment, just treat me as if anyone else. Like I think these Pride events are great because everyone is so used to being around each other. That's just normal interactions. It doesn't feel like anyone is trying to tiptoe or anyone's trying to be too much or too little. It's just very normal. Everyone's just talking and it's fantastic. Like it's that's why I want to have the clients that are very accepting. It's just I don't have to worry. I can go in there wearing whatever and it's not going to become a conversation piece. It's just going to be something that I'm wearing and we can get on with the day. And it's just I really appreciate that because I feel like more than anything, I just went through this transition to be much more OK with myself and that made me much more

OK with being out and in the world and being happy with that, and at the same time that has its challenges.”

After sharing that she attended a dance presenting femininely for the first time, Participant 2 described the accepting and safe environment she entered at a Pride event accompanied by other community members.

- Participant 2: “This seems silly. I just felt like another one of the girls that was on the dance floor, but it was just a really just a really great night for that.”
- Participant 2: “So yeah, that's primarily I've been going out a lot just because they are. Every event is very affirming. Like it is fantastic to go to these events and just not have to worry about how people might perceive me and if that's going to be positive or negative. It's just a very free experience to kind of lift that off and just as myself and not have to worry about tiptoeing or worry about masking or any of that. It's just it's just an opportunity to be completely open and it's it's something that like the high lasts for a while like it's it's June was fantastic so I'm I'm definitely waiting for the next one.”

When participants perceived acceptance from others, they were granted “permission to exist” (a direct quote from the participant validation process in an effort to further define what was meant by participants when describing the effects of acceptance). This category was originally coded as “Acceptance Functions as Authorization”, but through the validation process, the complexities of this code appeared to be more nuanced than previously perceived, causing the code to be redefined as Community Engagement. Examples of effects from community engagement include the following statements:

- Researcher: “Are there any circumstances in which you find yourself feeling Pride related emotions more than others?”

Participant 1: “Well, like also I guess maybe when I'm like with my closest friends who are the most accepting and I can, I don't know, just be all the more me.”

- Participant 3: “It's just a lot easier to be happy and feel that joy whenever you're in a space or with people that allow you to feel comfortable in your own skin. So that obviously is kind of a simple thing, but it certainly brings a lot of joy to me.”

Participants spoke to the benefits provided by accessing the LGBTQ+ community, including feelings of belonging, acceptance, and understanding. Participants placed emphasis on the importance of understanding that the community provides. Participants described a sense of understanding around a shared conceptualization of life, love, and being; the limits that society poses on LGBTQ+ individuals, and the ways in which we view and experience life.

- Participant 2: “I feel like I very much belong in the trans community. You know, even when I have doubts like, oh, am I really trans or anything like that. Like there's so, so many trans people that have felt the same way and can relate to that and, you know, can point out and be like, you know. All of these thoughts and feelings you have like...you're good girl! You don't need to like second guess or doubt yourself. And that's been really wonderful.”

Coming Out as a Strategic Decision

Coming out was described as an ongoing process for participants. “Coming out” is a colloquialism for LGBTQ+ individuals indicating public declaration of one’s LGBTQ+ identity. It is a decision to be made in every new space or social interaction. The decision to come out is based on a risk assessment, Participants noted questioning their safety and level of perceived acceptance in various spaces, and how these assessments were valued in their decision-making process. This decision-making process was considered after having self-acceptance, which

authorized a participant to acknowledge their LGBTQ+ identity. The decision to come out oftentimes was described to follow perceived acceptance, acknowledged through social signaling, or the presence of other community members. Authenticity, and external identity alignment were authorized by acceptance from others (most commonly acceptance from proximity to other LGBTQ+ community members). Sometimes, self-acceptance was enough to authorize authenticity, without the presence of accepting others. Participants spoke to the decisions to come out in certain spaces:

- Participant 7: “You don't wanna go out and be like out and gay in a space where people wouldn't be accepting of that. I've definitely been to places where I don't want to hold hands with my girlfriend because I don't feel the need to bring it up and make it somebody else's business, even though I don't think it's that deep. Other people do for some reason, and I don't feel the need to put us at risk. You know what I mean? Yeah.”

Participant 2 described her journey of self-acceptance due to the perception of safety leading her to come out to herself and others:

- Participant 2: “I feel like, I don't know if there's common for a lot of other people, but I came out during COVID and it's kind of a place where it felt safe to be with yourself and really like away from the world and it seemed like a good place to go through that.”

Participants spoke to the significance of coming out.

- Participant 6: “And there's something really strong about being like I yeah, I am gay. This is me. I am gay and I am holding this label because it is a label that I identify with and that has power and all of those things, I think. So yay labels and white culture. The other side of that is regardless of where you fall in any spectrum or outside of a binary or

anything, there's personal power in being able to speak to the fabric of your own existence. And I think that goes beyond gender, sexuality, queer identity.”

Pride is Multifaceted, Nuanced. And Personalized Emotional Experience Composed of Individual and Community Aspects

Pride was described as a consequence to the internalization or rejection of various processes previously described. Which processes were internalized or rejected for each participant determined the type of Pride they emotionally experienced. Three ‘versions’ of Pride were distinctly defined within the data; Relationally Generated Pride, Authenticity Causing Pride, and Pride as Resistance and Resilience (see Table 4 for endorsement by demographic). Relationally Generated Pride embraced significance of engagement with the community, and was emotionally described through feelings of acceptance and belonging. Participants who endorsed experiencing Authenticity causing Pride placed value on the experience of self-acceptance, acceptance from others, and placed significant value on authenticity. This version of Pride was emotionally experienced as a sense of proudness for oneself for embracing their authenticity. Pride as Resistance and Resilience was emotionally marked by anger and defiance. All aspects of Pride were described as emotionally significant, and were viewed as valuable and useful.

Table 4.*Endorsement of Various Emotional Experiences of Pride Based on Demographics*

Participant Demographics (quantity)	# of Participants #	Relationally Generated Pride #/ / 7	Authenticity Causing Pride #/ / 7	Pride as Resistance and Resilience # / 7
Cisgender (non-heterosexual)	2	2	2	2
Gender Minority (non heterosexual)	5	5	2	4
Age 20-29	4	4	3	3
Age 30+	3	3	2	3
Total	7	7	4	6

Note: This table provides information on how many participants endorsed each proposed emotionally distinct version of Pride based on demographic information.

Pride was emotionally described in various ways, which led to a nuance and multifaceted understanding of how Pride is emotionally experienced.

- Participant 2: “This I want to say Pride feels like...Um.....It's almost like home or family. Like it feels like finally belonging, but to yourself in a way.”

After describing moving from state to state, as a means to run away from herself, Participant 2 shared:

- Participant 2: “And so Pride for me really felt like I don't have to do all that worrying anymore. I don't have to do running around anymore. I don't have to be trying to find a place where I don't feel like I can sit and relax and feel at home. Like that has been something that I've felt this past year is where I can just.... If I go out to a Pride event and come home, like I'm just still glowing about it and it's it's something that I can bring into this space and be happy about like so for me. Yeah, I guess simply it feels like home.”

- Participant 4: “Yeah, I think like people say, well, I'm proud of this achievement, accomplishment and like being proud. Like, how is that really different from being prideful? I don't know. I've never actually studied the difference between those words. But to me, like the version of Pride that I think of when it comes to feeling Pride about this community is not the Pride that is negative. Sinful. It's just like you've accepted yourself and you're proud of yourself, and you're proud of seeing yourself for who you really are.

Relationally Generated Pride

Pride was most commonly described as being felt in relation to other queer people. Relationally Generated Pride is Pride triggered by engagement with the LGBTQ+ Community, and encompasses feelings of belonging, acceptance, and joy. Relationally Generated Pride was a consequence of being around accepting LGBTQ+ Community members or being felt in relation to other community members successes (typically in the form of their presentations of identity congruence). Relationally Generated Pride is dependent on the presence of other community members and comes from engagement with the community, which typically followed a participants decision to come out.

When asked about feelings of Pride; participants responded:

- Participant 1: “OK, for specifically seeing Pride feelings. Oh well, like seeing some of the stuff that my kids do that I say kids, they're adults, but someday we'll maybe I'll call them adults someday, but... I feel very proud of like when they're like doing something in the LGBTQ plus community and yeah, and they all go together and they bring their friends and so that's a little bit of like a mother kind of thing.”

“Well, like also I guess maybe when I'm like with my closest friends who are the most accepting and I can, I don't know, just be all the more me. Trying to think. Well, yeah, I guess this is like the obvious answer. I'll say when I go to LGBTQ+ events...”

- Participant 3: “Drinks on a patio with a bunch of chill queer people. That's ... that's the, that's the glory of Pride right there.”
- Participant 3: “When I'm with a ton of people that are like, you know, cheering and waving flags around and stuff, it makes me really happy and like, proud to be part of that community. But you know, when I'm just off on my own, it's like i don't necessarily feel like Pride, I guess. I'm just kind of me, but I I guess I don't feel like that's a super like something I need to be proud of. It's just something that is and like, that's really cool. But you know, it just doesn't really come out as top of my priority list, I suppose, unless I'm in like a situation where that kind of thing is being celebrated.

Interviewer: “what do you mean by that kind of thing?”

Participant 3: Oh I just mean the community, the culture, the smiles, just the atmosphere, I guess.

- Interviewer: “Could you tell me about a time you felt Pride in your LGBTQ+ identity or your association with the LGBTQ community?”

Participant 4: “Is kind of a silly one. I think in recognizing in myself and getting to know my friend group, I realized that I have truly surrounded myself with members of that community, mostly unknowingly. And I think that brings me a lot of Pride because I think that shows that this community is welcoming and accepting and loving that even when I'm not advertising myself of being a part of the community, I mean maybe

potentially I'm unknowingly doing that in certain ways with how I dress or how I talk or something, but that it they still would want to be my friends and be in my life.”

Interviewer: What did Pride feel like in that moment?”

Participant 4: “When I did kind of realize it, 'cause it, there definitely was a moment when that hit me, It was a bit overwhelming. Just feeling love and accepted is like a really big deal. Um, and then I think to it like. In the general scheme of things, like being bisexual doesn't feel like that big of a deal. But just knowing that my direct community would be accepting. You know, it is a big deal.”

Authenticity Causing Pride

Participants described feelings of Pride due to being out, to presenting as their true identity, and caused by sharing their identity with others. This Pride was generated through proudness and joy experienced from permission (whether internal or external) to fully be one's authentic self. “Authenticity” took many forms in the data; descriptions of identity congruence (external presentation of internal truth), being out (sharing one's identity with others), and from the act of finding oneself. Within this category, there are both community and individualized experiences: sharing one's authentic self with others bringing Pride in the form of feelings of proudness; and finding one's authentic self, bringing a sense of peace, relief, and understanding. Examples of Authenticity Causing Pride stemming from a communal experience include the following descriptions:

- Participant 2: “Well, it was my first time I'd ever been to a dance presenting feminine. So that was fantastic. Like, I got to dress up, I got to put on makeup, I got to wear heels, I got to wear earrings and all this. Like, I just had a great time. It was the first time that I

really felt like I ever got to go out in that kind of space, but also feel completely safe about it.”

- Participant 4: “And if someone did, you know, straight up ask me, like, I’m gonna be honest about my bisexuality, I will say like the part that where the fear comes in is I don’t necessarily advertise it. Um, but there is still a sense of Pride that like if someone asks me like I will be honest with them and now it still feels really good.”

Examples of Authenticity Causing Pride stemming from an internal, individual experience include the following descriptions:

- Participant 4: “I don’t know.... You go out to a nice event as a woman, like femme appearing. You’re expected to wear dresses and skirts and like, I know it’s socially more acceptable to wear pants, but in that own way, I think there’s Pride in not choosing to wear skirts or dresses sometimes. Um, which maybe is a little old school to think about, but um. Sometimes that brings me just like a little bit of Pride, knowing that, like, I’m leaning into my identity of dressing masculine when really I’m just choosing to wear pants and I’m not even specifically trying to say anything by that, but. Um, it does It does. I think tie more to my identity than like I vocalize most of the time.
- Participant 5: First time I felt Pride. I remember after I came across that label and I had had like, I I think I’d come out in person to a few of my friends, like specifically the ace part of that identity.”

- Researcher: When was the first time you experienced Pride?

Participant 7: I think maybe when I said out loud to myself that I was a lesbian and I said it out loud into like an empty space and I cried and I think it was just like, yeah, this is like. I’ve waited really long to have that and it was like just a personal moment where it

was like, yeah, this that's really it. And I was just felt so emotional about it because it felt really right and. Yeah.

- Participant 6: “To have an opportunity to pursue being my authentic self, coming out as trans. Everything sort of retroactively made sense. A lot of the pain and discomfort I had felt my whole life made a lot more sense in the context of being gender nonconforming.”

Pride as Resistance and Resilience

Pride was not always described as an emotionally positive experience. When Pride was felt in the face of adversity, it often times was described as feeling like anger. Resistance and Resilience were both described blatantly and outright by participants, and were alluded to within discussion of Pride in the face of adversity or oppression. Sometimes, participants described a perceived expectation that Pride was a positive experience, and how their experience of Pride does not align with this perception.

- Researcher: “Considering your queer identity, do you feel as though you have experienced Pride?”

Participant 6: “Yes and no. Um, I almost didn't do this interview because I don't necessarily participate in a lot of queer cultural things, like social gatherings and stuff like that. And so I'm like, well, that's where most people feel Pride is like in community at a giant parade drunk in the like 100 degree heat. And that is an event, but I think in my own queerness, I think when I experience Pride is in the face of oppression, it is usually defiant.”

The Participant went on to describe their experience of Pride.

- Participant 6: “It's not joyful Pride. I think it's quite spiteful Pride, which is. I don't think I've ever really categorized that to myself. But it is like Pride in standing up to something,

trying to change everyone or erase something. And so that Pride has come in like expressions of like, you know, it's not just two genders like. Were like I exist, if nothing else, you know?"

Participant 6 was unaware that this idea was one that I had heard numerous times in previous interviews. Pride was not always described as a positive emotional experience, like some researchers have previously proposed (ex. Testa et al., 2015). Instead, for some, Pride is backed by recognition of a painful starting point, whether that starting point be historical or personal in nature. Pride that includes recognition of adversity caused feelings of defiance, anger, and internal strength, as evidenced by Participants' statements:

- Participant 1: "It's like an act of resistance to be like, I am, I feel good about this."
- Participant 2: "And then sometimes I'll take the news and be like, you know what? Screw them. I'm going to go outlive my life the way I want to. And it's I don't know what the difference is sometimes. And sometimes maybe it is having the that Pride that makes me react to that differently."
- Participant 4: "But and then like, even now there's a lot of fear just surrounding this identity, you know, being attacked by many forces, including the government, it doesn't sometimes always feel safe to be in public about it in any way so and I also have to remind myself that even though I did marry a man, that doesn't erase my bisexuality. So I don't know. There's still some fear, but still a lot of excitement that at least I know that that's a part of me and I have recognized it and not said actually I reject this. I've embraced it, which does bring about a lot of excitement too."
- Participant 5: "I shouldn't have to feel proud that my community is resilient, right? That shouldn't be making me feel proud. I shouldn't have to. That shouldn't be a way that I

have to feel. And even in experiencing those feelings of Pride, I feel a lot of anger. You know, I shouldn't have to be commending my community for once again arguing that we have a right to be married, you know?"

This emotional experience of Pride was recognized to have more emotional value or weight in the face of adversity. Participants also reported an increase in feelings of Pride as a reaction to the experience of increased adversity to the community. Examples of these descriptions include the following participant quotes:

- Participant 2: "So um, that is something that I've probably felt more this year than in past years. Like in the face of adversity, it just it hits stronger and it's it feels more pertinent to be proud of who you are and feel. But I think I've just had more love for myself this year than I have in past years, despite all of the adversity. And I think it maybe it is the adversity that lends to that in some way, but..."
- Participant 2: "I I feel like I've just put more priority on, um, being open with myself and being honest with myself in this past year, I feel like in the face of adversity, I've been wanting to really put myself out there. As far as you know, I don't... It seemed ironic for me to hide throughout the entire Biden administration. And now that Trump is in office, I'm not being wholely out in public, but at least in my local hometown. But it's just like it's it feels like an opportunity to really live in the face of adversity. Like it really feels like to continue doing like locking myself up in my house and not going anywhere is exactly what the mission is for all these fear tactics, and that's really what it is, is just fear. Like that's all they're trying to instill is just fear."

Endorsement of Multiple Core Categories in Single Responses

Participants often endorsed multiple codes in one disclosure, their statements were made in a way that these codes and categories could not be distinctly parsed apart. For example, Participant 3 endorsed both “Fear or Shame as a Starting Point”, and “Self-Acceptance functioning as Authorization” (in this case, neutralization of shame coming from internal self-acceptance of identity).

- Interviewer: “... I’m wondering, does shame have any connection to your feelings of Pride?”
- Participant 3: “No, I've never felt shame. It's a lot of fear and terror about what other people think of me, but I've never felt ashamed of what I've chosen to do specifically. Cause, I mean, at the end of the day, something made me happy and I chased it like.. I have not felt ashamed of that, it's it's much more of the uncertainty of how others are going to change how they treat me or what they think of me or anything like that, you know?”

This combination of codes was fairly common, and showed how these internal processes interacted with one another. Experiencing self acceptance after fear and/or shame caused by risk associated with LGBTQ+ identification was a natural progression; echoed in this participant response:

- Participant 2: “But I mean, when I was a kid, I just did not know what being trans was. The only, the only actual, like interaction I had with trans people was through the media making fun of them. And that was just the kind of the world I grew up in in the 90s, and fortunately it's not that way anymore, but. I think there is.... There's still some shame there, I think. I think a lot of it is just mostly fear of not being accepted and just wanting

that safe space. But I don't know if that's really shame, because I can't really say that I'm ashamed. I've really felt ashamed of any of the changes that I've made. I can't really say that in any public space that I'm feeling ashamed of myself. I'm more just feeling afraid if I'm that's probably the most dominant negative emotion. It's just fear, but not necessarily... Um. Yeah, not necessarily ashamed of who I am, just more as more afraid of who other people are.”

In one response, Participant 2 walked through the Path to Pride, starting at a point of fear of how others may perceive and subsequently react to their identity, acknowledgement of risk associated with presenting with authentically, acceptance from the community authorizing their authenticity, and experiencing Pride, that was relationally generated, causing resilience.

- Participant 2: “But after COVID, I just didn't really feel like I'd go out and meet anyone. It was just really fearful as far as like, I don't know if I'm going to be present, if I'm going to be accepted with how I'm presenting, but going to like these LGBTQ events or going to groups, going to talks or even just like little things like even if they had just have like a weekly like game night or something. All of that just helps reminds me that it's there's a lot more people out there that are like me. It does. It helps me feel less alone. So that's something that I've really been trying to do more often is go to these local events, just because it does help a lot to just remind myself that the world isn't against me, at least not in our little town.”

Discussion

Overview of Results

Definitions of Pride

The goal of this research was to clarify the definition and experience of LGBTQ+ Pride. By better understanding the LGBTQ+ definition and experience of Pride, researchers will be better situated to conduct research within this community. For example, how the community defines Pride can inform researchers as to what is valued in this community and how Pride interacts with other emotions and behaviors. Three definitions of Pride were created through constructivist grounded theory analysis of 7 in-depth interviews with community members. Pride from Authenticity, Relationally Generated Pride, and Pride as Resistance and Resilience are the three distinct emotional experiences defined throughout data collection.

Pride caused by Authenticity was most aligned with current research-based definitions of Pride (Bockting et al., 2023; Cass, 1979, Conn et al., 2023; Testa, et al., 2015). In its most simple form, research has defined Pride as synonymous to “proudness”, and has often measured Pride on a Likert scale, depicting the degree to which one would say they are proud of the LGBTQ identity (Gorska & Bilewicz, 2015; Mohr & Kenra, 2011; Woodford et al., 2018). This definition of Pride was reflected in the data, through participants explicit statements of proudness of their LGBTQ+ identity, endorsed by 4 out of 7 participants. Authenticity took numerous forms, such as expressing one’s queer identity through external presentation (e.g., the way one dresses or styles themselves), or sharing one’s identity when given space to come out on one’s own terms. Similarly to understandings of gender and sexual attraction, authenticity may also be conceptualized on a continuum, as some LGBTQ+ Community members discussed disclosing

only one of their LGBTQ+ identities, or experiencing internal authenticity despite not having public declaration of an identity.

Community engagement was one avenue through which Relationally Generated Pride was endorsed. The basis of “Relationally Generated Pride” is that it is an emotional experience dependent on the presence of other queer individuals. Emotionally, Relationally Generated Pride was described positively, and was endorsed frequently when discussing Pride events. Themes of celebration, joy, and descriptions of being unburdened were prevalent in this data. These emotional experiences shared by participants include being proud to be part of the LGBTQ+ community, proud of the community being a supportive safe haven, Pride felt due to the presence of other queer people, proudness in witnessing other community members joy and authenticity, proudness in recognition of the growth of feelings of Pride within the community over time, and proudness in the idea of making elder and passed LGBTQ+ community members proud due to the growth seen in the community. Relationally Generated Pride was the most endorsed emotional experience of Pride by participants, despite current definitions of Pride widely endorsing a definition of Pride as an individual experience of proudness for one’s identity (Bockting et al., 2023; Cass, 1979, Conn et al., 2023; Gorska & Bilewicz, 2015; Mohr & Kenra, 2011; Testa, et al., 2015).

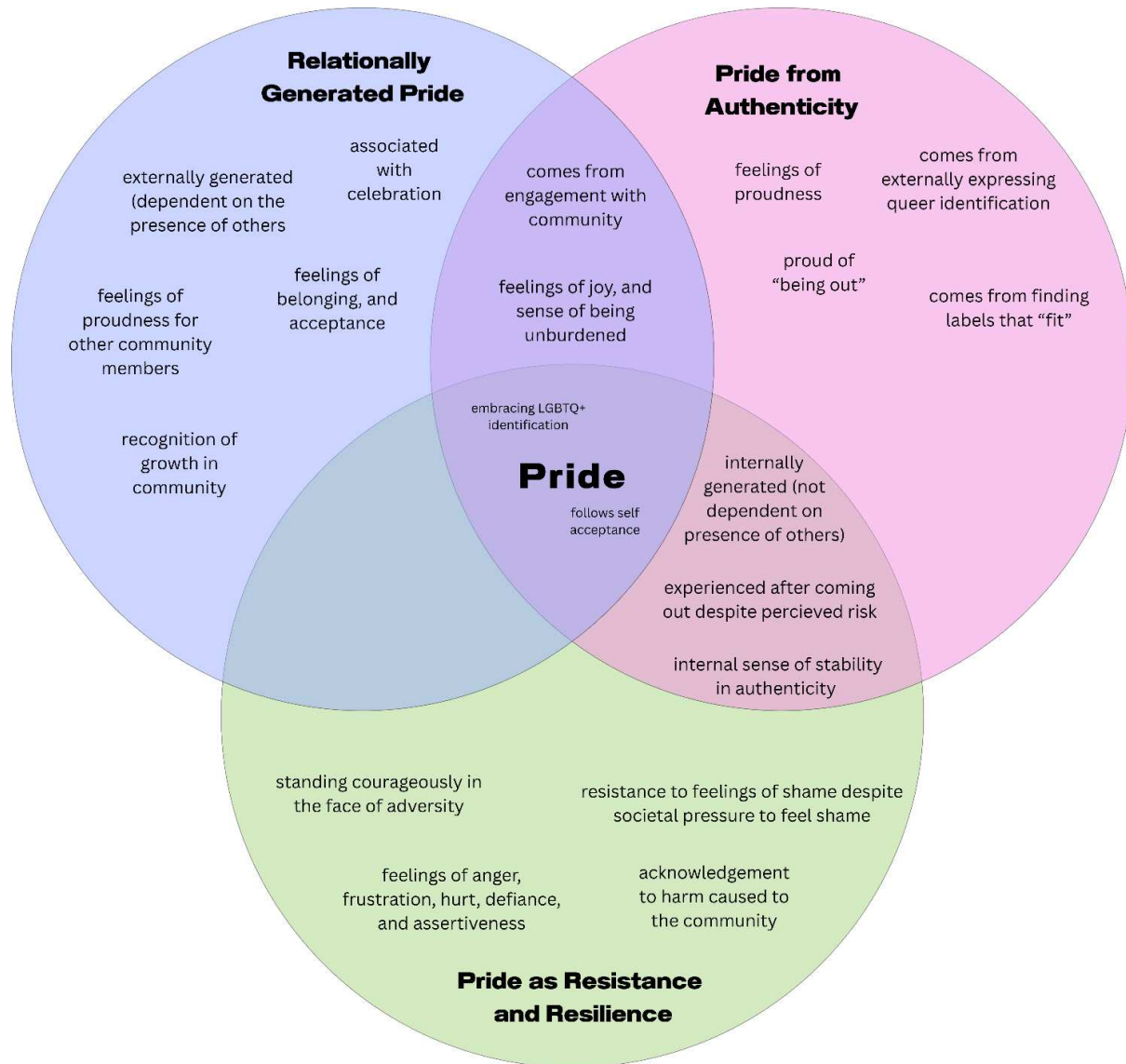
The most novel finding of this study is the emotional experience of Pride as Resistance and Resilience. This emotional experience was marked by anger, frustration, hurt, defiance, and assertiveness. The unburdened feelings reflected in Relationally Generated Pride were absent in this emotional experience, and instead there was frequent acknowledgement of the harm caused to the community, the risk community members experience, and the physical and emotional cost of LGBTQ+ identification. Participants described an internal sense of stability and authenticity

that allowed them to uphold their LGBTQ+ identification, despite pressures to conform to socially accepted norms. Anger is a valid reaction to marginality and inequality and is a driving force in social and political activism (DeGagne, 2018; Lorde, 1987). DeGagne writes “The dismissal of what I term “anger activism” both delegitimizes marginalized individuals and their claims, and reinforces the power relations that sustain the status quo” (DeGagne, 2018, pg. 142). Historically, anger serves a purpose for minority communities. It is not just a reaction to being othered, but the driving force of social change (Cherry 2015, 2022; Giugni & Grasso, 2019).

Currently LGBTQ+ Identity Development models strive for acceptance and stability of a queer identity, while also holding acceptance for the fact that their identity does not conform to the social work (Cass 1979; Coleman, 1981 & 1982; Woodman & Lena, 1980). Langdridge (2014) proposes that these models are potentially outdated in what it is they are striving for, what it is they conceptualize to be a beneficial or acceptable way to hold one’s identity and reaction to the society’s disapproval. Langdridge suggests the incorporation of Queer Theory to edit our understanding of what the ideal outcome of identity development may be; to strive for ambiguity while recognizing rejection of binary categories of identity and recognizing valid anger in the experience of heterosexism and homonegativity (Landridge, 2014).

Pride, the emotional experience, was socially constructed alongside Pride, the event. The participants of this study echoed voices of LGBTQ+ community members and activists present at Stonewall, as they embodied feelings of resistance, resilience, and rebellion (Phillips, 2001). The emotional and lived experiences that make up and cause each of these variations of Pride are represented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.
Pride



Pride is a complex emotional experience marked by various distinct qualities. Pride from authenticity is an individualized, internal experience of self-acceptance, and proudness for one's embracement of LGBTQ+ identification. Externally this experience is often marked by aligning one's appearance to be congruent with their internal experience of self. This emotional experience is not dependent on the presence of others and is instead internally generated. Relationally Generated Pride is dependent on the presence of others, and is emotionally

experienced as a sense of proudness, belonging, and acceptance. Pride as Resistance and Resilience embodied resistance to feelings of shame that were noted as the emotional ‘starting point’ of recognition of LGBTQ+ identification. This experience was again an internal and individual one (meaning it is not dependent on the presence of other community members). Emotionally, this experience was marked by feelings of anger, defiance, certainty of oneself, and courage.

Understanding the Origins and Processes Underlying the Pathway to Pride Model

Due to exposure to minority stressors and experience of shame and fear as an emotional reaction, participants described concealing their identity as a reaction to the initial discovery or acknowledgment of their queer identity. The act of identity concealment is considered a self-protective identity management decision and is intended to align an individual to accepted and expected identification, when they perceive their identity to be viewed as unfavorable (Larson & Chastain, 1990, p.440). Identity nondisclosure is a lack of motivation to share one’s identity, a different psychological process to concealment, which entails a desire to prevent disclosing one’s identity (Jackson & Mohr; 2016). These processes have different consequences, and lead to an understanding that lack of identity disclosure does not always mean a participant is suffering from the effects of lack of authenticity (Larson et al., 2015; Meidlinger & Hope, 2014). Identity concealment comes at a psychological, cognitive, and physical cost (Pachankis, 2007; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2011). Concealing an LGBTQ+ identity is reported to cause loneliness, undermining one’s personal wellbeing as feeling connected to others is an innate psychological need (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Ryan, 2019). Further, feelings of loneliness contribute to increased morbidity and mortality in stigmatized communities (Cacioppo et al., 2015). Concealment also hinders one’s ability to engage with their community, limiting social engagement, and sharing of

culture and experience that may provide them with feelings of validation, normalization, belonging and acceptance (Follmer et al., 2020).

Participants discussed the effects of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation early in the interview process, oftentimes after being asked the initial interview question: “As you think about your identity in the LGBTQ+ community, what emotions come up for you?” The significance of this response to thinking about one’s LGBTQ+ identity can be understood through understanding of social norms and consequences. American society embraces social norms deeply rooted in colonialism and imperialism (Maddern, 2021). These norms give priority to those who embrace dominant culture; people who are White, English-Speaking, Protestant, Cisgender and Heterosexual. Those who fall outside of these cultural norms are expected to conform through acculturation and assimilation. The LGBTQ+ Community is specifically affected by societal expectations of cisgenderism and heterosexuality. Legislation is one tool used to enforce societal expectations, and is a current tactic used to cause harm to the queer community (Mora, 2025).

The current political and social landscape are community level harms that have trickle down effects, noted by participants during discussions of increased risk caused by embracing their queerness through external presentation, fear of lack of safety, and perceptions of disapproval and non-acceptance from social signaling (e.g., MAGA caps). Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation does not need to be passed into law to have negative effects on queer people (Mora, 2025). Feelings of isolation, fear, and hypervigilance are commonplace for queer individuals, and the discussion of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation is enough to reinforce the legitimacy of these negative emotional states (Mora, 2025). Anti-LGBTQ+ legislation is structural violence, as it is a form of violence from a social institution that prevents a specific group of people from meeting their basic needs.

Risk is not a static and stable construct, so participants described engaging in risk assessments to determine their perceived safety or vulnerability in any given space. Studies show that fear of crime affects community members on both individual and community levels, damaging individuals wellbeing, and reducing collective trust and cohesion (Ilse & Hagerlid, 2025). Results of a risk assessment included either a sense of safety and acceptance, or potential disapproval, lack of safety, and perception of vulnerability. Participants described reacting to the results of a risk assessment with a negotiation process of their authenticity. Authenticity being negotiated in various spaces based on perceived acceptance or disapproval is a process of ongoing calibration that gives a queer person autonomy over how exposed their identity may be in any given social situation (Griggs, 1998, Levitt & Ippolito, 2014). These processes are not unique to the LGBTQ+ community and are endorsed by other minority groups for the sake of safety and acceptance from majority community members (Aday & Schmader, 2019; Heppner et al., 2008; Lane et al., 2017; Lenton et al., 2016; Roberts et al., 2025). For LGBTQ+ Community members, negotiation of authenticity may involve decisions to conceal their identity, to come out in a given space, or not enter a space due to lack of perceived acceptance. Participants who endorsed valuing authenticity over all else discussed feelings of sadness and grief related to no longer accessing spaces where they are at risk if they present as their authentic selves.

Self-Acceptance was a core category endorsed by all participants, which speaks to the importance of this internal emotional process in one's journey towards Pride. Self-Acceptance was seemingly more significant than Pride from Authenticity, as 2 out of 3 participants who directly denounced experiencing Pride from Authenticity instead emphasized the importance of self-acceptance. This emphasis on the importance of self-acceptance is validated by Cass's theory of Homosexuality Identity Formation which follows a six-stage model leading to

positively valuing one's gay identity (Cass, 1979). The act of self-acceptance has various definitions but is understood to include comfort and embracement of an LGBTQ+ identity (Perrin-Wallqvist & Lindblom, 2015; Rostosky et al., 2018). Although understood by some researchers as rejection of internalization of negative views (Elizur & Mintzer, 2001; McCarthy et al., 2014; Rivers, 2004), identity development researchers define self-acceptance as a separate process that is affected negatively by the process of internalization of negative views (Elizur & Mintzer, 2001; Meyer, 2003). This understanding of self-acceptance is one embraced the Pathway to Pride Model, as it recognizes a cycle that starts with recognition of negative external and internal views of identity, and maintains this acknowledgement despite moving towards and through self-acceptance. The feelings of shame and fear that come from experiencing societally constructed constraints to LGBTQ+ identification are a different process that influences one's ability to access and embrace self-acceptance.

Once a Participant moved through the process self-acceptance by resolving internal conflicts caused by having stigmatized identification, they then had internal permission to identify as a queer individual. Public declaration of an LGBTQ+ identity is colloquially known and widely referred to as "coming out" (a term short for "coming out of the closet" meaning revealing an identity previously kept hidden). Coming out has social significance because it means embracing a minority identity within a stigmatized group in society (Dennis & Davis, 2026). Stigmatization comes with social consequences, such as exposure to judgment, ridicule and isolation from majority community members, which is why the decision to come out is not one made lightly. Beyond the social significance that comes with public declaration of LGBTQ+ identification, embracing a queer identity was described by participants as an emotionally powerful and valuable experience.

Throughout data collection, participants discussed their engagement with the LGBTQ+ Community to provide them a sense of belonging. They oftentimes discussed how their minoritized identity that is spotlighted in most spaces, is no longer viewed as a focal point when around other queer individuals. As echoed by linguistic anthropology and cultural psychology alike, social groups share culture and language, and through this, they create shared narratives, worldviews, and communication styles (Eastman, 1985; Imai et al., 2016; Keblusek et al., 2017; Salzmann et al., 2014). Some participants spoke directly about the importance of having a shared language and shared understanding of life experiences causing neutralization within community on minority effects. This importance is validated and expanded on through psychological research on concepts like group-based social connection (Haslam et al., 2022), in-group solidarity (Markovsky & Lawler, 1994), group cohesion (Forsyth, 2021), and community consciousness (Frost & Meyer, 2011). Participants paraphrased and echoed the idea that connecting and engaging with the community leads to feelings of belonging, love, and support (Herek & Glunt, 1995), and has significant effects on one's sense of meaning (Steffens et al., 2017), self-esteem, and wellbeing (Jettson et al., 2017).

Similarly to many LGBTQ+ concepts of identity and attraction, Pride can be conceptualized on two continuums, one reflecting individual level Pride, and the other reflecting community level experiences of Pride. Individual level Pride can be conceptualized on a continuum starting with refusal of shame and ending with Pride from authenticity. On a community level, Pride can be conceptualized as rejection of stigmatization to Pride as resistance and resilience. Previous definitions of Pride (defining Pride as synonymous to proudness), such as those from Testa et al. (2015) and Soulliard et al.(2025), provide value due to their ability to quantify one's appraisal or disapproval for an aspect of their identity. This aids the development

of scales, such as those established by Testa et al., (2015), Redina et al., (2019) and Lawrence et al., (2024). While this definition may be useful for quantifying Pride, the results of the current study show that it reduced the LGBTQ+ emotional experience of Pride to be almost transferable to how Pride is experienced in other populations. This simplification of Pride from the perspective of psychological researchers is potentially caused by the development of LGBTQ+ pride being parallel to other cultural understandings of identity pride. This trajectory of the conceptual development of Pride does not account for how Pride was developed as an emotional experience for LGBTQ+ folx, that is, parallel to the development of Pride events, increase in LGBTQ+ activism and collective resistance.

Implications

Clinical

This research may help practitioners better understand the various ways Pride is emotionally experienced, as well as the pathways one takes to reach these various experiences. To serve individuals in this population with a more thorough understanding of how Pride is felt, provides a deeper understanding of the LGBTQ+ experience. Clinicians who treat LGBTQ+ individuals benefit from understanding the ways queer people emotionally react to living in a society where their identities are othered, and it is my hope that this study provides some insight into these emotional processes. Clinicians may use the findings of this study to guide their understanding of the various emotional experiences that are commonplace for LGBTQ+ individuals; such as feelings of shame and fear when one first discovers or acknowledges their LGBTQ+ identity.

Limitations and Future Directions

Due to the small participant sample ($n=7$), the findings should be interpreted with caution when applying them to other populations. The stories and processes endorsed by these participants are not intended to be representative of the community as a whole, but instead provide insight into significant areas of promise, and areas that are underdeveloped in current psychological research. The study design may have led to vulnerability to cohort biases as 5 out of 7 participants were recruited at Pride events, potentially causing an increase in results of participants labeling their emotional experiences as Pride. Although, this bias may be weakened due to one of these 5 participants sharing that they had not attended the pride event where they were recruited and instead were just passing by the study poster. Further, due to the small sample size, there are limitations to the saturation of data within the study. Although new themes did not arise within the last two interviews, more nuanced may have been developed if data collection continued past seven interviews. Challenges with participant response and follow through with completion of the study prevented further data from being collected.

This study evaluated the LGBTQ+ community as whole, in an effort to understand the commonalities within defining and experiencing Pride. In doing so, this study did not examine intersecting identities and how various identities (including specific aspects of the LGBTQ+ community and other demographics) interact to form an experience of Pride. It is likely that subgroups of the LGBTQ+ community have specified shared experiences of Pride due to their unique perspective and experiences. It is reported that 58% of the LGBTQ+ Community within the United States is White (Williams Institute, 2019), with this number increasing to approximately 74% of the LGBTQ+ Community in Colorado (Colorado Health Institute, 2024), where this study was conducted. This study does not reflect the racial diversity seen within the

community as a whole, and future studies would benefit from a more diverse racial Participant sample.

Future studies may also benefit from increased specification on how Pride is experienced by various LGBTQ+ subgroups. Societal norms affect community members differently based on the subgroup that they identify with, and community members experience unique barriers to social acceptance based on their specific identities. For example, in 2015, Pew Research Center reported only 28% of bisexual individuals being out to important individuals in their life, significantly less than their sexuality minority counterparts, with 71% of Lesbian and 77% of Gay individuals reporting being out. As noted in Table 1, Participants who held only Sexually Diverse Identities were more likely to experience Pride from authenticity, potentially due to lower likelihood for them to share and embrace their LGBTQ+ Identity.

I would anticipate that socially constructed constraints being further specified beyond expectations of cisgenderism and heterosexuality for community members who hold multiple minority identities. For example, to include effects of racism and transphobia for the most targeted LGBTQ+ subpopulation, Black transgender woman, would likely create variability in the experiences of socially created constraints, increased vulnerability, and potential variability in the emotional experience of Pride. Further, with attention to social constructivism, future studies can provide insight to how distinct cultural historically significant events shape the ways in which subgroup populations experience Pride, and how their journey to LGBTQ+ identification may differ. For example, how might the HIV/AIDS crisis effect the way gay men are affected by homophobia, how might this crisis change the ways Pride was created and since forth emotionally experienced for this subgroup? Future research should investigate any differences or centrality of certain identities in the formation and experience of LGBTQ+ Pride.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to tell the story of Pride, and define the emotional experience of Pride, from the perspective of LGBTQ+ individuals. Through Constructivist Grounded Theory Analysis of 7 in-depth interviews with community members, a developmental model of Pathways to Pride was established. The Pathway to Pride model shows how participants started their LGBTQ+ identification journey with recognition to the potential harm they may face for embracing their queerness. Participants shared about challenging internal and external processes such as internalized homophobia and structural victimization; and described reacting to these processes with feelings of shame and fear. They then described moving through self acceptance towards feelings of Pride, developed from embracing their authentic selves, and standing proudly in the face of adversity. The story of the Path to Pride that unfolded throughout data collection, echoed that of the LGBTQ+ community historically, and led to a nuanced multifaceted understanding of the emotional experiences of Pride.

The following definitions of Pride from Authenticity, Relationally Generated Pride, and Pride as Resistance and Resilience were developed through CGT analysis. Pride from Authenticity is the experience of feelings of authentic pride, caused by acknowledgement of one's alignment to their genuine self. Relationally Generated Pride is marked by feelings of joy, belonging, acceptance, and liberation, created through relation to the LGBTQ+ community. This emotional experience is communal, often triggered by interpersonal synchrony, observable in experiences of social bonding, engagement in LGBTQ+ culture (such as attending Pride events), and shared emotional experiences. Pride as Resistance and Resilience is emotionally defined through feelings of anger, frustration, hurt, defiance, and assertiveness. These emotions embody a kind of Pride experienced in the face of adversity, with acknowledgement to the difficult

emotional journey one must take to experience Pride when society is based on values that reject your identities.

My proposed new definitions of Pride may create ambiguity in understanding a once (potentially over-)simplified concept. It is my understanding that current understandings are oversimplified and conceptually miss acknowledgement of valid emotional experiences that reflect a more nuanced multifaceted understanding of how Pride is experienced. Embracing the three definitions of Pride created through constructivist grounded theory analysis, has the potential to lead to increased resourcing based on emotional experiences endorsed by various LGBTQ+ clients in clinical settings, increased understanding of how Pride is experienced.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Documents (Study Description, Consent Form, Screener, Demographics Questionnaire)

Colorado State University

Consent to Participate in Research

How the LGBTQ+ Community Conceptualizes Pride: a Qualitative Study based in Grounded Theory

Introduction and Purpose

My name is Trudy Tompkins. I am a graduate student at Colorado State University. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which looks at your experience at Pride.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct a virtual interview with you at a time of your choosing. Participants will be randomly chosen from the subject pool and will be contacted in the month of July in order to schedule a virtual interview. The interview will involve questions about your experience at Pride events. It should last about 1 hour. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you do not wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

I expect to conduct only one interview; however, follow-ups may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you by email/phone to request this. If a follow-up interview is

needed, you will be contacted up to one month after your original interview. If you have not been contacted in this time period, then no follow up interview is necessitated.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the body of research focused on the LGBTQ+ community and could benefit researchers who intend to base their interpretations of Pride on direct report of LGBTQ+ community members first person experiences.

Risks/Discomforts

As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk by storing all collected data behind multiple password protections. There is a possibility that some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to, or to stop the interview at any time.

Confidentiality

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, we will keep contact information and demographics on a locked excel sheet on a password protected computer. All audiotapes of interviews will be immediately deleted after transcription.

We will transcribe the audio recordings as soon as possible after the interview and then destroy the tapes. When the research is completed, I will save the transcriptions and other study data for possible use in future research done by myself. The same measures described above will be

taken to protect confidentiality of this study data. We may be asked to share the research files with the sponsor or the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes. Your identity/record of receiving compensation (NOT your data) may be made available to CSU officials for financial audits.

Compensation

To thank you for participating in this study, you will receive a \$25 virtual visa gift card immediately after you complete the interview.

Rights

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer any questions or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at trudymtompkins@gmail.com.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: 970-491-1553, or e-mail CSU_IRB@colostate.edu.

CONSENT FORM

Participant Consent:

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and voluntarily wish to participate in this research. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Signature of participant

Date

Name of participant

Do you consent for your interview to be audiotaped?

___ Yes

___ No

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

Participant's Name *(please print)*

Participant's Signature

Date

Screeners

Do you identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community?

(yes/no)

Are you 18 years of age or older?

(yes/no)

Are you fluent in English?

(yes/no)

If a subject does not answer yes to all three screener questions, Qualtrics will not let them continue to complete the recruitment documents.

Demographics Questionnaire

What is your age? (self-report)

What is your gender? (self-report)

What is your sexual identity? (self-report)

What is your sex assigned at birth? (pick from options)

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Intersex

What is your ethnicity? (pick from options)

- a. White / Caucasian
- b. Hispanic/ Latino
- c. Black / African American
- d. Indigenous / Native American / American Indian
- e. Asian / Pacific Islander
- f. Other

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (pick from options)

- a. Less than high school diploma
- b. High school degree or equivalent
- c. Bachelors degree
- d. Masters degree
- e. Doctorate
- f. Other (please specify- leads to self report)

What is your household income?

- a. Below 10k
- b. 10k – 50k
- c. 50k – 100k

- d. 100k – 150k
- e. Over 150k

Appendix B: Participant Contact Via Email

Invitation Email:

Hello,

This email is to inform you that you have been selected to participate in the research study: “How the LGBTQIA+ Community Conceptualizes Pride: A Qualitative Study Based in Grounded Theory.” As a reminder, participation in this study will involve engaging in an interview discussing your experience of emotions related to your LGBTQ identity. I have attached the consent form you previously accepted to this email to remind you of study details. Your participation will be rewarded with a \$25 virtual visa gift card. If you still want to participate in this study, please respond to this email with 3-5 dates and times you are available to schedule your virtual interview. Thank you again for your interest in my study.

Best,

Trudy Tompkins from The Laboratory for the Study of Meaning and Quality of Life

Participant Validation Invitation Email:

Hello!

I want to thank you again for being a part of my research study ("How the LGBTQ+ Community Conceptualizes Pride"). I am reaching out to see if you would be interested in discussing some of the results of my coding analysis! I have decided to undergo a process called Participant Validation, which is when a researcher discusses the results of the coding process with participants to see if their interpretation of the data is accurate to the participants' experience. It is important for me to interpret the data accurately according to your experience, and this would be an avenue for you to provide me feedback about if I missed anything, allow you to incorporate more information if desired, and reflect on the accuracy of my final codes. This process can be done on a short (30 minute) teams call, or via email. Please let me know if you are interested in helping provide me with this feedback! And thank you again for your participation!

Best,

Trudy Tompkins from The Laboratory for the Study of Meaning and Quality of Life

How the LGBTQIA+ Community Conceptualizes Pride

A QUALITATIVE STUDY BASED IN GROUNDED THEORY
REQUEST FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Who is conducting the study and what is this study about?

Researchers from the Psychology department at Colorado State University are recruiting participants for a study to further psychology's understanding of why LGBTQIA+ community members participate in Pride events.

Who can join this study?

You can participate in this study if you are an adult (aged 18+) who identifies as part of the lgbtqia+ community.

Compensation:

Randomly selected participants will be given a \$25 visa giftcard to thank them for their participation.

Why Should I join this study?

This study will entail discussing your experience here at NYC Pride with a queer researcher. Join this study for the chance to actively contribute to a body of research that discusses the LGBTQIA+ community and their views on pride.



PLEASE CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Trudy Tompkins (Study coordinator/CoPI)
trudy.tompkins@colostate.edu

Dr. Michael Steger (principal investigator)
michael.steger@colostate.edu



Appendix: D: Interview Questions

First Iteration of Questions (Provides a guide to all interviews)

1. Briefly review interview structure and confidentiality.
2. “To protect your privacy and autonomy, you may decide to end the interview or redact any statement that you have made. I will be taking notes if you decide to redact a statement to remind myself to delete specific lines from the transcription of the audio-recording. Any questions about confidentiality or the audio recording process?”
3. Follow prompts from the participant to explore their feelings about their identity, community and motivations in relation to their experience at Pride.

Greeting the Participant:

Hello, how are you doing today?

My name is Trudy, I use they/them pronouns, and I will be conducting your interview today.

What is your name and what pronouns would you like me to use when referring to you?

General interview overview:

I will be reading from a script, so all participants hear the same instructions. As previously stated, this interview will generally involve questions regarding your experience being part of the LGBTQ+ community. The interview may feel personal, and I encourage you to reject any question that causes you discomfort, or that you do not want to answer.

Confidentiality: Our interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be stored on a password protected computer, in a password protected Teams account. The recordings will

remain confidential, only I will have access to them, and after transcription they will be immediately deleted. All identifiable information will be deleted from the transcribed interview.

Do you have any questions for me? (wait for response)

Are you ready to begin?

General Interview Questions:

1. I am interested in understanding your story in how you connect to the LGBTQ+ community.

Could you tell me about that connection?

2. Tell me about the story of your Pride experience.

3. What were your motivations to attend the Pride event?

4. Could you tell me about your experience at the Pride event?

5. What kinds of emotions were you feeling at the Pride event?

6. What do you think may have caused those emotions?

7. What allowed you to experience those emotions when you felt them?

8. What was the best part of the Pride event for you?

9. What is it you valued about your experience at the Pride event?

10. What about your experience at the Pride event was important to you?

General Interview Questions:

1. As you think about your identity in the LGBTQ+ community, what emotions come up for you? (This question is the broadest, painting the emotional landscape of how the person feels broadly about their LGBTQ identity. This is valuable to see if pride is something that is elicited without a positive emotional stimulus such as a pride event) (I am curious how many people bring up pride themselves)

2. Can you describe your experience of _____? (clarity to question 1)

3. Considering your LGBTQ identity, do you feel as though you have experienced pride?

A. Can you tell me about a time you felt pride in your LGBTQ identity or association with the LGBTQ Community?

IF YES:

~ What did pride feel like?

~ What was happening that allowed you to feel pride in that moment?

~ Were there any barriers to feeling pride in that moment?

IF NO:

~ Are there barriers that prevent you from experiencing pride?

4. When I say pride, what is it that you are thinking of? OR What comes to mind when I use the word pride?

5. Are there any circumstances in which you find yourself feeling these emotions more often than others?

6. I want to take us back to where we met, at a pride event. Could you tell me about your experience at that Pride event?

~ What kinds of emotions were you experiencing at that event?

7. When was the first time you experienced “insert emotion stated in Q6 here”? (this is aiming to understand where these emotions come from, and if they are unique to a certain circumstance/environment, as well as if the positive emotions felt at pride events are the same as those elicited when not tied to aa pride event)

Direct Questions

1. I notice you did not mention (“shame”, “a connection to the LGBTQ+ community”, “self-acceptance”, “celebration or visibility of your identity or community”, “activism or advocacy”, “a sense of belonging”), does this have any connection to your feelings of pride?
 - a. If yes: How so? Could you tell me the story of when this has played into your emotional experience of pride?

When prompted to discuss emotions, focus on them to develop a story of the emotional experience of pride.

Possible Follow Up Questions:

What does (insert word they used) mean to you? (ask specifically about

“community”, “identity”, “connection”, “visibility”, “pride”, “proudness”, “shame”)

How did you know it was (insert word they used) that you were feeling?

Tell me more about that.

Could you tell me more about what that moment meant to you?

Does this _____ have meaning for you, and if so, in what ways? (if they mention sense of

“community”, “visibility”, “identity”, etc.)

When you say ____, what is it you mean? (pride, proudness, visibility, etc.)

Interview 1

1. **As you think about your identity in the LGBTQ+ community, what emotions come up for you?**

2. Can you tell me a little bit about your experience of Pride? How does it feel?
3. Could you tell me about a time, a specific time or experience where you felt pride in your LGBTQ identity or association with the LGBTQ community?
4. What was it that allowed you to feel pride in that moment?
5. Are there any barriers that prevent you from feeling pride?
6. When I say pride, what exactly is it that you're thinking?
7. Are there any circumstances in which you find yourself feeling pride related emotions more often than others?
8. I'm wondering if you could tell me a bit about your experience either at that Pride event or at any Pride event you've been to recently.
9. What type of emotions were you feeling during that moment where you were outside that drag brunch?

PHASE II

10. OK, so I noticed that during our conversation today you did not mention shame, and I'm wondering if shame has any connection to your feelings of pride.
 - a. Essentially, does shame have any connection to your feelings of pride?
11. I'm also curious if activism or advocacy has any connection to pride for you.
12. OK. And then finally, does self-acceptance have a position in pride for you?
13. How have your experiences of pride influenced your sense of self?

EXPLANATION OF CHANGE IN QUESTIONS: I decided after interview 1 to explore each emotion brought up after first question in more depth.

Interview 2

1. **OK, as you think about your identity in the LGBTQ+ community, what emotions come up for you?**
 - a. If that's what comes to mind, yes, but also if you want to answer for Fort Collins community and then just like as the LGBTQ+ community, like as a, you know, worldwide whole.
2. Could you describe your experience of those feelings specifically related to the local feelings, for example, you mentioned acceptance and belonging?
3. And then, same question bit regarding those almost opposite emotions you mentioned about globally, could you describe your experience of fear relating to your LGBTQ identity?
4. You mentioned pride events you have been attending. So, I actually want to take us back to where we met which was one of the pride events I was recruiting at. Could you tell me about your experience at either that pride event or the any you went to this year?
5. I'm curious what's the driving factor? Like, what keeps you going to these events despite the fear of your safety?
6. What kind of emotions were you experiencing at that specific event?
7. So we have been using this word throughout the interview, and I want to kind of bring it to the forefront. Considering your LGBTQ identity, do you feel as though you have experienced pride? Tell me about that.
 - a. (clarifying the question) Do you feel as though you have experienced pride in relation to your LGBTQ identity?
8. What does pride feel like?

9. It seems as though, for you, that the effects of pride, specifically from these pride events, are almost like long lasting. Could you speak to that a little bit?
10. So in the beginning of our interview, you mentioned some emotions such as self-acceptance, feelings of belonging, kind of comfort in a way, and also on the other hand, feelings of fear and acknowledgement of adversity. I'm curious which, or if any of these, fit under pride, or if any of these are a part of pride, or if they all differ from pride?

PHASE II

11. I noticed throughout the interview, and this sometimes comes up, so I've been bringing it up now a little bit more that shame wasn't mentioned and as it kind of is viewed as this opposing thing to pride, I'm wondering if it has any influences on your feelings of pride or your feelings of acceptance.
12. Another thing I wanted to bring in the space is I'm wondering if a celebration or like visibility of your identity within the community also has any part in your feelings of pride.
 - a. Yeah, like seeing your personal identity celebrated and visible in the community.
13. How does your experience of acceptance or pride influence your sense of self, if at all?
 - a. (clarifying) How does your experience of self-acceptance and pride influence your sense of self?

EXPLANATION OF CHANGE IN QUESTIONS: During interview 2 I helped the Client expand on each of their answers with the intention of getting more breadth of data. I was also to gain more depth regarding feelings of pride (i.e. their long lasting nature, how they differ from other associated feelings such as belonging and acceptance).

Interview 3

1. **So, my first question is, as you think about your identity in the LGBTQ plus community, what emotions come up for you?**
2. OK, could you describe to me your experience of the emotion pride?
3. When you're talking about pride, it... sounds like... how do I just how do I say this? It sounds like a specific thing or event is like kind of tied to the emotion. Does that ring true for you?
4. OK, we're gonna dive more into pride, but I wanna get back to a couple of the other emotions you named in the first question. Could you describe to me your experience of joy as it relates to your identity?
5. Yeah, both of your answers for both pride and joy seem to have a relation to other people. Could you tell me about what about the other the presence of other people allows or encourages those emotions?
6. And then could you tell me a bit about your experience of belonging as it relates to your identity?
7. OK, when I say pride, what is it that you're thinking of?
8. I'm curious about how the emotional experience of Pride, if it feels at all completely attached to Pride events, or can it be... Is it separate from Pride events? Does that make sense?
 - a. (clarification) So the feelings that you described of pride.
 - b. When I'm asking you about pride, I'm getting some various answers of feelings and also of events or situations. Are those two completely tied to one another, or can you

have one without the other? Can you have pride events without pride feelings or pride feelings without pride events?

- c. (follow up) What do you mean by that kind of thing?
- 9. Are there any circumstances in which you find yourself feeling these pride emotions or pride feelings more than others?
- 10. Um, are there any barriers to feeling pride?
 - a. (clarification) And I kind of want to frame pride in that same way of are there any things that might get in the way of feelings of pride?
- 11. Could you tell me about your experience at the pride event where we met one another?
- 12. What kind of emotions were you experiencing at the event and why, if you can pinpoint why?
- 13. When was the first time you experienced the emotion pride?
- 14. Were there any other emotions going on at that time? Cause we've identified pride and I'm wondering if the emotions, if there are any other emotions that you experienced when that consultation happened, when you heard that news? If those emotions are a part of pride, or if they're different from pride, does that make sense?

PHASE II

- 15. I noticed that you did not mention shame in your descriptions of pride or during this conversation really. And I'm wondering, does shame have any connection to your feelings of pride?
- 16. I also noticed that we didn't really discuss activism or advocacy, and I'm wondering if that has any connection to Pride for you?

17. So does celebration and or just having your identity visible within the community have a connection to your feelings of pride?

EXPLANATION OF CHANGE IN QUESTIONS: Goal of the interview was to increase the clarity of definitions of Pride.

Interview 4

1. **As you think about your identity in the LGBTQ plus community, what emotions come up for you?**
2. Could you describe to me your experience of excitement and that kind of journey that you went from it seems going from non-excitement to excitement?
3. I am also curious about your experience of anxiety and fear as they relate to your LGBTQ identity. I got flavors of it in the story you told, but is there anything more to that?
4. Considering your LGBTQ identity, do you feel as though you've experienced pride?
 - a. Could you tell me about what the experience feels like?
5. Could you tell me about a time you felt pride in your LGBTQ identity or your association with the LGBTQ community?
6. What did pride feel like in that moment?
7. I am wondering if there are any barriers to feeling pride for you?
8. When I say pride, what is it you are thinking of?
9. Are there any circumstances in which you find yourself feeling pride more than others?
10. Could you tell me about your experience at that Pride event?
11. When was the first time that you experienced Pride?

PHASE II

12. I noticed that you did not mention shame. Does that have any connection to your feelings of pride?
13. I noticed that you did not mention activism or advocacy directly related to feelings of pride. Does that have a piece of pride in your story?
14. Does visibility of your identity have any connection to feelings of pride?
15. How do you know that it is pride that you are feeling rather than a different emotion?
16. I think building off of what you said, what version of pride feels most salient to you in regards to your identity?
17. Are there moments where you have felt both pride and another emotion at once?

EXPLANATION OF CHANGE IN QUESTIONS: This interview went back to many basic original questions to recalibrate definitions of pride.

Interview 5

1. **As you think about your identity in the LGBTQ plus community, what emotions come up for you?**
2. I am seeing the journey you are describing as you are talking about it. Could you tell me more about the emotional journey? When you were talking, I heard the complicit and stress, and then leading to this more proud/resilient state. And yeah, I wanna know more about that process.
3. Ok, you mentioned feelings of pride in relation to your journey, your ace journey with like these, this younger group of people. Is that accurate? OK, and I want to know more about this. What did it feel like, and where did those feelings come from? Like what inspired that with journey of people?

4. You talked a little bit about when these experiences of moving and losing community, and I want to know more about like if pride still, if you still felt pride when you were isolated from the community, or if it felt more.... I don't know how it felt in comparison to having it with the community. That was the least eloquent way I could have put that.
5. Yeah, feel that. In a what way is it freeing to have community?
6. And yeah, how did coming out affect pride? Did it affect pride for you? Is there a relationship between those two things?
7. We've talked a lot about pride, and I want to directly get to the root of, like, what does pride feel like?
8. What are some things that allow you to feel pride or that encourage you to feel pride?
9. I'm gonna ask you the opposite question now, which in my head is like, what are some barriers to feeling pride, if there are any?
10. Could you tell me which pride event we met at?
 - a. It was at the like Pride dance event, right?
 - b. Oh, did you go to any Pride specific events this year?
 - c. Was there any reason in particular that you didn't attend any Pride events this year?
 - d. Have you have you been to pride events in the past years?
11. I circled a word before that you said that that I like never addressed. So you mentioned in our like first couple questions the feeling of like resilience. Tell me more about that.
12. Um, when was the first time you experienced pride?
13. Does shame have any connection to pride?
14. Do current adversities that the LGBTQ community may be facing have any influence on your feelings of pride?

EXPLANATION OF CHANGE IN QUESTIONS: This interviewer disclosed that they have never been to a pride event, providing me an opportunity to increase my disentanglement of Pride the emotion, experienced outside of being prompted by pride events.

Interview 6

1. **As you think about your identity in the LGBTQ plus community, what emotions come up for you?**
2. Could you walk me through your coming out journeys a little bit?
3. So you mentioned in kind of more the beginning of your coming out journey, this need to have a digestible identity and I'd like to know a little bit more about your experience with that as in, what that was like in the moment and also how that feels now in hindsight, either reflecting on it or if it's still something you experience.
4. You mentioned the power of coming out and how that was taken from you in spaces sometimes where you would come out and they would say like, "Oh yeah, we knew that." And I want to know more about what you mean by the power of coming out. What is that power?
5. Something you mentioned kind of throughout is taking up space and I'm wondering if there are certain things that determine whether or not you are going to authentically take up space.
6. You mentioned some day-to-day feelings of excitement and happiness specifically they were in relation to being different from heteronormative standards, I want to know more about those happiness and excitement feelings too.
7. Considering your queer identity, do you feel as though you've experienced pride?

EXPLANATION OF CHANGE IN QUESTIONS: Participant 6 was more robust in their responses, causing me to decrease the number of questions asked in their interview. Their journey was more salient to them than the word pride, and so we stayed in description of that journey. Pride as resistance and resilience was given more nuance and depth through descriptions of anger and resistance from this interview. I followed the interviewee's lead on their narration of their journey for this interview as I found their organic description of emotions valuable.

Interview 7

1. **As you think about your identity in the LGBTQ plus community, what emotions come up for you?**
2. Could you describe to me your experience of passion as it relates to your identity?
3. Okay, you seem to have a connection, a powerful connection to the word lesbian. Could you tell me more about it, like, where that connection came from? And your experience of it? How does it feel to be connected to it?
4. And I am curious how, or if, the patriarchy does affect your experience of lesbianism, or how it has affected you on your journey?
5. I am feeling inclined to follow up on your coming out experience if you'd like to share.
6. What caused you to have the ability to like accept and take on the title of lesbian, or accept and take on the fact that you didn't have traditionally accepted attraction to a different gender?
7. Could you tell me about your experience of being proud of your identity?
8. Considering your queer identity, do you feel as though you have experienced pride?

9. Yeah, it seems that pride, a big part of that for you, is safety. And then another piece sounded like acceptance and also “feeling good.” And I wanna know more about what “feeling good” entails.
10. Yeah, I'm getting the “I feel the big feelings” and I wanna know what do you think drives the like big emotions that you feel?
11. When was the first time that you experienced Pride?
12. Do you feel as though you are always feeling pride towards your identity and community, or are there ever things that prevent you from feeling that?
13. I'm curious if there are other external barriers to experiencing pride.
14. Have you been to any pride events?
15. What motivates you to go to these pride events?
16. Tell me more about the feelings regarding pride month ending.

PHASE II

17. I'm curious if advocacy or activism has any connection to pride for you.

EXPLANATION OF DECISION TO END DATA COLLECTION: At this point, collection of data is providing no new core categories. Although more nuances may be developed from continued data collection, there is difficulty with recruitment of participants, possibly due to fears created by current negative visibility of the LGBTQ+ community in media, and increased targeting of LGBTQ+ individuals since the beginning of Donald Trump's presidency (HRC, 2023).

Appendix E: IRB Approval

IRB: #5770 How the LGBTQIA+ Community Conceptualizes Pride: A Qualitative Study based in Grounded Theory

Initial Approval Date: June 28th, 2024

Initial Review Type: Exempt

Approval Date post Revisions: June 4th, 2025

Review Type & Status: Exempt