The Lived Experience of 'Sexual Migration' Among Brazilian Transgender People in Ireland

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Declaration

'I declare that this thesis that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of BA (Hons) Psychology is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.'

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Abstract

Previous research highlighted that, due to the field's infancy, there was a need for research to further explore the lives of the transgender migrant cohort in Ireland. This study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of Brazilian transgender people in Ireland, whose migration was motivated by sexual identity. It sought to explore the challenges and benefits facing transgenders and their sexual migration narratives. Qualitative research was carried out with five open-ended semi-structured interviews. The data was analysed through NVivo and four themes were generated: (a) Sexual Migration, (b) Importance of Respect and Support, (c) Outcomes of Migrating, and (d) Psychosocial Stressors. Participants reported a need to escape Brazil to avoid violence due to their gender identity. A feeling of being accepted and respected in Ireland was reported. The themes generated and their implications emphasise a need for appropriate access to social integration, employment and healthcare services.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to examine existing literature surrounding the sexual migration of transgender individuals, with an emphasis on Brazilian transgender people in Ireland. Before reviewing the relevant literature, it is necessary to understand the terminology that characterises transgender individuals, who are the focus of the current study. The word transgender comes from the Latin word 'trans', meaning to cross, in this context indicating that a person crosses from one gender identity to another. The term 'transgender' is today used as an umbrella term for many different identities, referring to all those whose gender identity and gender expression are not aligned with the gender assigned to them at birth (Borden, 2015, p.1). Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female, or other (American Psychology Association, (APA) 2011, p.1).

The concept of lifelong, extensive cross-gender identification is not new to either contemporary culture or time. Throughout history, numerous descriptions from classical mythology, classical history, renaissance and nineteenth-century history, plus many sources of cultural anthropology, point to the long-standing and widespread pervasiveness of the transgender phenomenon (Denny, 2013).

The question whether gender identity is determined by nurture or nature generated great debate across different theoretical standpoints in psychology. Early scholars have shared views on the field and a number of theories have been presented since. For instance, Harry Benjamin (1966) argued that transgender people suffered from a medical rather than a psychological condition. He lent legitimacy to the feeling of being born or living in the wrong body. On the

other hand, the idea that one's gender was determined by environmental factors was proposed by Money (1978), who theorised that parents could raise a child to be whichever gender the parents wanted, regardless of the child's birth sex or core gender identity.

This field was once filled with many unethical studies involving transgender individuals and the debate around transgender still has a long way to go (Greydanus & Codde, 2018). This study, however, aims to focus on the lived experiences of Brazilian transgender immigrants currently livening in Ireland. While this review endeavours to utilise research specific to the transgender community, unfortunately there is a lack of available data in this area. Hence, studies relating to the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual) community as a whole have also been reviewed and referred to.

1.1 Constructs of Gender

The concepts of 'sex' and 'gender' have historically been linked to biology (Fausto-Sterling, 2012). Such concepts have influenced and determined a range of societal arrangements worldwide and from time immemorial. Biological sexuality determines many socially constructed concepts such as gender (Nagoshi, Brzuzy & Terrell, 2012). Children born as male are assigned gender-related roles as boys and later as men (Rubin 1975; Ristori & Steensma, 2016). These roles are now accepted as being socially constructed (Hausman, 2000). Children learn from an early age how to behave in a gender-accepted way – to use a cliché, boys are dressed in blue and play with cars while girls dress in pink and play with dolls (Garber, 2012). Later, young adolescents continue to learn their gender roles socially (Martin & Ruble, 2010).

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Despite the gains made by feminists in recent years, many mainly heteronormative gender roles still remain in place (Segal, 2015). 'Masculine' or 'feminine' traits are implied to be the norm in everyday life. However, such a People often make heteronormative assumptions about others (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009).

More recently, a study looking at mental health professionals surveyed 128 psychologists on their attitudes towards the DSM-V and concluded that the current DSM relies too much on medical semantics, overlooking the complex interaction of psychological, socio-cultural, contextual and biological factors that contribute to the diagnosis of mental illness. This is evident across the study as response rates of the survey were consistently high (Raskin & Gayle 2015). A similar approach has also claimed that a mental condition becomes a disorder only when it has an adverse impact on the ability to function and to experience the ordinary enjoyments of life (Conrad & Slodden, 2013).

Countries including France and Switzerland have reclassified GD and removed it from their list of mental disorders. The World Health Organization's (WHO) ICD-11 has recategorised transgender from being a 'Mental & Behavioural Disorder' to 'Sexual Disorders and Conditions Related to Sexual Health Disorder' (Drescher, 2017).

There is evidence to support the notion that diagnostic classification frequently intensifies stigma by increasing an overall sense of 'differentness' (Corrigan, 2016). Because of the stigma attached to the term 'disorder' the perpetuation of such a term is oppressive of transgender individuals and therefore, the DSM-V has replaced it with 'dysphoria' in the new term Gender Dysphoria (GD). In addition, research findings using a retrospective interview design clearly demonstrate a relationship between government policies and the generation of stigmas such as transphobia, social rejection and

violence towards transgender persons. In evaluating this field, the reclassification of transgender-related conditions may serve as a useful tool in the reduction of victimisation of transgender persons (Robles, Fresán, Vega-Ramírez, Cruz-Islas, 2016).

Factors such as stigmatisation and distress among transgender persons have statistically been associated with a high suicide rate (Nuttbroock, Hwahng, Bockting, Rosemblum, Mason, Macri & Becker, 2010). More recently, Ellis, Bailey & McNeil (2014), surveyed a sample of 889 transgenders in the UK, and found that the prevalence of suicidal ideation was at 84% and that this rate appeared to be considerably higher than for any other minority group, because of gender-based stigmatisation. In the search for a more accepting society,

1.2 Sexual Migration

According to the United Nations (United Nations, (UN) 2015), a migrant is defined as 'any person that changes his or her country of usual residence'. 'Sexual migration' refers to

> *... an international relocation of people which is motivated, directly or indirectly, by the sexual identity of those who migrate, including motivations connected to sexual desires and pleasures, the pursuit of romantic relations with foreign partners, the exploration of new self-definitions of sexual identity, the need to distance oneself from experiences of discrimination or oppression caused by sexual difference, or the search for greater sexual equality and rights (Carrillo, 2007).*

Within an Irish context, *Far from Home* (2018), the largest study of LGBT migrants in Ireland, surveyed 231 participants from a wide range of nationalities with the highest ethnicity being from Brazil. It identified that the most common reasons for coming to Ireland, apart from to study and work, were to find greater acceptance as a member of the LGBT community and as a way to escape from serious risks to their safety and lives in their home countries. The report also found that nearly 84% of the respondents intended to stay in Ireland (Noone, Keogh & Buggy, 2018). However, this report and the majority of the published research has only focused on the LGBT community as a whole and has not adequately examined subpopulations within that community, such as transgender immigrant, racial and ethnic groups (Graham, Berkowitz, Blum, Bockting, Bradford, Vries & Makadon, 2011).

According to the latest available Census results from 2016, approximately 622,700 immigrants reside in Ireland, with a significant portion, 13,640, coming from Brazil. However, many Brazilian people living in Ireland are registered under European nationalities such as Italian or Portuguese. Furthermore, there is a cohort of undocumented Brazilian nationals living in Ireland. Hence the true figure for the Brazilian immigrant population in Ireland is unknown (Central Statistics Office, 2016).

There is a lack of official data regarding sexual orientation and gender identity within this population. Trans experiences are not captured in the national census. McNeil, Bailey, Ellis & Regan (2013) argue that information on the size and key health indicators of any population group is critical in order to

meet that population's healthcare needs and to address health issues particular to that group.

Far from Home (2018) highlighted that, due to the infancy of research regarding transgender people, a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach is required to establish knowledge in this area. The report emphasises the need for further studies using a narrative methodology to explore the experiences of sexual minority groups such as transgender people. In accordance with this recommendations, this current study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by exploring the lived experiences of sexual migration among Brazilian transgender people in Ireland.

1.3 Challenges

The concept of what constitutes a challenge is inherently subjective , because it depends on a variety of different factors and personal attributes. For a transgender person the self-doubt surrounding their sexuality on an everyday basis can be quite challenging (Lenning, & Buist, 2013). In addition, transgender people represent one of the most marginalised groups in our society. Research published to date has consistently pointed to the numerous challenges that a transgender encounters due to a range of stresses specific to this cohort (Higgins, Doyle, Downes, Murphy, Sharek & DeVries, 2016). However, little attention has been paid to understanding immigration as one of the challenges facing this community.

It is important to note that LGBT migrants experience double marginalisation and stigmatisation as a sub-population of the migrant community, which is usually defined by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age and other factors (Burnes & Chen, 2012). Research findings clearly state that stigma towards transgender people is multiplied towards transgender migrants (Cerezo, Morales, Quintero & Rothman, 2014).

Bockting, Miner, Romine, Hamilton & Coleman (2013) argue that transgender people face systematic oppression and devaluation as a result of the social stigma surrounding their gender roles. Furthermore, in the context of transgender migrants this claim is also consistent with the research of Cerezo et., al. (2014), which suggests that many transgender immigrants, more specifically transgender persons of colour, face issues of violence and structural oppression due to their immigrant status. According to Trans Murder Monitoring (2016), a project that collects reports of homicides of transgender and gender diverse people, worldwide 61% of trans-murder victims were sex workers. In addition, the report shows that in Europe 65% of trans-murder victims were immigrants (Balzer, Lagata & Berredo 2016).

1.4 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is broadly conceived as the ability of an individual to participate fully in society (Atkinson & Marlier, 2010). However, adapting to a whole new environment can be particularly difficult for transgender immigrants. Being able to integrate into a new society as well as to be fully socially included as a transgender can be almost impossible for some (Cerezo et al., 2014). This may be because many of those individuals would depend on friends

or family from their home country or immigrant communities as their primary access to social relationships and support (Morales, 2013).

Although previous research has emphasised the importance of social integration for immigrants (Amit, 2012), some social factors such as cultural differences establish barriers which prevent them from forming social relationships with the local population (Barwick, 2017). This appears to be partially in accordance with the *Far From Home* (2018) survey in which 54% of transgender participants said that as a migrant they do not feel they are included in Irish society.

Additionally, a lack of social integration plays an important role in health outcomes among LGBT immigrants (Lee, Kim & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2019). A variety of psychological issues arise because of challenges and barriers experienced as a result of not adequately integrating in the host society. According to a cross-sectional study in the US the prevalence of depression among sexual minority immigrants is estimated at 75% and is associated with exclusion and alienation. However, in this context, this study suffered from a low statistical power, because only 16% of participants were transgender. In this instance, the sample size may not show significant difference when comes to identifying mental health burden experienced by the transgender respondents (Rhodes, Martinez, Song, Alonzo & Miller, 2013).

Along with difficulties in socially integrating, the double minority status of being both transgender and immigrant may accentuate the risk of rejection and discrimination (Burnes & Chen, 2012). More specifically, factors such as language barriers, cultural differences and racism can make it difficult for LBGT immigrants to integrate into communities (Ibañez, Van

Oss Marín, Flores, Millet, & Diaz, 2009). All those factors may have adverse psychological consequences if social supports and integration are not available (Boulden, 2009).

In addition, inclusion of LGBT migrants into the host country LGBT community and society has often not been extensive (Korten, 2019). The existing body of research emphasises that being part of a community helps to build the resilience of an individual (Riggle, Whitman, Olson, Rostosky, & Strong, 2008; Zimmerman, Darnell, Rhew, Lee, & (Riggle, Whitman, Olson, Rostosky, & Strong, 2008; Zimmerman, Darnell, Rhew, Lee, & Kaysen, 2015). Although the open-ended method adopted in those studies allowed researchers to explore the lived experience of participants and to reveal the positive aspects of belonging to a community as a LGBT person, there was no transgender person recruited for those studies as they only explored the experiences of gay men and lesbians. However, community can be presumed to be of equal importance for transgender persons.

The challenge of adapting and adjusting to a new culture entails a range of adjustment issues, particularly for sexual minority immigrants (Xu & Chi, 2012; McWhirter, Ramos & Medina, 2013). Considering that social connections are critical to the integration of a migrant population (Hynie, Crooks & Barragan, 2011), a mounting body of evidence suggests that, due to stigmatisation, most transgender immigrant individuals face enormous obstacles in integrating into mainstream society as well as into the LGBT community. For example, access to work is often refused to transgender people due to hiring policies requiring normatively gendered workers (Padilla, Rodriguez-

Madera, Varas-Dias & Ramos-Pibernus, 2016). As a result, according to a number of cross-cultural studies, participation in sex work is often more prevalent among transgender people (Padilla, Aguilla, & Parker, 2007).

1.5 Transgender issues in Brazil

According to the Brazilian National Transgender Association (Antra, 2017) the Brazilian state maintains laws that foster institutionalised oppression of transgender people. For example, there is no federal law that protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, which leaves LGBT people vulnerable to bias and without any way to take legal action against perpetrators. As a result, transgender people are still deprived of access to employment, with 90% of transgender people in Brazil engaged in sex work (Antra, 2017). It was only in 2018 that the Brazilian Supreme Court ruled that transphobia was a criminal offence, as well as allowing transgender individuals to change their name and gender on official documents without undergoing surgery.

However, Brazil's new right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro removed certain rights from the LGBT community within hours of his inauguration, which was part of a sweeping set of executive orders targeting some minority groups (Pereira, 2019). In addition, during his inauguration his newly appointed Minister for Women, Family and Human Rights declared

'Attention, attention. It's a new era in Brazil. Boys wear blue and girls wear pink', demonstrating a strong ideological commitment to traditional gender constructs.

In Brazil, the LGBT community continues to be under-supported and suffers great violence and discrimination. According to the Grupo Gay da Bahia (2016), Brazil has the World's highest annual LGBT murder rate. In addition, anti-LGBT violence more worrying for transgender people in particular. Brazil is considered the World's most dangerous country for trans people, since it has the highest rate of trans-homicide, about 16.4 percent higher than any other country, about one new victim every 48 hours (Diehl, Pillon, Caetano, Madruga, Wagstaff & Laranjeira, 2020; ANTRA, 2017).

1.6 Transgender issues in Ireland

In recent years there has been an increasing acceptance and visibility of previously unseen groups of gender-diverse people (Bouman, de Vries, & T'Sjoen, 2016). Within the Irish context, the gradual diminishing of the influence of the Catholic Church was evident in the introduction of full access to contraception in 1992 and divorce in 1995. Homosexual acts were decriminalised in 1993 and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation was outlawed in 1998 (Sherlock, 2012).

Government policy in relation to sexual minority persons in Ireland has also been developing in recent years. As a result, Ireland has undergone a complex, and sometimes rapid, process of cultural change (Todd, 2018). According to Amnesty International (2015) the sexual progressivism inherent in the passage of the Marriage Equality Referendum Act 2015 has positively influenced people across the globe. In addition, the Gender Recognition Act now enables transgender persons to achieve full legal recognition of their preferred gender (Gender Recognition Act 2015). However, according to (McNeil et al., 2013, p. 9), transgender

individuals are still among the most vulnerable members of Irish society and experience high levels of stigmatisation and marginalisation.

1.7 Current Research – Rationale

Recently, there has been an increasing number of transgender researchers publishing in the area of transgender health and wellbeing (Vaele, 2017). Galupo (2017) states that this increase in transgender related research has had a positive impact on areas such as health, education, respect, dignity and equality. Within an Irish context, it is important to note that there is limited data relating to transgender (and in general) immigrant studies in Ireland (McNeill et al., 2014). Therefore, the current research aims to explore factors that interplay with the sexual migration narratives and the lived experiences of Brazilian transgender people who migrated to Ireland, documenting some of their migration, settlement , social interaction and inclusion challenges.

Despite advances made in the legal status of members of the LGBT community in Ireland and around the world, studies regarding transgender people (Goodmark, 2013) would indicate that, for some members of the community, such gains have not impacted on their lives. Therefore, there is still a need to undertake research into their lived experiences and to establish a framework of social and health supports for them (Mot-mans, Ponnet, & De Cuypere, 2015; Muller, 2017). In the context of such limited data on the transgender community, specifically Brazilian transgender immigrants living in Ireland, this study is attempting to make a contribution to this field of research by exploring the experiences of this specific cohort.

1.8 Research questions

The three research questions developed for the current study were:

1- What are the 'sexual migration' narratives?

2- What are the benefits experienced by migrating to Ireland?

3- What are the challenges experienced by transgender persons migrating from Brazil to Ireland?

2. Method

2.1 Participants and recruitment

Participants were a purposive sample of five Brazilian transgender persons living in Ireland. Participants were recruited by using snowball sampling by asking members of the Brazilian transgender community in Ireland. The recruitment of participants for this study was not a difficult process. The researcher also used the convenience sampling technique to speak informally about the study, aiming to select participants who were willing to be part of the project. In order to take part in the study participants met the following inclusion criteria: they were all individuals who identified as the opposite sex to the one they were assigned at birth, the age range of the sample was 20-40 years, their participation was voluntary and no monetary incentive was provided in return for participation in the research.

2.2 Design

To facilitate gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Brazilian transgender immigrants in Ireland, this study employed a qualitative research design with the data collected in the form of open-ended questions. Qualitative studies are more suitable for exploring new areas of study (Clark-Carter, 2009). The data was generated through semi-structured interviews allowing the researcher to focus on the research questions while giving participants the opportunity to describe their lived experiences of migrating to Ireland as a transgender person. Key variables of interest relating to the research questions were considered by the researcher in designing the interview for the purpose of carrying out Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) these included: their lived experiences of the transgender individuals as migrants and the challenges/benefits experienced by migrating from Brazil to Ireland.

2.3 Materials

An interview guide was used to conduct semi-structured interviews. The interviews were comprised of seven open-ended questions (See Appendix C). The questions were designed to capture the lived experience of 'sexual migration' of Brazilian transgender people in Ireland using TA to generate themes on the migration experiences. Interview questions were designed based on the review of relevant literature and the gap in previous research in the area. To ensure that there was sufficient framework and some consistency in the gathering of data, questions were specific, yet open-ended to give each participant their voice in a narrative manner The interviews took place at the Dublin Business School's Psychology Lab room and at a time which was agreed upon by both participant and researcher. Interviews were conducted in the English language, which is not their mother language. The interviews were recorded using the voice app of an iPhone 7.

2.4 Procedure

2.4.1 Participant recruitment and briefing.

There was a brief introduction, introducing the researcher and explaining that the research was part of a thesis final year project for a BA in Psychology at Dublin Business School. An information form outlining the study and thanking them for their participation was provided and participants were advised of the use of their data and were given written guidelines on confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the research. Participants were then invited to provide informed consent, with the reassurance of complete anonymity, and warned of the inability to withdraw after submission due to the data being anonymous (See Appendix A). After the interviews, participants were provided with a debrief sheet including contact support in case of any distress caused by the interview (See appendix B).

2.4.2 Interviews.

As the most frequently used interview style for qualitative research is the semi structured interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013), semi-structured open-ended interviews were designed as the most suitable method. Prior to each interview, participants received a sample of the interview questions and an information sheet for consent forms and signatures. Five separate semi-structured interviews were conducted. Data collection took place between the 10th and the 27th February 2020. The duration of the interviews ranged from 20 to 30 minutes in length. Participants were encouraged to adopt an informal narrative approach in answering. Interviews were carried out in English and in order to maintain the authenticity of the data and no attempt was made to correct grammar or pronunciation when transcribing the data. In this way it remained a true record of the spoken responses given by the participants.

Each interview was transcribed verbatim onto a Microsoft Word document and saved both on the researcher's OneDrive DBS account and a computer desktop. Subsequently, all transcribed data were uploaded to NVivo 12 software and, in order to protect anonymity, each participant was given an ID number to ensure that the interview transcripts were not identifiable.

2.4.3 Thematic Data Analysis.

The current research used the six steps of TA approach as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006). As the current study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of 'sexual migration' of Brazilian transgender people in Ireland, the use of TA was appropriate because 'Thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Braun

and Clarke (2006) outline a number of decisions consisting of six steps in order to report the analysis. Once the interviews were recorded and transcribed the data was analysed and placed into thematic categories in order to select themes. Each potential theme was considered based on the 3 research question and its prevalence and relevance across the data. Themes were identified in an inductive manner and were data-oriented with a semantic level of coding. In this way themes were identified based on participants' responses as well as the 'explicitly meaning of the data' (Braun &Clarke, 2006). Themes were generated using the software NVivo. While generating code and potential theme a relist/essentialist model was adopted in line with the aim of exploring how themes might be tied together to form a cohesive story (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

2.4.4 Ethical Considerations.

Prior to conducting the study, a research proposal was approved by Dublin Business School Filter Ethics Committee. The research proposal was reviewed because of minor changes regarding the research questions. Following final approval, DBS ethical guidelines, Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI, 2010), and British Psychological Society (BPS, 2017) professional guidelines were consulted in planning and carrying out this study, including guidelines concerning ethical awareness of the dignity, anonymity, protected confidentiality and data protection of each participant. More specifically, participants were provided with information regarding the subject of the research. Issues of informed consent and the right to withdraw were also made clear to participants prior to each interview and participants were informed about the confidentiality of the interviews as well as their right to decide not to disclose certain pieces of information. They were also informed that direct quotes from their interviews may be used in the research, but they would be anonymous.

3. Results

3.1 Thematic Analysis

This study used TA as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006) to explore the sexual migration of Brazilian transgender people in Ireland. The researcher sought out this area which had been overlooked in previous studies, aiming to gain a detailed understanding of the challenges/benefits faced by transgenders, more specifically Brazilian transgender migrants in Ireland. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews ranging from 20-30 minutes, with five participants who identified as a transgender person living in Ireland. Thematic analysis was used to obtain a detailed analysis of their migration experiences. The data corpus was analysed via six different steps as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006).

Initially, the researcher became familiar with data through interviewing, listening back to, transcribing and reading the responses. Braun and Clark (2006) explains that actively reading each item and being immersed in the data corpus thoroughly is a valuable stage in TA. This first step was achieved by transcribing each interview verbatim from its audio recording to five Word documents (Participant, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), which aided in familiarisation with the data. This stage is crucial in TA as this enables the researcher in terms of delving into the lived experiences of the participants to perform the analysis and establish the reliability of codes.

Subsequently, initial codes were generated from the entire data set of interviews. This coding process was executed with the software NVivo12 Pro. In this stage the researcher reflexively generates any relevant content from the interviews that were related to the research questions. This step allows the researcher to point out potential patterns/themes from the entire data corpus. A number of codes were highlighted and the researcher reread the data to be reassured that the codes held their reliability.

3.2 Transition from codes to themes

The third step of thematic analysis follows the transitioning of initial codes generated to themes. The third step involved the categorisation of codes and patterns into themes across the five interviews. This step allowed the researcher to create a more constructed perspective of the study, conceptualising and understanding potential themes. During this step, four main initial themes were generated: Theme-1 Sexual Migration; Theme-2 Psychosocial Stressors; Theme-3 Transphobia and Acceptance; Theme-4 Positive Outcomes for Migrating to Ireland. A mind map was created with the potential themes and sub-themes in order to find meaning patterns related to the research questions (See Appendix D).

Subsequently, in the fourth step, initial themes were reviewed in order to determine if the value of the data corpus was relevant to the selected themes. Those themes were then re-examined in relation to the whole data corpus and it allowed the researcher to relocate themes and, if necessary, to review and change in order to apply any possible refinement. Ongoing analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) includes the delimiting and labelling of each theme. For this step, the researcher must be able to reflexively, throughout the data corpus, identify the uniqueness of the generated outcome, in order to confirm that generated themes do not overlap and have a singular focus. However, it is important to note that steps taken in this process of analysis were not linear as the review of themes took place over time and in different phases.

Finally, the 'producing the report'; on completion of final analysis a report was produced which includes domains of the data reflecting the research question and the previous literature on transgender immigrants.

3.3 Themes

The process of thematic analysis described above led to the generation of four overarching themes that serve to outline the lived experiences of these participants. Within each of the four themes, 11 sub-themes were generated from the main theme which can be related back to the research questions (See Fig.1).

Table 1. Summary of Themes		
Theme	Description and Subthemes	
What are the sexual migration narratives?	• Sexual Migration	• Motivations to migrate • Left difficult lives behind them in Brazil • State and society
What are the benefits experienced by moving to Ireland?	• The Importance of Respect and Support	• The importance of respect • The importance of support • Support from the LGBT community
What are the challenges experienced by transgender people migrating from Brazil to Ireland?	• Psychosocial Stressors	• Deprivation of employment • Forced entry into survival work • Difficulties in forming relationships • Social isolation • Healthcare issues in Ireland

Fig. 1 Table of themes and sub-themes.

3.3.1 Theme 1: Sexual Migration.

The first theme generated across the participants' interviews was 'Sexual Migration'. As outlined in the literature review, this term refers to the participants' motives for migrating to Ireland. Motives included the need to pursue new horizons and to create an opportunity to start somewhere where they could have freedom to express their gender identity in a sense that they weren't able to do back in Brazil, and to distance themselves from experiences of discrimination caused by state or society.

Based on these circumstances, the participants' principal motive to migrate was to search for a better life in Ireland. They described the urge to migrate to a country where they would be allowed to be themselves regardless of their chosen gender identity. They saw this as an opportunity to start a new life with dignity.

Participant 2: *'...I want to give it a try, I want to have a better life, to construct better things for my future and I knew I would not be able if I was in Brazil, because it's so difficult to get better there specially for transwoman, So yeah, that's why I decided to come to Ireland.'*

While specific reasons varied, all the participants reported that the main reason that drove their migration to Ireland was the belief that they would be able to express their gender identity.

Participant 1: *'...The main reason was to look for a perfect life, I mean not a perfect life but to improve my life because at that time when I lived in Brazil, the situation for*

trans people was very hard. It was a big hassle. It was hard so to deal with everything, you couldn't get a job you couldn't live your life you couldn't stay and I had to leave to live my life.'

Most participants reported that they left difficult lives behind them in Brazil. They highlighted that in Brazil transgender-specific issues did not allow them to feel included in society in the same way as any other member of Brazilian society.

Participant 1: '*As you don't have any legal rights of living or going and doing anything, so the main reason was to be able to be myself and to live my life to the fullest.'*

Participant 3: '*Life in Brazil can be very difficult, for jobs, for making money and for education, especially for members of the LGBT community.'*

Participant 4: '*I don't remember anything special in my life in Brazil, I don't have good memories, when I think about Brazil, I don't have good memories.'*

A common sub-theme throughout each of the five interviews was issues related to state and society in Brazil. Participants shared their stories regarding violence and discrimination at a social and institutionalised level.

Participant 3: '*There is a lot of violence and the government cannot really fix some of those issues. It's sad when you got leave somewhere you like behind because of other reasons.'*

Participant 1: '*If you find a dead body of a transgender in Brazil, it's like, it's just another body they don't look after they don't care about what happened is just a transgender.*'

3.3.2 Theme 2: The Importance of Respect and Support.

A theme which was prevalent across the data was "Respect and Support", considering that most of the participants faced serious victimisation because of their identities back in Brazil. Participants expressed views regarding the importance of having respect and support across their life span. Participants seemed to value those principles as vital factors and it was mentioned how any kind of support received had been a crucial factor for them, as it is for any other human.

More than one participant reported the importance of being respected as a transgender individual. They valued respect as part of their integrity and being disrespected played a huge part in how participants felt included in or excluded from society.

Participant 5: '*They even respect somebody who is able to kill a person but they don't respect a good person just because they are transgender or LGBT.*'

Participant 2: '*and respect people, is so important you know the because transgender people just want to be respected like any other we don't want to feel exceptional or anything, Just respect, nothing else.*'

Participants emphasised the importance of being supported as an essential part of their lives. The support that participants received from family members was reported to be

fundamental. A number of participants spoke strongly about how important it was to be able to rely on the support of family members. One participant noted struggles encountered when family support was not available. It was expressed how the lack of family support and feelings of being neglected influenced her to move abroad.

Participant 4: '*my situation there was terrible, absolutely terrible in any aspect. Things like not having the support from my family, I never had the support of my family and in Brazil.*'

The significance of family arose again, indicating how much being supported affected the participants' sense of wellbeing. The influence of family support was seen as having a major effect.

Participant 1: '*I wish all the transgenders in the world who have the support that I had from my family, that's very important, very important for your well-being as a trans woman as a human being.*'

The significance of being able to access support arose again. As participants belong to a minority group, and some of them are not in contact with their families, the importance of belonging to a community such as the LGBT was considered as their first point of access to any kind of support. Especially as a migrants the community enables them to feel included and accepted.

Participant 5: '*When comes to only being in LGBT environment, the majority of my friends are LGBT member as we have our own community because we are excluded*

sometimes from places where we can be made no welcome there and the LGBT community no everywhere of course that there is Acceptance but we feel more wanted and accepted I guess.'

Participant 4: '*The community always helped trans people when they need and I think that this was a very important part of getting help from other members when I needed.'*

3.3.3 Theme 3: Outcomes of Migrating to Ireland.

Participants described that since they migrated to Ireland they started their new lives. This was clearly demonstrated across the interviews and it reflected the advances that have occurred for the transgender community in Ireland.

Participant 4: '*I took the opportunity to live in Ireland and I see the difference between Brazil and Ireland and start real life, heaven, dignity life.'*

Participant 3: *'I really enjoyed the idea of staying in a place where I could actually be myself without any fear.'*

Participant 3: '*I knew about the legal advances for transgender people that was going on in Ireland, and I was tempted to move to somewhere like that because It's much easier then to make a fresh start in a different country when you know that at least you will be able to be you.'*

While participants believed that getting support and respect were factors that influenced many aspects of their lives, there was a strong emphasis throughout the interviews that in Ireland a feeling of being accepted and respected was successfully achieved.

Participant 3: '*My overall experience has been very positive to be honest, I think people in Ireland are really respectful, I never had any problems or negative experiences in here.*'

Participant 2: '*…their acceptance was so, so nice... In those years I've never had any problems, anything bad.*'

Ireland and its progressive legislation were reflected in how participants viewed the protection of their rights by the society they were currently living in.

Participant 5: '*…in Ireland it's very easy to like the change to name and change your gender so then it is very affirming to the transgender community that we get this validation such as the Recognition Act, that gives you extra reassurance*.'

Overall, participants had a positive perception of living in Ireland. This was described as directly impacting on their quality of life, because Ireland was considered by participants to be a more inclusive, tolerant, safe and welcoming place. Many believed that migrating to Ireland was an escape from extreme acts of transphobia in their own home country.

Participant 5: '*When I moved in here, I could see that the world was changing especially in Europe, it advances faster than in Brazil, So just by seeing that I could have a chance*

or I could have a shot of a normal life. Ireland definitely gave me a push, to be myself accept me and coming to terms with my identity

3.3.4 Theme 4: Psychosocial Stressors.

When the participants were asked about their greatest challenges, a theme that arose as expected was the hardship encountered in finding employment as a transgender. A majority of the participants found it very difficult to break into the job market.

Participant: 1 '*If you try to get a job, at the first stage when they see you but as soon as they realise that you are transgender. They just say like, Ok, I'm going to, I'm gonna check on that, and they never call you back they never given chance it doesn't matter how good professional you are.*'

It was noted that employment was easier to access before they had fully transitioned into their desired gender identity.

Participant 3: '*…I think I was luck because I got my job before transitioning and I haven't left the job since, I know that for a transgender person it is crazy to get a job, because people always tend to sexualise us just because of who we are.*'

Due to those circumstances, participants reported that they were left with no other option but to engage in survival work in order to earn an income and provide themselves with the basics.

Participant 4: '…*as a transgender sometimes you don't have many opportunities to work and make money because the way we are very excluded beings and I had to do wherever to survive.*'

Additionally, participants strongly spoke about the difficulty of forming relationships, due to their gender identity, and as a consequence facing social isolation.

Participant 2: '*It is hard to have any sort of relationship because they always stigmatise trans people as sexual things and people when they know you are a transgender they make assumption and always bad assumptions and this is very hard.*'

Participant 3: '…*because when you are a trans you feel really isolated and it's hard to trust and rely on others.*'

A subtheme which arose unexpectedly but was discussed by participants was health care issues in Ireland. They discussed the challenges of accessing healthcare due to the long waiting lists, claiming that long waiting is one of the greatest challenges facing transgender persons in Ireland.

Participant 3: '*I had to wait to get start with my treatment, I think I bit more than one year, and that was a difficult period, because you kind don't know what to do and have to wait until you start the treatment.*'

Participant 5: '*In Ireland, we still have a long way to go, especially within the health system because you have to wait over two years and that can be crucial to any teenage transgender…. it's just not acceptable that you have to wait for so long.*'

In summary, each participant shared their sexual migration experiences as transgenders. Participants discussed the motives that influenced their migration to Ireland – the hardship encountered for trans persons in Brazil such as violence and institutionalised biases. They reported the importance of being able to get support when it is needed and how beneficial it was to have migrated to a country where they felt more accepted and respected. Participants shared the positive outcomes for migrating to Ireland, and they considered Ireland tolerant and respectful towards LGBT, which was an important initial reason for migrating. Legal reassurance was noted as a positive factor that contributed to self-validation as a transgender person. However, some challenges were highlighted. Deprivation of employment and, as a consequence, their engagement in survival work was prevalent across the data. The need for more accessible and rapid healthcare services was also highlighted. A model of the themes and sub-themes can be seen in Fig. 2 below.
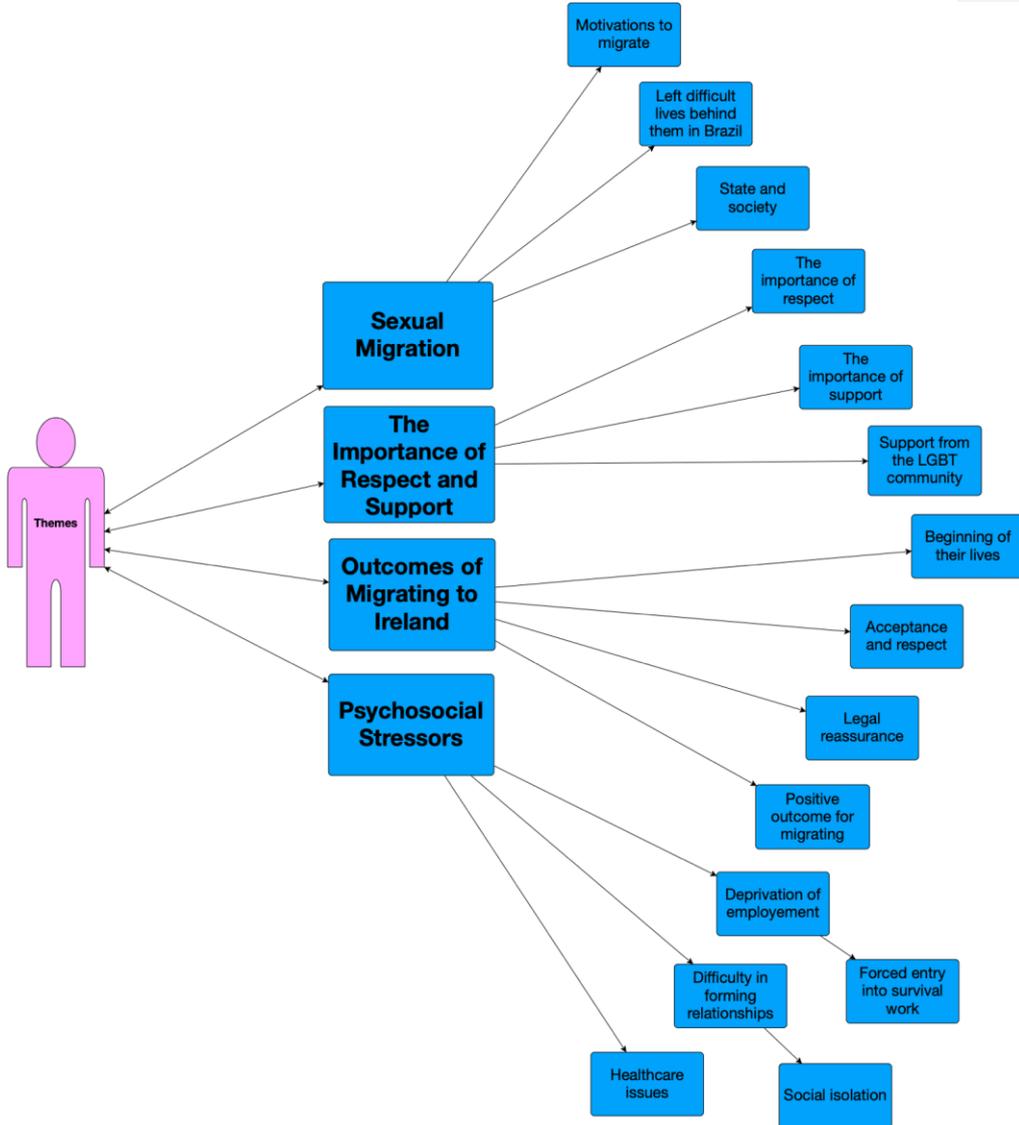
Fig. 2 Model of themes

4. Discussion

Due to the infancy of research regarding transgender migrants in Ireland, the current study looked at an area that has been overlooked, capturing the lived experiences of those particular participants. This research aimed to qualitatively explore the lives of Brazilian transgender immigrants in Ireland. Using a semi-structured interview, five participants were asked to describe the challenges and benefits experienced by their migration process as transgender individuals. It was envisioned that taking this approach may assist in identifying issues faced by this community. A thematic analysis was used to explore in depth their responses and four main themes were generated. As demonstrated by the findings, it is important to have an understanding of the inequalities experienced by those who belong to a sexual minority cohort. It was highlighted that, while participants reported to feel accepted and respected in Ireland, they experienced psychosocial stress due to lack of access to employment, issues related to social isolation and access to healthcare in Ireland

Theme 1 – Sexual Migration.

This theme captures the underlying motives that influenced the participants' migration from Brazil to Ireland. The findings demonstrate the importance of understanding those reasons because of the direct impact on their wellbeing. Participants highlighted the factors that influenced them to migrate and their gender identity was highlighted as one of the reasons. It was reported that participants used migration as a way to escape from violence and discrimination back in Brazil. Furthermore, the findings from the current study support (Noone et al., 2018) outcomes that many LGBT persons reported to have migrated to Ireland in order to escape from serious risks to their safety and lives. This may be due to such high levels of stigma towards trans people within Brazilian society. The Ideologies of state and society play

a significant role in science and the way the general public sees others. This may affect the way people behave towards transgender persons. Participants prevalently reported that very often they were exposed to violence, crimes and the lack of legal protection in their home country. This is Similar to Chavez (2011) who reported that transgenders are very often targets of violence which has an impact on their well-being. In order to recognise and protect rights of member of members of particular community the first step is to acknowledge the existence of that community and obtain information related to that community. In this instance, this research has implications for protecting those individuals' rights because transgender rights are human rights.

Theme 2 – The Importance of Respect and Support.

Considering that participants reported to have experienced serious victimisation due to their gender identity, the importance of respect was prevalent unsurprisingly across the findings. They described the need for being respected as a transgender person. Galupo (2017) stated that transgender research increases their visibility in terms of education, dignity and respect. In addition, participants in this study expressed their views regarding the support that they received from those by whom they surrounded themselves. They also stressed how the LGBT community provided them with support in many forms which directly contributed to their overall wellbeing. For transgender immigrants, there is not only the fact that they belong to a minority group but also that they are a minority within their own ethnic background and within the LGBT. This study emphasis the importance of support within the LGBT migrant community in order to overcome factors such as social isolation. This is similar to Zimmerman et al., (2015) who revealed the importance of belonging to a community as a LGBT migrant and Morales (2013) who stated that many migrants would depend on members of their own community for social relationships and support.

Theme 3 – Outcomes of migrating to Ireland.

It has been previously suggested that the most common reasons among LGBT migrants for coming to Ireland was to find greater acceptance as a member of the LGBT community (Noone et al., 2013). This is consistent with the current study as it was reported that by migrating to Ireland, participants began new lives. In addition, it was also reported how legal advances such as marriage equality and Gender Recognition Act created an overall positive perception of living in Ireland as a transgender, because having policies that support transgender rights can reduce exposure to discrimination.

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Theme 4 – Psychosocial stressors.

Participants reported to be constantly affected by psychosocial stressors due to their gender identity. It was widely discussed that as a transgender, personal, social and environmental experiences were negatively impacted. Numerous studies demonstrate that transgender persons lack access to employment, due to the fact that employers hold biased assumptions regarding gender identify. This seems to have a knock-on effect that causes those individuals to enter survival work because they have no other means of earning an income (Padilla et al,. 2015). Participants reported that very often they struggle with forming relationships, which left them feeling socially isolated. Those findings align with the outcomes found by (McNeil et al,. 2013) that transgender suffer from social isolation which has a negative impact on their mental health. This shows the need for inclusion on an equal basis for transgender people in all areas of society.

Ireland has legally advanced and improvements were made in regard to the legal status of transgender individuals. However, it is clear that Ireland is still at the beginning in relation to the whole process of dealing with issues concerned with LGBT people. In this instance, another priority reported by the participants was the difficulties related to accessing the healthcare system. Findings highlight the urgent need of implementing more efficient healthcare services – including mental health. Therefore, the findings have implications for policy makers, in order to improve these individuals' overall experiences. However, this is a theme that requires further investigation because it is beyond the scope of the study.

4.1 Strength and Limitations

Even though this was a very small study, it gives voice to the Brazilian transgender community in Ireland who have not been heard before. In addition, it line up very well with the lived experience literature. One surprising element of this research which was contrary to other studies was the ability to recruit interviewees, which was a major accomplishment for such a hard-to-reach cohort, although it was relatively straightforward as participants were very anxious to tell their stories. This points towards a cohort of people that needs further investigation and it will help to increase the visibility of transgender individuals within the migrant populations in Ireland.

However, the use of English as the medium of interview was very limiting, as some of the interviewees felt that they could not represent themselves clearly. These boundaries to the study led to a number of nice things being unsaid. In addition, this also raised questions regarding the clarity of the interview questions, because of the fact that some of the participants were limited in their ability to answer the questions. The researcher wonders what the data would have looked like if the interviews had taken place in Brazilian Portuguese.

Furthermore, this study did not record some specific sociodemographic characteristics such as education level and age. The future inclusion of a larger range of ages could enable better understanding of the needs of older transgender individuals.

Finally, when applying thematic analysis to the data, some level of subjectivity is required on the part of the researcher in order to run the analysis and this may generate bias within the outcomes. In addition, a potential bias may have been generated towards the sample because of the ethnicity and background of the researcher. However, in this instance, in order to maintain awareness of the risk, the researcher engaged in self-reflective exercises (See Appendix E).

4.2 Future Research

The current study explored in depth the lived experiences of Brazilian transgender people living in Ireland. The findings support previous research as to their lived experiences of migration, community inclusion, daily psychosocial stressors and stigma, which are common issues faced by transgender migrants. The unique experiences that LGBT migrants have, certainly for people coming from vulnerable backgrounds such as transgender people, leads researchers to focus on the negative outcomes related to this cohort which may suggest the need for future research to investigate a different perspective, perhaps viewing their lives through a more positive lens.

A vast majority of the research available on immigrants fails to considerer a more diverse framework for the field, and that includes research on the LGBT community where lesbian and gay members are usually the main focus. Further research regarding the transgender community, as they hold double minority status, should be conducted in order to explore their

potential for further development such as, for example, access, to education. In addition, when it comes to research related to immigrants, given the sensitivity of the topic and to ensure that the researcher stays true to the interviewees' voices as well as understanding the emotional meaning of their shared experiences, further studies should be conducted in the interviewees' preferred or mother language.

Overall, the literature has its main focus on transgender-specific issues, but research into policy options to benefit transgender lives is limited. For instance, in accordance with the literature, the current research found that transgenders were greatly impacted by the lack of opportunity for employment. This is an issue that should be further explored with the aim of developing interventions for the inclusion of trans persons in the workplace. In addition, the need for more efficacious health-care services for transgender persons was highlighted. A research study to better understand the specific care services that transgenders need, in order to provide appropriate health services and to improve their lives., is suggested.

4.3 Conclusion

Despite the research's limitations, this study has contributed to research on transgender individuals in an Irish context as little research has been done to date. More specifically, it offered a beginning to an understanding of the lived experiences of Brazilian transgender migrants. This piece of research draws attention to particular challenges experienced by these individuals. In Brazil they were exposed to physical and psychological harm. The importance of respect and support was highlighted. Overall, participants had a positive perception of living in Ireland as a transgender. However, policies should be put in place in order to assist them to fully integrate in society, and that means having employment opportunities and appropriate healthcare services.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information sheet and consent form

INFORMATION FORM

My name is Marcos Vinicius Barboza and I am currently undertaking a BA in Psychology at Dublin Business School. I am inviting you to take part in my research project which is concerned with exploring the lived experience of the "sexual migration" among Brazilian transgender people in Ireland. I will be exploring the views of people like yourself who migration is linked to gender identity and other factors which may have led you to move abroad.

What is Involved?
You are invited to take part in this research along with a number of other people because you have been identified as being suitable. If you agree to participate in this research, you will be invited to attend an interview with myself in a setting of your convenience, which should take no longer than one hour to complete. During this I will ask you a series of questions relating to the research question. After completion of the interview, I may request to contact you by telephone or email if I have any follow-up questions.

Anonymity
All information obtained from you during the research will be anonymous. Notes about the research and any form you may fill in will be coded and stored in a locked file. The key to the code numbers will be kept in a separate locked file. All data stored will be de-identified. Audio recordings and transcripts made of the interview will be coded by number and kept in a secure location. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any point of the study.

DECLARATION

I have read this consent form and have had time to consider whether to take part in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary (it is my choice) and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. I agree to take part in this research.

I understand that, as part of this research project, notes of my participation in the research will be made. I understand that my name will not be identified in any use of these records. I am voluntarily agreeing that any notes may be studied by the researcher for use in the research project and used in scientific publications.

Name of Participant (in block letters) _____
Signature_____

Date / /

Appendix B: Debrief Sheet

DEBRIEF SHEET

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

If you have experienced any negative emotions as a result of the questions asked in the interview, please reach out for help at any of the services below.

Researcher: ███████@mydbs.ie

Transgender Equality Network Ireland: Peer Support Groups:

http://teni.ie

Aware:

Phone: 1800 80 48 48

Email: supportmail@aware.ie

Samaritans in Ireland:

Call Freephone: 116 123

Text: 087 2 60 90 90 Email: jo@samaritans.ie

LGBT Hotline: Please call 1890 929 539 or visit www.lgbt.ie

Pieta House: Please call 1 800 247 247 or visit www.pieta.ie

Appendix C: Interview Questions

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE:

1. Can you tell me the reasons why you left Brazil to come to Ireland?

2. Can you tell me about your life in Brazil?

3. Tell me about your life in Ireland?

4. Can you tell me about your experience of the migration process?

5. What have been the challenges of living in Ireland as transgender?

6. Does the LGBTI community in Ireland play a role in your life?

7. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Appendix D: Initial Mind Map

Initial Mind Map with its 4 Themes and 17 Sub-themes.

Appendix E: Personal Reflection

As referred to in the study, I'm including a personal reflection based on my research diary.

Since I began to conceptualise which research topic would be of relevant academic interest, I also sought one that would be of personal relevance and interest. Firstly, I believe that being ethnically black and a member of the LGBT community, my interests lay towards the protection of individuals against any form of injustice and the suppression of the right to be different. Secondly, migration resonated with me, as I experienced the entire process since turning 19. The social and political impact, as well as the personal and individual impact of migration fascinates me. I also knew that some aspects of study were not too distant from my own lived experiences.

However, transgender migration is a new topic for me to dive into and explore its complexity. Yet, as a member of the LGBT community, I also feared that I might have preconceptions. I had to acknowledge this and examine my own attitudes to make sure that such preconceptions did not overpower my data. While the chosen topic is both relevant and sensitive one, I encountered a startling lack of available data, perhaps due to the social exclusion and therefore invisibility of this community. I believed that further studies of and within this community would lead to greater awareness and, in turn, hopefully to greater understanding and to recognition and protection. This is what happened to the gay community, which was not too long ago marginalised, prosecuted and classified and as mentally disordered

Regarding the interview process, it is important to note that, while gathering the data I noticed that participants took some time to feel comfortable and to trust me their stories. I knew that some of their experiences were difficult to articulate and, as a result, in some cases meetings were lasting longer than one hour. Some of their stories realty touched me. One participant said she had been told that transgenders should not be allowed in the world. It was seen by many that sex was the only thing that they had to offer, and that they could not form ordinary romantic or platonic relationships with other people.

However, I was left with admiration for the spirit and resilience of the people I encountered, and I found it quite empowering to be able to hear those stories. They did not feel recognised as fully and equally human in their country of origin. Society somehow insists on imposing a blanket definition of what is normal and, based on that, most of us tend to try to fit in with those societal norms. Those people had insisted on presenting themselves to the world in their own terms. If there is any problem with that, the problem is ours, not theirs.

This dissertation has made me develop a strong sense of empathy and I've learned also that sharing experiences, either good or bad, is a potential tool for self-understanding and healing.

MVB