

SEX AND SEXUALITY WITHIN THE FAMILY CONTEXT

Edited by R. Sooryamoorthy
and Sampson Lee Blair

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES
IN FAMILY RESEARCH

VOLUME 34

**SEX AND SEXUALITY WITHIN
THE FAMILY CONTEXT**

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN FAMILY RESEARCH

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RESEARCH VOLUME 34

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CONTEXT**

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FOREWORD

In this volume of *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research*, we have chosen the topic of *Sex and Sexuality Within the Family Context*,” due to its contemporary significance and growing relevance.

As the topic implies, the focus of the issue falls on several aspects that concern sex, sexuality, and family. Families, of any form, are undoubtedly critical for healthy sexuality (Graham Holmes et al., 2020). Sex, viewed through sexual behavior within the family, is both a social concern and a public health issue calling for attention across the world (Chikovore & Sooryamoorthy, 2023).

Sexuality, which begins at the conception stage, is shaped throughout various phases of life in both biopsychosocial organization and sexual behavior (Hegde et al., 2022). In the development phases, the family and parents are the primary providers of information about sexual life. Sexuality has, therefore, increasingly attracted more prominent features within families. The sexual behaviors of partners within families have impacts on relationship quality and family functioning. Children struggle with issues of sexual identity and sexual orientation. Parents are confronted with the challenges of dealing with the sex and sexuality of their children in the stages of physical, emotional, and psychological development of their children. Family is considered an institution engaged in the production of sexuality, and parents have a crucial role in shaping the sexuality of their children (Stacey, 2021). Taylor and Neppi (2023) show us the role of the family and sexuality on sexual identity development. This volume is intended to fill that gap to a certain extent and to make the topic alive in the minds of readers and researchers.

Sexuality is a complex phenomenon which demands in-depth understanding (Hegde et al., 2022). Sexuality as a variable is composed of sexual activity, sexual orientation, and sexual identity (Ridner et al., 2007). Foucault was keen to study sexuality, as he entered the domain of modern sociological descriptions of the instincts that stimulate sexual behaviors and viewed it as a global phenomenon (Downham Moore & Elden, 2023).

As Conley and Klein (2022) distinguish, sex and sexuality have different meanings. This is not just about physical experiences but refers to the totality of how women and men experience their sexual selves. That is why sexuality tends to differ across genders. Theoretical advancement in this area has been beneficial in explaining family, gender, and sexuality. Mize and Manago (2018) have elaborated on how men and women are treated differently for the same sexual behavior. As Lamba (2022) noted, social structures of gender, caste, and class influence women’s decision-making regarding their intimate relationships, relationships, partners, and marriage. Sexuality should be treated in the cultural contexts as well. It is best understood that way, acknowledging its impact on sexuality. Sexuality, as Conley and Klein (2022) stress, includes how others perceive others

as sexual beings, how individuals get to know about sex, and how they physically and psychically explore desire and pleasure, either alone or with others. Specific areas of sexuality, such as sexual violence, have received increasing attention, which originated as part of the movement against women (Schmidt et al., 2023).

Wyn et al. (2012) reported how important it is to recognize the importance of family relationships in the lives of adults. The quality of family relationships affects young people's sense of connection to society, their perception and capacity to have a say in decisions affecting their lives, and their view of society (Wyn et al., 2012). The effect of family relationship quality on sexual activity is seemingly connected (Caruthers et al., 2014). Better communication channels within the family are expected to protect adolescents from risky sexual behavior. Grossman and Richer (2022), based on their study, think that parents' persistence and patience contribute to children's shifting responses to family communication and opportunities to connect with teens about sex and relationships. Within the family, parenting styles, parental attitudes toward sexuality, and family environment influence the development of an individual's sexuality (Hegde et al., 2022).

We speak about partnered sexuality, an aspect of sexuality that falls within the realm of families. Partnered sexuality is viewed as a fundamental type of social relationship that has been neglected. The longitudinal study by Liu et al. (2016) provides evidence to support the perception that partnered sex of good quality positively affects health. It can promote cardiovascular health and reduce the risks of hypertension.

Recent developments through research in this area have brought to light several unknown dimensions of sex and sexuality. Busby et al. (2020) explored the association between attachment patterns of individuals, committed or casual sexual partners, and relationship status. Research on sex and sexuality has also engaged in studying how health is related to them (Tucker, 2024). This has consequences not only for the academic understanding of these concepts but also for the practical considerations, particularly within different forms of families.

Farmer et al. (2025), focusing on a significant aspect of sexuality, find that sexuality has a role in the experience, internalization, and psychological impact of sexual victimization of survivors. Sexual harassment involving unwanted sexual advances and coercive requests for sexual favors can have a psychological impact on individuals. The latest comprehensive review of sexuality in China from ancient to modern times by Yu et al. (2022) centered on the role of sexuality in the family suggests that the Chinese have become more liberal in their sexual attitudes and behaviors. This indicates a change in their sexual ideology. While they still hold the traditional standards of sexuality and show intolerance toward extramarital relationships, there is a sexual revolution at the moment that departs from the past.

Killoren et al. (2019) make us aware of another dimension of sexuality disclosing to family members such as mothers and sisters or even partners. Sexuality is associated with romantic relationship intimacy, sexual attitudes, and sexual intentions. Ophir et al. (2023) tell us that family trajectories become less diverse among sexual minorities of lesbian women and bisexual men.

Methodological developments using visual methods add to the study of family and sexuality research and facilitate more profound levels of reflection upon broader familial and social ties outside the frame of the images of the participants and beyond the individual or couple (Lo, 2024). Bahner and Lindroth (2023) advise us that when conducting qualitative interviews about sexuality with participants belonging to marginalized sections, the researcher should be prepared to share sexuality-related knowledge or support the participants seek. This is important from the ethical perspective of the research. Such an approach, in the view of Bahner and Lindroth (2023), can add therapeutic value to those participants whose sexual needs have been ignored or denied in the past. Hicks (2008) presents different models of sexuality within discriminatory practice theory. We are getting to know about newer dimensions and trends in the areas of sex and sexuality through studies such as these.

In this volume, we have a range of topics related to the broader theme of the volume that authors from different parts of the world write. The issues of sex, sexuality, and family in this volume are related to sexual minorities, premarital fertility, parenting, parental responsibilities, sexual autonomy, contraception, sterilization, adoption, toxic masculinity, sexual health, sex education, taboos of sexuality, and others.

The chapter titled “‘Til Death Do Us Part ... or Not, I Really Don’t Care: A Thematic Analysis of Sexual Minority Transgender Young Adults’ Marital Aspirations,” authored by Aaron Hoy, Maddie Kowalczyk, and Ryuto Hashimoto, is based on a qualitative study of sexual minority adults in the United States, namely, transgender adults and their marital attitudes and aspirations.

Michel Garenne’s chapter, “Premarital Fertility and Household Structures in South Africa,” presents premarital fertility in South Africa. The analysis of quantitative data shows that premarital fertility is associated with living arrangements.

Emily Fitzgibbons Shafer, Paula England, and Anne Kathleen Johnson (“Views of Adolescent Sex and Parental Responsibility: Do Religiously Conservative Christians and Trump Voters Have a Distinctive View?”) investigate the influence of religious and political orientations on the sexual behavior of adolescents.

Toxic identity poses a barrier to gender equality, and it has consequences. In “The Great Divide of Sex and Politics: Exploring Toxic Masculinity in Generation Z Undergraduates,” Ioana Podarita and Christina L. Scott go into the demographic factors that facilitate toxic masculinity among adults.

Tanya Lamba and Lakshmi Lingam in the chapter, “From Constraints to Choices: The Evolving Intimacies of Indian Women,” discuss the conceptualization and experience of intimate relationships in the cultural, social, and economic contexts.

Husna Latheef’s research is set in Kerala (India). In the chapter, “Prioritizing Tubectomy Over Vasectomy: Analyzing the Sexist Barrier Blocks on Women’s Choice to Be Sterilized,” Latheef wants to see the socio-political and religious matters that influence the choice of women to opt for tubectomy and vasectomy by conducting a qualitative study.

Drawing on a set of qualitative studies from Ireland, Elizabeth Nixon, Conn Dorai-Raj, Anna McInerney, Mary E. Keegan, and Mary Creaner examine the

identities of gay and lesbian parents, in their chapter “Parenting in Legal Limbo: Parenting Identity Among Gay and Lesbian Parents in Ireland.” We have another chapter on parenting. The research presented in “Parenting Beyond the Binary: Ethnopsychological Analysis of the Challenges and Support Needs of Parents in Italy” by Antonio Iudici, Gloria Orczyk, and Jessica Neri was necessitated by the lack of awareness and resources regarding the needs of transgender and gender-variant minors in Italy.

Angela M. Kaufman-Parks, Monica A. Longmore, Wendy D. Manning, and Peggy C. Giordano, in their chapter, “The Long-term Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on Lifetime Risk for Sexually Transmitted Infections,” assess the relationship between adverse early life experience and sexual health among adolescents.

Zimbabwe is known for its sexual silence. Social media is breaking these silences on issues related to sex education. “From the Home to the Publics: Religion, Social Media, and Sex Education,” a chapter by Hardlife Stephen Basure and Vivian Besem Ojong, explores sex education in publicly available sermon snippets from popular preachers in Zimbabwe.

Another one is from Zimbabwe. The chapter “‘No One Suspects I Am Gay’ – People of Different Sexual Orientation’s Survival Mechanisms for Identity Management in Zimbabwe” takes us to Zimbabwe, where homosexuality is a crime. Gabi Mkhize and Liberty T. Mambondiani investigate the survival mechanisms used by gay individuals in homophobic, heterosexist, and hetero-cis-normative-infested spaces in Zimbabwe.

A critical review by Gokhan Savas (“A Critical Review of Sexuality and Cultural Taboos in Türkiye”) presents the cultural taboos of sexuality in Turkey that take into account the historical, religious, and socio-cultural forces that determine gender norms, family control, and individual autonomy.

Iraklis Grigoropoulos’ interest is adoption by same-sex couples (“Beyond Blood and Legal Ties: The Impact of Dominant Conservative Socializing Agents on Attitudes Toward Adoption by Same-Sex Couples”). In a cross-sectional study, Grigoropoulos is curious to know whether individual-level differences in religiosity and political preferences have any discriminative power in adoption.

We have a range of interesting chapters in this volume, and we hope readers will enjoy studying them, which can open new doors for further research. Our sincere gratitude goes to the authors, peer reviewers, and the Emerald staff who helped to bring out this timely volume on time.

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CHAPTER 1

‘TIL DEATH DO US PART ... OR NOT, I REALLY DON'T CARE: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL MINORITY TRANSGENDER YOUNG ADULTS' MARITAL ASPIRATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Although young adults in the United States increasingly delay entry into marriage until later ages, studies suggest that most still want to marry and even further that marriage is an important life goal for most. However, research is needed that examines the marital attitudes and aspirations of sexual and gender minority young adults, who have thus far been overlooked in the empirical literature. To address this, in this chapter, we draw primarily upon qualitative data from a mixed-methods survey of sexual minority young adults, focusing specifically on data provided by a subsample of transgender young adults (n = 48). The results of our thematic analysis suggest that although a slight majority do report wanting to marry someday, the transgender respondents in our sample are largely indifferent toward marriage. Some did describe circumstances under which they would feel compelled to marry, including if their partner desired marriage or they needed financial/legal benefits associated with

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marriage. However, many respondents described marriage as unnecessary, for themselves, for a relationship, and/or for society. Finally, respondents cited several significant influences on their attitudes toward marriage, including norms or values from family and queer community.

Keywords: Marriage; marital aspirations; LGBTQ+; transgender; young adulthood; online survey

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, sexual and gender minorities have gained historically unprecedented access to the institution of legal marriage all over the world. In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to recognize marriages between two people of the same sex, while in the United States, marriage equality was first achieved in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 2004 (Crary & Corder, 2021). In 2015, national marriage equality was achieved in the United States as a result of the Supreme Court's *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). Despite recent concern that marriage equality may be in legal peril, a significant number of sexual and gender minorities in the United States today have exercised their legal right to marriage. Looking at sexual minorities specifically, according to the Census Bureau, there are approximately 710,000 married same-sex couples in the United States today, making up 59% of all households headed by a same-sex couple (Scherer, 2022). At the individual level, approximately 10% of all adults who identify as a sexual minority are currently married to a same-sex spouse (Jones, 2022). Looking at transgender Americans, because very few population-representative studies have measured gender identity until quite recently, estimates of the share of transgender people who are currently married are mostly based on smaller, non-representative samples and thus vary widely. For example, whereas Dawson et al. (2023) report that approximately 26% of adults who identify as transgender are currently married, London (2022) estimates that 37.5% are currently married.

Following the achievement of marriage equality, researchers have begun to examine marriages among sexual and gender minorities and the role these relationships play in their lives and well-being (e.g., Hoy, 2022; Kimport, 2014; London, 2022; Richman, 2014). However, the marital attitudes and aspirations of sexual and gender minorities, especially those in young adulthood, have been relatively under-studied. To be sure, there is a robust body of research on marital attitudes and aspirations among the general population of young adults given ongoing anxieties about a so-called retreat from marriage, especially among those between the ages of 18 and 35 (e.g., Allred, 2019; Crissey, 2005; Manning et al., 2007, 2019). With few exceptions, however, this research focuses exclusively (if often implicitly) on those who identify as heterosexual and cisgender. As a result, researchers still know very little about whether sexual and gender minority young adults want to marry, why or why not, and how they feel about the institution of marriage more broadly. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to explore

the marital aspirations of young adults who identify as both sexual and gender minorities. To do this, we draw primarily on qualitative data from a mixed-methods survey completed by a convenient sample of sexual minority young adults, focusing exclusively on data provided by the subsample of 48 respondents who identify as transgender. The results we present below are based on a thematic analysis of written responses to open-ended survey questions that asked about their personal desire to marry or not and their general attitudes toward the institution of marriage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual and Gender Minority Marriages

Following the nationwide legalization of marriage equality in the United States, considerable research has been conducted on sexual and gender minority marriages, with nearly all of it focusing specifically on cisgender sexual minorities or otherwise overlooking gender identity. For example, research has consistently found that sexual minorities, especially those who identify as gay or lesbian, choose to marry for many different reasons, including love, legal rights or benefits, and equal recognition for their relationship (Kimport, 2014; Richman, 2014). Upon getting married, research suggests that sexual minorities tend to experience improved psychological well-being, including greater feelings of acceptance and belonging within society (e.g., Green, 2010; Kimport, 2014; LeBlanc et al., 2018). Furthermore, married same-sex couples often report that getting married changes their relationship, with many noting a deepened sense of commitment to their partner (Green, 2010; Hoy, 2023). Importantly, many researchers have theorized that the apparent benefits of marriage for sexual minorities stem from the cultural construction of marriage as a symbol of normativity and respectability (see DiGregorio, 2022; Kimport, 2014; Ocobock, 2013).

With respect to transgender people's experiences with marriage, research is far more limited and inconclusive, and many basic questions still do not have clear answers. For example, as we note above, estimates vary widely on the share of transgender adults who are currently married, and likewise, research has yet to establish that transgender people are less likely than their cisgender counterparts to marry over the life course (see Lagos, 2018; London, 2022). Still, one of the most extensively researched topics regarding transgender people's experiences with marriage is how gender-affirming care impacts their relationships (e.g., Marshall et al., 2020; Platt & Bolland, 2018; Smithee & Few-Demo, 2023). Research indicates that although separation and divorce do occur, cisgender partners often continue relationships with transgender partners who undergo gender transitions (London, 2022). Nevertheless, transgender individuals are often advised to seek divorce before receiving transition-related surgeries (Amand et al., 2013; Meier & Labuski, 2013). Furthermore, partners of transgender individuals report facing challenges such as physical, sexual, and emotional intimacy issues, changing sexual orientation labels, safety concerns, and marginalization (Platt & Bolland, 2018). In contrast, for married transgender people themselves,

marriage is associated with lower levels of perceived discrimination, especially among transgender women (Liu & Wilkinson, 2017).

Young Adults' Marital Aspirations

Although research specifically focused on sexual and/or gender minorities is relatively sparse, a substantial body of literature exists on the marital aspirations and expectations of the general population of young adults in the United States (e.g., Allred, 2019; Crissey, 2005; Manning et al., 2007, 2019). While the average age at first marriage continues to rise, 69% of young adults aged 18–29 still express a desire to marry at some point in their lives (Taylor, 2010). Despite concerns that young adults are increasingly turning away from marriage (e.g., Collins, 2021), the consistency of these numbers with those reported since the 1970s indicates that marital aspirations or expectations have remained relatively stable among young adults over several decades (Allred, 2019; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). Furthermore, young adults are reported to value marriage slightly more than other life goals, such as parenting or career success (Willoughby et al., 2015).

Importantly, though, marital aspirations differ across various demographic factors (e.g., Gassanov et al., 2008; Willoughby et al., 2015). Existing research highlights several sociodemographic factors influencing young adults' desire or expectation to marry, including race/ethnicity (Crissey, 2005), gender (Crissey, 2005; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001), socioeconomic status measured by education (Manning et al., 2007), religion (Ellison et al., 2011; Manning et al., 2007, 2019), and parents' marital status (Manning et al., 2007). Particularly, the impact of the parental family formation on young adults is commonly discussed within the literature, as young adults often model their parents' family formation behaviors. For example, if their parents experienced divorce, stepparenting, or single parenthood, young adults are more likely to devalue the institution of marriage and exhibit unstable marital behaviors in their own relationships (Axinn & Thornton, 1996; Kapinus, 2005; Miles & Servaty-Seib, 2010). With divorce specifically, some young adults whose parents divorced internalize their negative experiences with marriage and later report fearing divorce themselves (Willoughby et al., 2020). Still, there is a notable scarcity of research on sexual and/or gender identity and the role these identities may play in shaping young adults' marital attitudes and aspirations (Hoy, 2024; London, 2022). The current study, as far as we know, is the first empirical attempt to understand marital aspirations among young adults who identify as both sexual and gender minorities.

Sexual and Gender Minority Young Adults' Marital Attitudes and Aspirations

To date, only a handful of studies have been conducted on the marital attitudes of sexual or gender minority young adults, and as we note above, none of these look at young adults who are both sexual and gender minorities. Instead, the few studies that exist focus on either sexual or gender minorities, with most focusing on the former. For example, in one study, Hoy (2024) shows that among a convenient sample of unmarried sexual minority young adults in the United States, most report wanting to marry, even as many claimed that getting married is not a

significant life goal. Although Hoy's (2024) sample contained several transgender and/or non-binary young adults, gender identity was not the focus of the analysis. In addition, Hoy and Pokhrel (2024) report that sexual minority young adults tend to think about marital timing in terms of "checkpoints" or preconditions they would need to meet in order to feel ready to marry, including completing a college degree and achieving financial security and/or emotional maturity. Hoy et al. (2021) also show that sexual minority young adults, including those who want to marry, tend to approve of divorce, with many claiming that they would be quite willing to pursue a divorce from their own spouse under a broad range of circumstances. Again, though, both of these studies focus on sexual minority young adults specifically and make no mention of the role of gender identity.

Not surprisingly, very few studies to date have examined the marital attitudes or aspirations of transgender young adults. This is despite the fact that research documents the importance of romantic relationships for transgender young people both before and during social or medical transitions (Araya et al., 2021). Research done by Campbell et al. (2023) looks at how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the marital aspirations of both transgender and cisgender individuals. The authors report that transgender individuals in particular perceived greater importance in marriage as a result of the pandemic, which they argue may have heightened the need for romantic relationships among transgender people more than cisgender people due to the additional stress layers transgender people face (Campbell et al., 2023).

To the best of our knowledge, a 2022 study by Godfrey et al. is the only study to have examined the marital aspirations of youth who identify as both sexual and gender minorities. Among the female-to-male transgender individuals they surveyed, Godfrey et al. (2022) report that most consider long-term committed relationships important; however, only about half have strong aspirations to marry. Those who value marriage do perceive these goals as achievable. Finally, based on existing research and theories, Godfrey et al. (2022) hypothesize that several contextual factors may be associated with family formation aspirations among sexual and gender minority youth, including minority stressors (see also Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003), involvement in sexual/gender minority communities (see Haldeman, 2007), perceived partner availability (see Savin-Williams & Cohen, 2015), and relationship experience (see D'Augelli et al., 2007; Manning et al., 2007). Importantly, though, their study is limited to adolescents aged 16–20 who were assigned female at birth, and the variables tested in this quantitative study were designed based on relationship theories and concepts that generally focus on adolescents or at best gay and lesbian populations who are not transgender (i.e., cisgender).

As this brief discussion illustrates, the research literature lacks a detailed qualitative description of marital aspirations among transgender young adults, and given the ways sexual and gender identity have been siloed in what limited research does exist, we focus here on young adults who identify as both sexual and gender minorities. Our study aims to address the following question: How do transgender young adults who are non-heterosexual think about and plan for marriage within the context of their own lives? Specifically, our study is based on

a thematic analysis of written responses to open-ended survey questions provided by a convenience sample of 48 transgender young adults, all of whom identify as a sexual minority.

METHODS

Study Design and Data Collection

Given the nature of our research question, we chose a qualitative design for this study since qualitative methodologies are most appropriate for understanding how individuals think about and make sense of complex phenomena like marriage (e.g., [Denzin et al., 2023](#)). Specifically, the data for this study come from a larger mixed-methods survey, administered online via Qualtrics, on the marital attitudes and aspirations of sexual minority young adults; the qualitative data we analyzed for the current study come primarily from open-ended questions that prompted respondents to provide written responses. Although surveys are closely associated with quantitative approaches, we opted for a survey in part because the method provides participants greater confidentiality than in-depth interviews, for example, which is especially important when working with a marginalized population ([Sue & Ritter, 2012](#)). For this reason, survey data are commonly used in research on sexual and gender minorities, including for qualitative analyses (e.g., [Hoy et al., 2021](#); [Jowett & Peel, 2009](#); [Peel, 2010](#)). In addition, we chose this method of data collection partly due to its affordability and efficiency, although we also acknowledge that online surveys can sometimes encounter problems with respondent misreporting ([Braun et al., 2021](#); [Sue & Ritter, 2022](#)).

To be eligible to complete our survey, individuals had to be (1) unmarried, (2) between the ages of 18 and 35, (3) a sexual minority, and (4) a resident of the United States at the time of survey completion. The survey included a total of 93 questions, comprising 86 closed-ended questions and 7 open-ended questions. The questions were organized into the following modules: “Marital Beliefs,” where respondents answered questions about their global attitudes toward marriage as a social institution; “Marital Aspirations,” which asked about respondents’ desire to marry; “Your Own Marriage,” which included questions about respondents’ ideas and preferences regarding marital relationships and dynamics; “Demographic Information,” which asked about common sociodemographic, including both sexual and gender identity; and “Open-Ended Questions,” where respondents were able to write freely in response to questions about their marital attitudes and aspirations.

Most of the questions in the first three modules were statements with which respondents could register their level of agreement using a five-item Likert scale: “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Neither Agree nor Disagree,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.” Although we draw on these data to provide context for our findings below, our thematic analysis below draws primarily from the open-ended questions in the final module, which asked about the following: (1) marital aspirations (i.e., whether the respondent wants to marry and why); (2) marital importance (i.e., whether they see getting married as an important life goal);

(3) marital timing (i.e., when they would like to marry, if at all); (4) perceived qualities of a “good” marriage (i.e., characteristics of what they consider an ideal marital relationship); (5) marriages they admire (i.e., marriages within their family or extended network that they see as admirable and why); (6) attitudes toward divorce (i.e., whether they approve of divorce or would be willing to get a divorce themselves); and (7) perceived influences on marital attitudes (i.e., who or what respondents believe shaped their views on marriage).

After ethics approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Minnesota State University, Mankato, the survey was administered via Qualtrics from February to April 2021. Participants were recruited using convenient sampling techniques, with a primary focus on social media platforms to reach a diverse group of respondents. Specifically, recruitment flyers were posted to multiple Facebook groups, most of which catered to sexual minority users, and the same flyers were distributed via Twitter (now X) using multiple hashtags such as #LGBTQ and #queer. Individuals who saw these flyers and were interested in participating could click or tap a link to the survey, where they were first directed to the informed consent page for the study. To solicit participation and to thank respondents for their time, upon completion of the survey, respondents had the option of entering their email address to enter a random drawing for one of 21 Amazon gift cards worth \$50 each.

Sample Description

In total, 256 sexual minority young adults completed the survey. However, for this thematic analysis, we draw only on the data provided by our subsample of transgender respondents. In the “Demographic Information” module, respondents were asked the following question regarding gender identity: “Transgender is an umbrella term that refers to people whose gender identity, expression, or behavior is different from those typically associated with their sex assigned at birth. Do you identify as transgender?” Our final sample for this analysis is composed of the 48 respondents who answered “Yes” to this question; the remaining 208 respondents, all of whom indicated that they identify as cisgender, were excluded from this study.

Of the 48 young adults in our transgender subsample, over half (26 or 54.2%) identify as non-binary/third gender, whereas 9, or 18.8%, are transgender men, and 6, or 12.5%, are transgender women. Notably, seven respondents, or 14.6%, chose to self-describe their gender, with “genderqueer” and “genderfluid” being the most common identities provided. In terms of sexual orientation, 21 respondents, or 43.8%, of the sample, again chose to self-describe. Here, “queer” was by far the most common identity listed, followed by “pansexual” and “asexual.” In addition, 19 respondents, or 39.6%, indicated that they identify as bisexual, and another 8, or 16.7%, are gay or lesbian. With respect to age, the average age of the respondents in our transgender subsample is 26.6. Finally, in terms of education, our transgender respondents are disproportionately well educated, with only a few having never attended college. Specifically, 4, or 8.3%, reported that their highest level of education completed is high school or a General Educational Development (GED), and another 13, or 27.1%, have completed some college or

an associate's degree. However, 16, or one-third, have a bachelor's degree, and 15, or 31.3%, have a graduate degree of some kind.

Data Analysis

Although we do report a small number of descriptive statistics from our subsample of transgender respondents in the results below, these are simply meant to provide context for the qualitative findings of our thematic analysis. The qualitative data from the open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step process outlined by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#), each of which was followed by analytic memo-writing for reflection and synthesis. Our approach to thematic analysis is consistent with what [Morgan \(2022\)](#) terms a "reflexive thematic analysis," which is a "fully qualitative" approach that is primarily inductive and sees themes as "shared meaning-based patterns" (p. 2081). As such, we did not create or rely on a codebook for our thematic analysis, although our use of analytic memos served a similar function during later rounds of coding, nor did we track discrepancies in our coding. Instead, we resolved interpretive differences through dialogue during regular research team meetings.

To begin, we created the data files by exporting the written responses to each of the seven open-ended questions from Qualtrics, pulling only those responses provided by respondents who identify as transgender. Then, the first step in our analysis process was to become familiar with the data ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)). We immersed ourselves in the data by reading and re-reading the full set of responses provided for each question, and after doing so, we wrote analytic memos to note our initial impressions of the data. Our next step involved initial coding, where we inductively generated codes to summarize each response (336 in total). After writing additional memos to document similarities in the meaning of these initial codes, we then generated preliminary themes by grouping these codes into thematic categories. Next, we used these preliminary themes as focused codes, which we used to code the full data set a second time. During this step, we collated the data by creating separate data files for each of the preliminary themes, and we noted variations and complexity within each theme through additional analytic memos. Doing so allowed us to refine our themes, which we narrate below.

RESULTS

Marital Aspirations and Motivations

Of the 48 respondents in our sample who identify as transgender, a slight majority reported that they do hope to marry at some point in their lives. In response to a closed-ended survey question that asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statement "I would like to get married someday," 57% of the transgender subsample (27) said that they either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree." In contrast, only 23% (11) said that they "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree," with another 21% (10) saying that they "Neither Agree nor Disagree." Thus, most of the transgender young adults we surveyed either want to get married or remain open to considering marriage in the future.