Thriving connections:

Bringing awareness to the Dyslexic experience of self and others

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Debate exists about whether one should use the label of Dyslexic or a person with dyslexia. However, as a Dyslexic person, I prefer to classify myself as Dyslexic as it is through my dyslexic brain that I process everything around me, not only language. I recognize that our identities exist with the combination of various aspects of one's biology, experiences, beliefs, relationships, education, values and innate strengths, however it is our processing style that influences all these aspects. I mean no harm to those who have differing opinions from me about how to use these terms and to be conscientious of my word count along with showcasing the difference of the word's meaning, I will capitalize the term Dyslexic when writing about the individual and use lowercase when referring to the condition.

Abstract

Dyslexics have been shown to have higher rates of suicide idealization, mental health issues, lower levels of self-concept and have historically been researched through a psycho-educational perspective. They are commonly linked to other neurodiverse populations and regularly have these traits misattributed to them, creating the question of what it means to be just Dyslexic in society and within oneself. Using the research methodology of interpretative phenomenological analysis, adult female Dyslexics (n=4) were asked a series of semi-structured questions to explore how adult dyslexics perceive their social interactions and self-identity within their communities. Research findings through the positive psychology second-wave perspective showed that social interactions were safe or unsafe and that there are Dyslexic personas of hidden, socially described and empowered. Obtaining an understanding of the dyslexic experience and identities allows for a more advantageous understanding for professionals when the focus is on raising this demographic's well-being.

Keywords: Dyslexia, social interactions, self-identity, positive psychology, resilience, meaning & mattering

1. Introduction

Despite dyslexia being considered a reading issue and commonly researched within educational institutional settings (Donolato et al., 2024), motherhood (Skinner, 2013), post-secondary education (Gibby-Leversuch et al., 2021), workplace arenas (Asghar et al., 2019), and within positive psychology interventions (Stampoltzis et al., 2023; Hisham et al., 2024), it is more holistically a different way of processing of information. Dyslexic research is highly situated around children, even though dyslexia will impact the individual for the breadth of their life (Frith, 2013; Garner, 2021). Historical studies bring about aspects of how dyslexia influences and affects an individual, yet what is lacking is the exploration of what it means to be dyslexic and how these moments contribute to the perception of mattering.

Mattering is a fundamental need (Flett, 2022) and is contingent on the internal evaluation of one's life experiences and how they are perceived. The importance of mattering extends to its influencing factors on social connection, interpersonal relationships (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981), intrapersonal relationships, societal impacts and is associated with increased levels of mental health (Jung, 2015). Prilleltensky (2014) stated that phenomenologically mattering equates to an emotional connection that one is personally recognized and capable of instilling impact. The study of mattering is becoming a focus for those who have disabilities, which could be extended to dyslexia. Mattering occurs when individual's verbal expression is received to have meaning and is acknowledged with respect and dignity, while impact occurs when the individual feels they have the agency to make a difference (Prilleltensky, 2014). Both aspects of mattering bring a depth to how adult female dyslexic individuals perceive their social interactions and their concept of self.

Positive Psychology (PP) and the approach of what allows for a good life is regularly attributed to Diener and Seligman (2002), who shared that authentic happiness consists of a pleasant life, a good life, and a meaningful life. However, Wong (2011) shared that a more balanced psychological well-being approach was needed, and he pioneered the second wave of PP or PP 2.0. PP 2.0 differs as it acknowledges both the negative and positives aspects of human experiences rather than just what is good (Wong, 2019). PP 2.0 focuses on the optimal level of well-being regardless of life's challenges and is an essential approach with the study of dyslexia. PP 2.0 approach is essential as no matter what optimal level of well-being is achieved the dyslexic's challenges, due to their processing style, are forever apparent. Using the research lens of PP 2.0 adult female dyslexic challenges and abilities can be explored to uncover their perceptions of social interactions and self-concept, as they are six times more likely to attempt suicide (Alexander-Passe, 2015) and are a historically under researched demographic (Rechlin et al., 2022).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Positive Psychology

The foundations of PP began with the focus around what makes a good life (Diener & Seligman, 2002) and later expanded to include many other PP waves or approaches. The second wave of PP (PP 2.0) was to bring about a more balanced view towards PP and did so with the introduction of an existential focus (Wong, 2019) of how individuals recovered from difficult experiences (Wong, 2020). PP 2.0 has evolved further to include the development of a resilient mind (Arslan & Wong, 2024), which could extend to how individuals perceive themselves. PP 2.0 highlights that by acquiring a resilient mindset, the individual moves past their experiences and evolves into accepting one's challenges and abilities (Arslan & Wong, 2024). In addition to

PP 2.0, the third PP wave focuses on unresearched demographics (Wissing, 2022), and the fourth wave focusing on existential/spiritualism and meaning making (Peteet, 2018). However, both waves stem from PP 2.0 and its recognition of the dichotomy of life experiences along with the development of the resilient mind. Through the PP waves, the dyslexic social experiences and development of self-concept have yet to be researched.

2.2 What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is known by numerous names, such as word blindness (Morgan, 1896), mental retardation, intellectual disability, learning disability (Gillberg & Soderstrom, 2003; Cluley, 2018), a specific learning difference (Asghar et al., 2019), and incorrectly as a disease (Iqbal et al., 2023). When dyslexia's meaning is reduced to spelling and reading issues, both acquired (result from brain injury) and developmental dyslexia can be discussed. Developmental dyslexia (now referred as dyslexia) is due to different neurologically based (Garner, 2021; Palser et al., 2021) brain organization (Caverzasi et al., 2018). Dyslexia is linked to nine potential chromosomal regions (Schumacher et al., 2007; Zaki et al., 2024), has a genetic hereditary rate of 50% to 60% (Schumacher et al., 2007) and presents with various phenotypes (observable behaviours) such as phonological dyslexia, rapid naming deficit dyslexia, surface dyslexia, attentional dyslexia, and motor dyslexia (Schumacher et al., 2007; Zaki et al., 2024). As such, not every Dyslexic will present the same, and it should be viewed as a spectrum (Ryder & Norwich, 2018; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020). Dyslexia is said to affect 5% to 17% of the school-aged population (Palser et al., 2021); however, the adult percentage is unknown but estimated to be 4% (APA, 2013) and commonly aligned with other neurodiverse populations such as ADHD and Autism (Russell & Pavelk, 2013; John-Adubasim & Ugwu, 2019).

Dyslexics face difficulties with reading, writing, spelling, word recall, short-term memory and language processing, despite intelligence level or motivation (Garner, 2021). They have difficulties with visuoperceptual and audio perceptual functions, right–left discrimination (Fletcher, 2009), oral expression, processing speed, working memory, concentration, time management, and self-organization (Asghar et al., 2019; Elliott, 2020). The DSM 5 (APA, 2013) bases the degree of difficulty for the Dyslexic as mild, moderate and severe and offers that dyslexia can be seen more commonly in males than females (2:1 ratio to 3:1; APA, 2013).

Taylor et al. (2022) shares that there is an essential need to change our perspective from a deficit perspective when discussing those who innately think and process the world differently from the average person. Taylor et al (2022) further share that there's a need to move towards a focus of cognitive strength recognition and celebrate these various individual differences. Transitioning towards a strength perspective brings science closer to a positive psychology perspective of what is good and further from the DSM 5 deficit criterion.

Seminal literature is beginning to showcase the common cognitive strengths (MIND strengths: material reasoning, interconnected reasoning, narrative reasoning, dynamic reasoning) that are affiliated with dyslexia (Elliott, 2020; Garner, 2021; Eide & Eide, 2023). Within the MIND strengths, Dyslexics showcase big-picture thinking, problem-solving abilities, enhanced communication skills (Kannangara, 2018; Garner, 2021; Griggs, 2021; Eide & Eide, 2023), increased ability to process 3D information, visual-spatial abilities, networking and teamwork, and increased ability to access empathy (Glazzard & Dale, 2013; Kannangara, 2018). Sanderson-Mann and McCandless (2006) shares that PP innate character strengths for dyslexic's are empathy, understanding, patience, curiosity and imagination. Those classified with learning disabilities innate strengths are love of learning, honesty, fairness, judgement and appreciation of

beauty and excellence (Umucu et al., 2022), teamwork, communication, understanding, and coping (Nicolson, 2015 as cited in Ghisi et al., 2016). Even with the two sides of dyslexia beginning to be discussed, there is still limited research and documentation on what it means to live as a dyslexic from the intrapersonal and interpersonal perspectives within their social settings, and as Zhang et al. (2021) shares these are essential aspects to well-being.

2.3 Communities and Social Settings

The communities and social settings that Dyslexics find themselves in bring about various forms of interactions that they must navigate. While majority of research is completed within controlled academic settings, social settings bring about various inputs. Research has illustrated that when dyslexic children were exposed to emotionally charged visuals, they had heightened reactions (increased respiratory rates, increased perspiration, and increased facial expressions; Sturm et al., 2021), increase in their parasympathetic nervous system and heart rates (Palser et al., 2021). What this verifies is that dyslexics are hypersensitive to non-verbal cues (Diehl et al., 2014; Sturm et al., 2021), which may result in issues with emotional regulation (Alexander-Passe, 2017b; Sturm et al., 2021) due to heightened reactivity (Sturm et al., 2021). Assumptions are commonly placed with the dyslexic brain as misaligned rather than structurally adapted to be more heightened to what is happening around them. As such, more qualitative investigations need to occur to bring forth understanding of what is occurring for the dyslexic individuals during these experiences rather than assuming linkage to educational perspectives.

Dyslexics are considered to have an invisible stigma that can bring about misperceptions and discrimination (Nalavany et al., 2015), which has them experience devaluation within social settings (Nalavany et al., 2015). Stigmas and stereotypical beliefs such that dyslexics have poor social skills, lower intelligence, and limited ability (Beckett, 2024) further nurture the Dyslexic

to want to hide or mask their processing style. It is reported that 50% of adult Dyslexics hide their dyslexia from the workplace (Gerber, 2012) and Hamilton Clark (2024) and Henderson (2017) reported that university students were resistant to disclosing their dyslexia for fear of stigma. Alexander-Passe (2017b) states that dyslexic adults limit their dyslexic disclosure at the beginning of relationships and only reveal when masking becomes too difficult. However, when a Dyslexic's interpersonal interactions are supportive, they experience increased self-acceptance have higher disclosure rates and they experience higher well-being levels (Ragins, 2008).

2.4 Factors to Interpersonal Interactions

Interpersonal interactions can be contingent on one's ability to remember names, dates and facts about another individual. Dyslexia causes challenges within the different memory systems (working/short-term, long-term term and prospective memory), and as such, can have a social impact on connection. Whether it's through difficulty with self-expression, lack of confidence in the ability to remember facts resulting in impairment within discussions (Smith-Spark & Lewis, 2023). To further social impairment, Alexander-Passe (2015) shares that dyslexics can exhibit communication issues, have difficulty reading social cues, require structure to reduce panic and say bizarre things in conversations.

Masoud Mahmoodi Shahrebabaki (2018) is quoted as saying, "Owing to the fact that language learning serves as a tool for the realization of one's identity in varying social environments, it is a reflection of our socioeconomic status (SES), race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, and so many other aspects of speakers' identities (p. 221)". The ability to comprehend language and offer genuine dialogue are ways that individuals contribute to the world around them, allowing for the acceptance of being oneself during such verbal exchanges (Tweed et al., 2023). These communication exchanges impact the aspect of mattering and

meaning, which are essential aspects of well-being (Seligman, 2011; Flett, 2022; Paradisi et al., 2024) and can influence an individual's positive adjustment, which includes self-compassion and self-acceptance (Flett, 2022).

The work of Yeager and Dweck (2012) brought forth the importance of one's mental outlook towards life experiences (growth and fixed), and a growth mindset has been shown to support those with dyslexia (Kannangara, 2015). Kannangara (2015) identified two dyslexic personalities: Languishing Dyslexics (a version of a fixed mindset) and Thriving Dyslexics (a version of a growth mindset). Those with a languishing personality succumbed to the dyslexic challenges, while those thriving dyslexics discovered ways to work around their challenges through strength-based approaches and had better self-concepts. However, other perspectives on personality development are not based on mindset but on how one interprets and engages in interactions (Kegan, 1994; McCauley et al., 2006) and have yet to be applied to the Dyslexic.

2.5 Development of Self

Self-concept is the overarching theme of how an individual perceives or thinks about themselves, and can sometimes be used interchangeably with self-esteem, self-image, self-perceptions, and self-worth (Humphrey, 2002). When approaching the social aspects of the Dyslexic's self-concept, we can see that they consistently have lower self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth (Brunswick & Bargary, 2022). A mixed methods approach by Brunswick and Bargary (2022) separated Dyslexic groups into those diagnosed earlier (DEL) and later in life (DLL) and discovered that DEL had even lower self-esteem and self-efficacy when compared to DLL. To further these differences, DLLs regularly incorrectly estimated their intelligence levels, yet had higher self-efficacy levels than DEL (Brunswick & Bargary, 2022). Through their interviews, Brunswick and Bargary (2022) discussed how the social influences

(opinions and treatment they received from others) significantly impacted how dyslexic individuals viewed themselves.

The Dyslexic's self-esteem level can predetermine their goal-setting level, self-attitudes, displayed behaviours and emotional responses (Richmond, 1984, as cited in Humphrey & Mullins, 2002). Rosenthal (1973) stated that dyslexic children whose families were educated about the various impacts of dyslexia had higher levels of self-esteem than those dyslexic children whose families were uneducated about the impacts of dyslexia. Nalavany et al. (2015) furthered Rosenthal's finding by illustrating that family support also influenced the adult dyslexic's self-esteem. The further impact that social support has on the dyslexic individual is that research showcases that lower levels of self-esteem can further contribute to the expression of aggressive, emotional responses (Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Nalavany et al., 2015), emotional experiences (sadness, anxiety, exhaustion), and painful memories; (Nalavany & Carawan, 2012). When increased self-acceptance is achieved, the individual becomes more aligned with their authentic or ideal self, thus allowing the individual to be more self-accepting and increase well-being (Beckett, 2024).

Dyslexic self-concept and well-being are influenced by the issues they have with language processing and the language used to describe them (Beckett, 2024). Elliot and Grigorenko (2014) argue that the dyslexic nomenclature needs to be changed as it does not convey the full depth that this processing style has for the individual. However, the dyslexic label can bring value to the individual (Glazzard & Dale, 2013, 2015) as it offers normalcy as to why they present differently from the typical, furthering their self-concept (Brunswick & Bargary, 2022). When the focus is on dyslexic deficits, the individual's self-esteem and self-

concept are shown to be lower (Deacon et al., 2020; Hamilton Clark, 2024) and as Alexander-Passe (2015) states this is even more profound for the female Dyslexic.

Historically, females have been underrepresented as focused research participants, yet sexual identity is a profound aspect of self-concept (Jastrzębska & Błażek, 2022). Highlighting the need for more research exploration of Dyslexic sex trait differences. Between the years 2009 and 2019, only 19% of total neurological studies explored sexual differences (Rechlin et al., 2022) and those that study the dyslexic population are a lesser fraction. Current research states that dyslexia presents differently between the sexes due to cultural expectations, external behaviours, cognitive processing speed, and cognitive precursors such as language development (Arnett et al., 2017; Smith-Spark & Lewis, 2023). When compared to male Dyslexic, female Dyslexics are reported to be six times more likely to attempt suicide (Alexander-Passe, 2015), higher levels of anxiety, self-harm (use of food), and lower levels of self-esteem (Alexander-Passe, 2006, 2015), which highlights the need for more female Dyslexic well-being research to be explored. As for abilities, Krafnick and Evans (2019) share that female Dyslexics may also have more vital abilities in IQ, working memory, visuospatial, verbal conceptualization, and orthographic coding when compared to male Dyslexics.

2.6 Research Purpose

A Dyslexic's well-being has been documented to be consistently lower than that of the typical individual, as they have increased mental health issues (Garner, 2021), anxiety (Ihbour et al., 2021), suicide and self-harm tendencies (Alexander-Passe, 2015; Fuller-Thomson et al., 2018; Garner, 2021) and poor overall well-being (Donolato et al., 2024). Even for the general population, lower levels of self-esteem can lead to suicide idealization (Tan Dat et al., 2023), and these rates are even higher for those with dyslexia. Higher levels of mattering are associated with

decreased suicidal ideation (Olcoń et al., 2017), alleviation of marginalization (Huerta & Fishman, 2014), and increased interpersonal connection (Zeeb & Joffe, 2020), but without knowing what it means to be dyslexic, we are unable to understand the construct of mattering for the Dyslexic. Even with all these adversities, Dyslexics are also shown to experience post-traumatic growth and resilience (Ghisi et al., 2016; Alexander-Passe, 2017a). PP 2.0 states that post-traumatic growth brings about resilience, wisdom, compassion, and a positive outlook on life (Wong, 2019), which is an essential PP lens to take towards dyslexia.

Confirmation bias is noticeable within dyslexic research as results are commonly referenced to explain learning differences within the academic environment rather than acknowledge social and interpersonal influences. Kim and Zabelina (2015) share that the best way to research a diverse group is to avoid stereotypes, identify gaps, and interpret through understanding communication patterns, learning styles, and experiences. Through this approach, accessing the lived experiences of Dyslexic participants through a PP 2.0 existential lens within an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) can further uncover what occurs for Dyslexic females within their social interactions and how these interactions manifest into the self-concept of introspective meaning and mattering. Scientific rigours need to be aligned with how dyslexic attributes contribute to, interfere with, and influence well-being. This PP research explores the question, 'How do adult dyslexics perceive their social interactions and self-identity within their communities?'

3. Method

3.1 Study Design

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research design was used to uncover the depth of the participant's lived experiences as it is firmly embedded within the thought process of psychology (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) shared that IPA is founded on the approaches of phenomenology (the lived experience), hermeneutics (the process of interpretation), and idiography (focusing on the particular rather than the whole), which highlight the participants' ability to make sense of their experiences and meaning making. Semi-structured questions (Appendix F) that were framed openly and had no predetermined hypothesis were used to obtain the lived experiences of the four female participants (Smith et al., 2009). Findings were uncovered through reflexivity and double hermeneutics, the researcher making sense of the participant's making sense of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). The interpretive approach to the findings was from a hermeneutics of empathy approach to uncover the experience from its perspective rather than from suspicion (Smith et al., 2009). IPA was the best approach as it was meant to bring forth the meaning of the dyslexic experience (Smith et al., 2009). The individual dyslexic experience is an unresearched area, and before exploring it through various methodologies, the individual perspective must first be understood.

3.1.1 Researcher Description

The researcher's background is that they are a mild Dyslexic and have extensively researched this topic. To remain unbiased, the researcher bracketed (or placed one's perceptions to the side) and focused on the participant's lived experience rather than their own. However, language is created through personal experience (Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki, 2018) and the researcher's interpretations stem from this embodiment of the dyslexic experience.

3.2 Participants

Participants were limited to four adult Dyslexic females which meets ethical approval of a master's level research design (n= 2 Canadians, n=1 Hispanic/American, n=1 British) and were over 25 years of age. Adolescence is considered from 10 – 24 years, as it is at 25 that the neural wiring has completed within the prefrontal cortex (Arain et al., 2013). Limiting to female participants allowed for uniformity in the lived experiences based upon sex (biological attributes at birth) and to further explore this under-researched demographic (Rechlin et al., 2022). Participants were English-speaking, access to a computer with a camera and the internet, received formal diagnosis and were not known to present with ADHD or Autism. Focusing on only those with dyslexia will allow insight into how dyslexia influences one's experiences. Diagnosis was determined by the participants sharing who diagnosed them, age of diagnosis, and level of dyslexic severity (severe to mild; Table 1). Before advertising and conducting the research, ethical approval for this study was granted through the University of East London's department of psychology and human development ethics committee for the school of childhood and social care.

Table 1: Participant intake results

Questions	Participants			
	PA	PB	PC	PD
1. Have you received a formal diagnosis or classification as a Dyslexic from a qualified person or organization?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

2. Preferred pronouns? She/her, Him/he, They/Them	She/Her	She/Her	She/Her	She/Her
3. Nationality	USA/Hispanic	British	Canadian	Canadian
4. What country do you currently live in?	USA	England	Canada	Canada
5. How old are you currently?	32	30	74	47
6. What degree or level does your Dyslexia present as? (mild, moderate, severe, or not sure)	Moderate	Moderate	Mild	Mild/Moderate
7. Do you also have either ADHD or Autism, or both?	No	No	No	No
8. How old were you when you were diagnosed/professionally classified as a Dyslexic?	8	17	38	10

3.2.1 Researcher-Participant Relationship

To increase psychological safety the researcher disclosed their diagnosis of dyslexia prior to beginning the interviews, showcasing that they were a part of the in-group (psychologically identified as a member).

3.3 Participant Recruitment

Recruitment was conducted by advertising posters on various Facebook and LinkedIn pages (Appendix B) to allow for purposeful sampling selection. Those who did not meet the study requirements negatively expressed their thoughts of being *othered,* which occurs when an individual does not feel they are a part of the dominant social group, through comments they

posted underneath the advertised posters. All those that emailed their interest were sent the participant information sheet (Appendix E), the participant intake form (Appendix D) and the consent to participate in research form (Appendix C).

3.3.1 Participant Selection

25 individuals emailed their interest to participant, two of these were after the research had begun and were thanked for their interest and 19 individuals never responded to the information packages that were sent to them. The first four participants that sent back their consent to participate form (Appendix C), the intake form (Appendix D) and booked their interview time were accepted into the study.

3.3.2 Data Collection

Data was collected using an intake form (Appendix D), N=9 semi-structured questions (Table 2), and clarifying questions through video-recorded 90-minute MS Teams meetings. Participants were advised that not all the questions needed to be answered, and they could end the interview at any time, all participants remained. Acceptance to participate in the study was acquired through the consent to participate form (Appendix C) and just before the beginning of the interview, along with their permission to record the conversation. The method of handling confidentiality was shared within the participant information document (Appendix D), before and at the end of the interview. Following interviews participants were asked if they felt psychologically safe then sent the debriefing form (Appendix G). MS Teams supplied the initial transcriptions, which were later refined by the researcher for accuracy. All personal information was generalized, and participants were referred to as PA, PB, PC and PD.

Table 2: Semi-structured questions (Appendix A)

1. What is it like for you to have dyslexia?

Self-Identity questions:

2. How has being Dyslexic shaped who you are?

3. What does the label of being Dyslexic mean to you?

4. As a Dyslexic person how do you experience the world? School and Social worlds

5. Can you describe yourself to me?

Social Interaction questions:

6. Are there ways that Dyslexia has allowed you to see the world differently when you are interacting with other people?

7. How do you think Dyslexia affects or might affect the various relationships you have with others?

8. Are there certain types of relationships that allow you to be more relaxed as a Dyslexic person?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion that I haven't asked but you think is important for me to know on how being dyslexic influences your social interactions?

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis method was initiated by manually coding for the overall meaning shared in each participant's answers rather than taking a line-by-line approach (Smith et al., 2009), as it took several sentences for thoughts to be conveyed. Initial coding for self-perception and perception of social interactions for each research question was based upon the creation of descriptive comments (what the participant said), linguistic comments (explicit language of significant meaning and metaphors), and conceptual comments (researcher's use of double hermeneutics of empathy for interpretation of what was said and questions of linguistic meaning; Smith et al., 2009). The next step was the development of experiential statements by limiting word expression into simplified phrases, which then were grouped to allow for the development of both personal and social experiential themes to be developed for each participant answering each research question. Once each participant's themes were created, they were used as group experiential themes for each research question. The experiential themes were then grouped based on similarities and reclassified as overarching group themes for each research question. To establish perspective through a PP 2.0 approach these codes were then focused within the Dyslexic experience, where resilience may be expressed and how the participants establish meaning and mattering.

3.4.1 Methodological Integrity

IPA's validity is contingent on the researcher's transparency of the participant's dialogue. Limitations of IPA are that findings cannot be generalized to the population, the researcher is more involved, it is based on a philosophical approach, and it encompasses more of the opinions of one's experience rather than the experience itself (Tuffour, 2017). While these limitations have merit, IPA is the best method of analysis as the research question involves having the participant's opinion of their experience come forth to uncover the meaning and mattering that occurs for them in their moments. Other research methodologies such as narrative, thematic analysis and grounded theory could also have explored the Dyslexic experience; however, they lack the detailed convergence and divergence of the lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, IPA's historical association with existentialism allows for exploring human existence within personal and social encounters (Tuffour, 2017).

4. Findings

The research question can be broken down into two focuses around the perception of the social interactions and the perception of self. Findings show two main group experiential themes for how the participants of this study experience social interactions with an outlying theme that influenced these themes (Figure 1), and three group experiential themes for self-identity (Table 3).

Table 3: Group experiential themes

Perception of Social Interactions	Perception of Self
Safe Social Interactions	Hidden Dyslexic
Unsafe Social Interactions	Socially Described Dyslexic
	Self-Empowered Dyslexic

4.1 Perceptions of Social Interactions

Social interactions create unique experiences; however, these unique perceptions of safe and unsafe can also be shared within an in-group setting and were influenced by dyslexic social interference.

4.1.1 Safe Social Interactions

Safe interactions were those that the participants felt more connected towards and there was a strong affiliation towards those that processed the world similarly. Using intuition and profiling of the other individual's behaviours "PC" expressed that safe personalities create safety for her to be herself:

"I can tell the type of personality, in fact, I probably acutely aware and protective for myself if I run into someone who is not going to be kind to me, or that type of personality that you just *know* they're not believing you."

The sentiment of being allowed to be oneself is what determines a safe relationship as stated by "PD" "But so yeah, as a safe relationship, I feel comfortable in being dyslexic and being open in who I am."

Participating in safe relationships is essential for wellbeing and these interactions were made up from the group experiential statements of allies and social skills for social success (Appendix F).

4.1.2 Unsafe Social Interactions

Perception of unsafe social interactions are determined from whether a Dyslexic experiences a sense of acceptance for who one is. The participants of this study all shared

interactions which thematically were negative in nature. "PA" shared how she has experienced being socially misunderstood as a Dyslexic "Well, why don't you take your medication for your dyslexia?" While "PB" shared:

> "There is still a stigma like I, but it's also unspoken. Like I've felt it, I felt that as soon as I told someone I'm dyslexic, they switch up. How they include me, how they how they talk to me, how they work with me, how they've had a relationship with me like it does people's stigma and idea of what it is."

These experiences caused the participants to shift how they interact with others and become furthered when the Dyslexic feels diminished and unaccepted for their processing style as shared by "PC" "Why can't you see what I'm saying? We're saying the exact same thing, but the person has to insist that they're doing it right …" Unsafe interactions created from the group experiential statements of social threats, social defence tactics, and socially diminished (Appendix F), were consistent within each participant's stories.

4.1.3 Dyslexic Social Interference

Dyslexic social interference was not able to become a part of a group experiential theme, however it influenced the perception of the social interaction being safe or unsafe (Figure 1) and in turn shifts how the participant showed up within their interactions. Safe interactions were those when the other individual accepts and understands how dyslexia influences the Dyslexic, allowing the participant to be themself. While unsafe experiences occur when dyslexic traits are misunderstood by others (Appendix F).

Table 4: Sample of outlying theme of dyslexic social interference

Participant	Experiential Statements	Page/line	Quote
PA	Hard to find words	21.617	… hard for me to find correct words when I feel a certain way.
PC	Popular	26.780	I didn't mind being laughed at, it was an attention thing (laughs). I was popular, people will laughed. As a comedian.
PD	Name recall difficult	25.831	I'm horrible with names

Ultimately, the perception of safe or unsafe interactions influence the experience of self-perception which can then in turn influence how the Dyslexic interacts with their social interactions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Dyslexic perceptions of social interactions
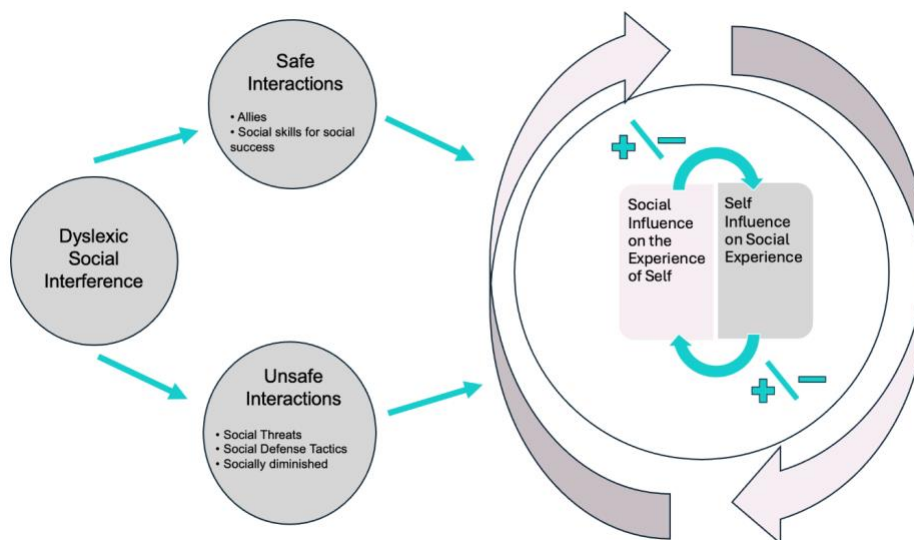
4.2 Perceptions of Self

The Dyslexic participants illustrated a continuum of Dyslexic personas (Figure 2) which were founded through three main super-ordinate group themes of the hidden Dyslexic, socially described Dyslexic, and empowered Dyslexic (Figure 2). Individuals' placement can shift between one continuum to another; however, it is reliant upon how they understand themselves holistically as a Dyslexic (Appendix H).

Figure 2: Evolution of the Dyslexic persona
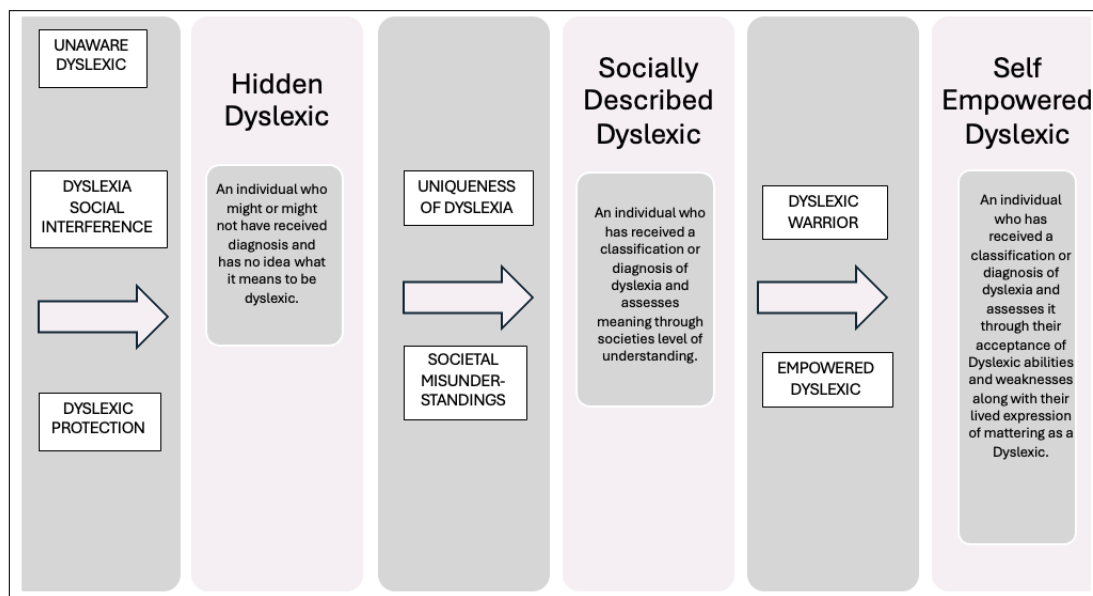
Every Dyslexic prior to or at the initial stage of diagnosis will begin within the hidden Dyslexic. Some will move along the continuum towards the socially described Dyslexic, which determines who they are based on how society defines them. Others will then align with the empowered Dyslexic, whose increased knowledge of their unique abilities and weaknesses allows them to take a more existential view of themselves. Each of these self-descriptions vary in how the individual understands and embraces what it means to be a dyslexic, in turn, in the differing degree of how much impact their safe and unsafe interactions have on them. The hidden

Dyslexic has the greatest impact of social interactions, while the empowered Dyslexic has less social influence (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Social impacts towards the Dyslexic persona
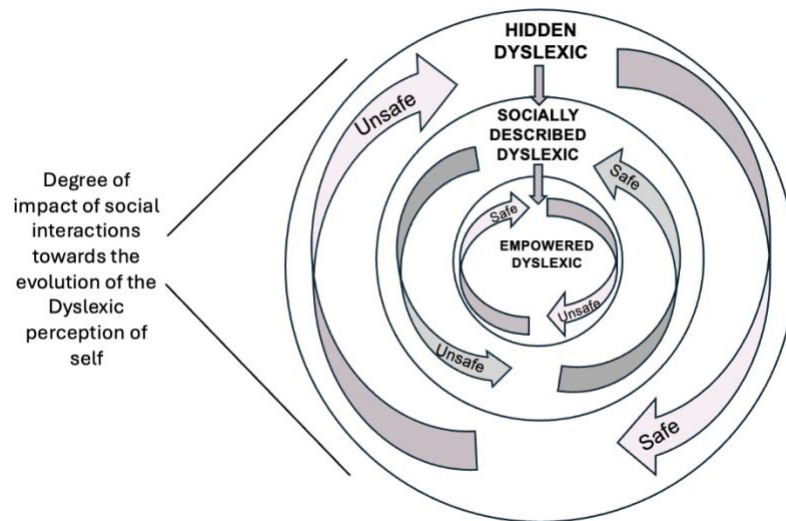
4.2.1 Hidden Dyslexic

Prior to classification or diagnosis of dyslexia the individual innately knows that there is something different with them through social comparison as expressed by "PA" "When I was little, I remember feeling like well, I'm inadequate because my siblings are not dyslexic, and they got commended on their like state exams." Negative misconceptions about self were furthered by "PC" "I really had inferiority complex. All growing up, I really thought that I was pretty stupid and so therefore I always thought I just didn't get the education … [Diagnosed at age 38]." These upward social comparisons bring about feelings of "shame," which ultimately shifted upon diagnosis as stated by "PB":

"I'd say when I was first diagnosed at 17, a lot of shame, a lot of resentment, a lot of embarrassment, a lot of confusion. Feeling like there was something wrong. Feeling like there's something broken."

However, the diagnosis of dyslexia brings about a sense of understanding and reassurance as "PC" mentioned "It [dyslexia diagnosis] was a real, exciting challenge a real opening a light came on. It made me feel so good about myself." Acquiring this level of dyslexic awareness allows for the individual to experience a better way to be labelled, as stated by "PD", "I had an answer like I'm not stupid and lazy. I had a better label that makes sense. So, when I got the label dyslexia, it was almost freeing."

Labelling allows for understanding that they are not alone, yet it does not offer the individual a fundamental knowledge of what this means to be Dyslexic. Which brings about a lack of dyslexic understanding as expressed by "PC" "There's a lot of things I don't know about it [dyslexia].…"

By obtaining knowledge about their dyslexic processing style, the individual begins to comprehend what it means to be Dyslexic through their social environment. Regardless of receiving a diagnosis or having the innate awareness that one could be Dyslexic, these individuals are still influenced by the group's experiential statements of dyslexic social interference and dyslexic protection. While all Dyslexic individuals will experience this stage, not all will remain, and some may move on to the next stage of the socially described Dyslexic (Appendix H).

4.2.2 Socially Described Dyslexic

When an individual enters the persona of the socially described Dyslexic, they determine their sense of identity and worth from what others and their society says about them. "PA" was able to bring forth an impactful conversation she had with a professor "One day she did call me at my work and she said, well, you're dyslexic. You can't amount to anything." Societal misunderstandings that dyslexic traits are something that the Dyslexic can control as expressed by "PD" "I remember I had one boss was like, you need to learn how to spell better. Like I'm never gonna have this ability." Experiencing unsafe social interactions such as these cause those who align within the social described Dyslexic to self-minimization to protect oneself, as shared by "PD":

"You know, like you push that off as always, just a small error, right where I'm I know I'm gonna make that error over and over, but I'll make a joke of it. Or like, oh silly me."

The need for minimization to reduce the Dyslexic experience within unsafe interactions was further shared by "PA":

"Whoops, sorry, that's my dyslexia [laughs], or I'm just to be funny or silly, but really, really it feels like throughout the years I'm just slow, but you know, I mean, that's not bad [laughs]."

It is in this stage that we find most the self-minimization comments and for the societal requests that the Dyslexic needs to present like others and were influenced by the group experiential statements of uniqueness of dyslexia and the societal misunderstanding (Appendix

H). The final stage of the Dyslexic persona occurs when they actively search for the meaning of what dyslexia brings to them.

4.2.3 Empowered Dyslexic

When the participants embraced their unique dyslexic processing style, they must research and learn about how dyslexia impacts them as individuals beyond society's understandings. Which requires the individual to research and search for answers on their own as stated by "PB":

"I think it's important that people with differences are aware of the support that's out there, because I've only come across it because I've researched into it myself. It's not really promoted or encouraged."

It also requires them to search for meaning and understanding through the perspective of different nationalities, who may hold different understandings of what it means to be Dyslexic as shared by "PD" [Canadian], "But lately, with the movement that I've seen in the workforce and with the movement coming out of the UK about like, I'm a dyslexic thinker and all that stuff."

Empowered Dyslexic's self-discovery goes beyond societal limitations, allowing them to accept that unsafe social interactions have more to do with the other person than themselves. "PD" openly shared "They don't want to understand, they don't care to understand, they have their own issues." While "PB" perceived this awareness to be focused more on her self-acceptance "I feel like it's giving me no choice but to be who I am because it's actually impacted (long pause) how my brain works and how I'm able to function and kind of navigate through

life." Enabling them to shift how they handle their emotions as "PB" stated, "I'm really in touch with my emotions, and obviously there's a time and a place for emotion…"

The social impact towards this persona is focused more on the search for accepting relationships rather than just relationships that simply understand dyslexic traits. Acquiring deep connecting social interactions allows the Dyslexic to signify their processing style and strengths, as shared by "PB" "... I'm more aware that I connect to other people that have similar differences to me, so other neurodiverse people, because there's like that fundamental understanding … "

Those that align with this continuum section are influenced by the group experiential statements of the Dyslexic warrior and the empowered Dyslexic (Appendix H), which further showcase the importance of self-acceptance towards wellbeing.

5. Discussion

Dyslexic understanding is commonly limited to a language processing issue (Garner, 2021) as it has been dominated through educational psychology and the psycho-medical model of disability, of what is wrong and what needs to be fixed (Macdonald, 2019), rather than through the PP perspective of what makes a good meaningful life (Diener & Seligman, 2002). With the research aim of exploring how Dyslexics perceive their social interactions and sense of self through a PP 2.0 perspective, allowed for the initial uncovering of what it truly means to live as a dyslexic person and how they determine their sense of meaning and mattering. The current research showcased a variance of how the participants understood their social communities as either safe or unsafe and that there is a Dyslexic persona continuum of self-concept from the hidden Dyslexic, socially described Dyslexic and empowered Dyslexic.

The Dyslexic persona showcases a different perspective of dyslexic personality than what Kannangara's previous research states with their languishing and thriving Dyslexic (2015), as it

focuses more on the growth of self-concept and acceptance as a Dyslexic, rather than how they instil meaning to their experiences. As such the Dyslexic persona findings illustrated a similarity to Kegan's constructive developmental theory (Kegan, 1994; McCauley et al., 2006). While Kegan's theory refers to the potential of personality developmental growth of an individual, the Dyslexic persona encompasses intrapersonal awareness and willingness of personal exploration. What we find is that Kegan's self-authored mind allows for the creation of one's own identity based upon their own values and beliefs rather than relying on societal input (Kegan, 1994) much like what was seen with the transition between the socially described Dyslexic towards that of the empowered Dyslexic. The self-transforming mind from Kegan's theory (1994) aligns with the empowered Dyslexic in that empowered Dyslexic understands that they hold different identities and perspectives, as do others, and that they are capable of more than what society currently tells them they are.

Aspects of meaning and positive relationships from the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) can contribute to whether the participants interpreted their social interactions as safe or unsafe. Unsafe social interactions consistently occurred when others did not fully understand how dyslexia influences the participant or insisted that the participant conform, instilling the sentiment that they were not accepted for themselves, nor do they bring meaning to these social interactions. In comparison, safe relationships aligned with the participant's values and allowed for the acceptance of their dyslexic traits. Ragins (2008) shared that through supportive and positive relationships, a Dyslexic has higher well-being levels, which can be further supported by Seligman (2011) and PERMA's influence of positive relationships towards well-being levels. The current research concluded that the determining factor of what made the interpersonal relationships safe or unsafe was the participant's existential view of themselves and their degree

of self-acceptance through developing their resilient mind (Arslan & Wong, 2024). The hidden or social described Dyslexic participants expressed more unsafe social interactions. In contrast, those who aligned with the empowered Dyslexic did not express the same impact and actively sought safe social interactions. The discernment of social interactions brings forward the difference in how the participants used masking to create safety for themselves.

Dyslexics are non-visual minorities, as their challenges are not physically visible to others, representing up to 17% of the population (Palser et al., 2021), allowing them to choose when they want to disclose their unique processing style. Participants shared that disclosure brought about the experience of stigmas, stereotypes and misunderstandings (Nalavany et al., 2015; Hamilton Clark, 2024). When Dyslexics do not experience a sense of personal meaning within a situation, with another person or themselves, they are more likely to mask, hide and minimize who they are until pressured to disclose (Alexander-Passe, 2017b), which was expressed more by those who aligned with the hidden Dyslexic and the socially described Dyslexic.

There was a marked difference with dyslexic disclosure based on where the participant aligned along the Dyslexic persona continuum, with a higher effort to minimize and hide their dyslexia being aligned with those within the hidden and socially described Dyslexic personas. In comparison, those who were situated between the socially described Dyslexic and the empowered Dyslexic expressed having more pride in their dyslexia and being less likely to keep it hidden. Differences between these two disclosure levels are the perception of intrapersonal safety, which aligns with the research results by Ragins (2008) and the participant's intrinsic level of self-acceptance and empowerment, aligning more with intrapersonal mattering. A PP 2.0 perspective allows for the acknowledgement that negative dyslexic experiences exist alongside

their dyslexic abilities and through the development of the resilient mindset (Arslan & Wong, 2024) the participant can align with authentic happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2002).

The socially described Dyslexic participants expressed frequent minimization and masking, along with less emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional regulation, which contributed to their lack of verbal understanding of emotions themselves, which further supports Alexander-Passe's (2017b) statement that Dyslexics are known to have a decreased level of emotional regulation. The socially described Dyslexics attributed these emotional differences to the continual removal from regular formatted classes to work on spelling and reading. Causing them to develop the belief that they lacked educational opportunities to acquire EI. However, those participants who aligned as empowered Dyslexics did not share minimization of themselves and expressed higher levels of emotional control, awareness and intelligence, which goes against previously stated literature. These findings illustrate that there is a spectrum within EI of Dyslexics which may affiliated more with the sense of mattering (Flett, 2022), self-acceptance and placement along the Dyslexic persona rather than to the processing style itself. Zhang et al. (2021) share that acquiring meaning within one's interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions is essential to raising one's well-being regardless of processing style.

A difference between meaning and mattering is that meaning is what we bring to others and the world (Steger, 2012), while mattering is how we are uniquely accepted for ourselves (Flett, 2022), extending to how we process the world. Dyslexics face challenges of meaning something to society and themselves; however, once individuals discover how they matter to themselves, they embrace a higher level of self-acceptance, love and appreciation for their unique processing style, as seen with the empowered Dyslexic, which allows for the potential to achieve resiliency within themselves (Arslan & Wong, 2024). The intrinsic level of mattering

can be attributed to a Dyslexic's self-perception. It can also be influenced by the PP 2.0 existential perspective of resilience and growth (Wong, 2019). Varying degrees of post-traumatic growth (PTG) expressed through the participant's dialogue showcased resilience to their social interactions and dyslexic challenges. Previous research supports PTG and resilience within academic settings (Ghisi et al., 2016), while the current research highlights that participants can possess PTG within their expressed self-views. Flett (2022) shares that mattering is a vital construct influencing an individual's protective nature towards experiences. Assessing the Dyslexic through the lens of mattering, it can be postulated that their ability of EI might be influenced based upon their extrinsic and intrinsic level of mattering, which has yet to be researched.

5.1 Strengths to the Research

The findings from this research allow for an increased understanding of the participant's comprehension of what it existentially means to be dyslexic and how they matter within their social interactions and with themselves. Acquiring this PP 2.0 focus of acknowledging both the Dyslexic struggles and successes, we can further empower Dyslexics to have more self-confidence within the social world, bringing about actionable hope for the increase of their overall well-being levels and the decrease of suicide idealization. Society has benefitted from the dyslexic mind for years through their ability to perceive and work with information differently. It is time to move away from shaming the Dyslexic for what they cannot do and instead emphasize what they are capable of excelling at (Eide & Eide, 2023; Garner, 2021). The participants of this study had a range of ages and varying cultural backgrounds. They offered valuable insight into how various females may perceive what it means to be a Dyslexic individual.

5.2 Limitations

The volunteered participants used their experiences of being stereotyped and othered (Hamilton Clark, 2024) to advocate for others, creating a similar personality profile. Due to the nature of this study and its use of IPA research methodologies, the findings cannot be applied to all Dyslexics (Tuffour, 2017). With regards to the progression of the Dyslexic persona, it is important to note that additional aspects of personality, such as innate character strengths, traumas, and academic ability, would also contribute to these findings and the placement of the Dyslexic along this continuum, and would need to be considered within future research. The screening criteria of this study also requested that participants not have any known linkages to ADHD or Autism traits (Russell & Pavelk, 2013; John-Adubasim & Ugwu, 2019). However, there is a possibility that the participants unknowingly had other neurodiverse traits, which might interfere with the findings of the Dyslexic experience. In addition, the findings were discovered with a limited sample of participants and have the potential not fully to represent the accuracy of the Dyslexic persona. These limitations highlight the need for more dyslexic research, allowing for a more holistic understanding of the interpersonal and intrapersonal influences on the Dyslexic.

5.3 Future Research Considerations and Impacts

Further IPA studies could be conducted with males, other cultures, and age groups to understand similarities and differences with these demographics, and through other qualitative research methods such as thematic analysis. Quantitative studies could also be utilized to gather what potential mass attributes dyslexia has toward the individual's experience beyond language processing. In addition, future research considerations could include more straightforward language to explain its importance in understanding dyslexia and using bullet points in the

participant information sheet (Appendix E) when advertising for future research. Along with future use of psychometrics, such as the resilient mindset scale (Arslan & Wong, 2024), to securely align the proposed affiliation of the resilient mindset to the Dyslexic personas, rather than the alignment being solely based upon the language used.

By acquiring a more rounded understanding of how Dyslexics process their environment and interactions, therapists, coaches, teachers and medical professionals will better understand their dyslexic clients rather than reduce their experiences to reading issues. Ultimately allowing the dyslexic label to have normalcy (Glazzard & Dale, 2013, 2015). Expanding the knowledge around dyslexia can also shift societal views of dyslexia and shift the focus towards improving the Dyslexic understanding of themselves for increased self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-concept (Brunswick & Bargary, 2022). So that they develop an understanding and acceptance of their weakness alongside their strengths, bringing about PTG (Wong, 2019) with a focus on increasing overall well-being.

6. Conclusion

The effects of dyslexia will impact an individual's life (Flett, 2022). While they cannot control its impact during social interactions, they can increase self-awareness and self-concept to reduce its negative impact on their well-being (Zhang et al., 2021). The perceptions of social interactions are either dictated as safe or unsafe, which is primarily based upon how society perceives and understands dyslexic traits, and how aware the individual is of the existential level of meaning and mattering that they bring. The spectrum of the Dyslexic identity (hidden, socially described and empowered) showcases the individual's concept of self and to what level they have acquired resiliency within their interactions with others and themselves. While well-being and the accomplishment of having a good life can be achieved anywhere along the Dyslexic

persona, it becomes more meaningful when individuals can achieve the empowered Dyslexic persona. This persona enables the individual to remove themselves from society's perceptions, embrace their dyslexic challenges and establish a unique and empowering definition of themselves, ultimately creating PTG within one's self-concept. By creating a more PP 2.0 existential view (Wong, 2019) of what makes a good and meaningful Dyslexic life, the Dyslexic can begin to uncover how and why they matter for themselves and society. From here, therapy or coaching sessions can be created to allow the Dyslexic to establish this level of awareness for themselves so they can flourish even more in a world that processes information differently from themselves.

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Appendix A: Semi-Structured Research Questions:

"How do adult dyslexics perceive their social interactions and self-identity within their communities?"

1. What is it like for you to have dyslexia?

   Self-Identity questions:

2. How has being Dyslexic shaped who you are?

3. What does the label of being Dyslexic mean to you?

4. As a Dyslexic person how do you experience the world? School and Social worlds

5. Can you describe yourself to me?

   Social Interaction questions:

6. Are there ways that Dyslexia has allowed you to see the world differently when you are interacting with other people?

7. How do you think Dyslexia affects or might affect the various relationships you have with others?

8. Are there certain types of relationships that allow you to be more relaxed as a Dyslexic person?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion that I haven't asked but you think is important for me to know on how being dyslexic influences your social interactions?

Appendix B: Study Advertisement

Adult Dyslexic participants needed for interview style research
Hello, my name is Carleen Ross, and I am a Master of Science in Applied Positive Psychology Coaching Psychology student at the University of East London, who is looking to explore how adult Dyslexics perceive their social interactions and themselves.

I am recruiting adult dyslexic individuals who have received a professional diagnosis/classification and have no other comorbidity (Autistic or ADHD). The online interview will consist of semi-structured questions being asked through a casual conversation style.

You are invited to participate if you are:
• If you are 18 years or older
• Diagnosed or professionally classified as a Dyslexic
• Dyslexic only - no other comorbidity (ADHD, Autism)
• English speaking
• Have access to a computer with internet

You will be asked to participate in a 60-to-90-minute casual conversations based around semi-structured questions.

If you are interested in learning more or to join as a participant, please contact the researcher Carleen Ross at u2462896@uel.ac.uk

Appendix C: Consent to Participate in a Research Study

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

"How do adult dyslexics perceive their social interactions and self-identity within their communities?"

Contact person: Carleen Ross
Email: u2462896@uel.ac.uk

	Please initial
I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet dated 12/12/2024 (version 1) for the above study, Reference Number #202 and that I have been given a copy to keep.	
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time, without explanation or disadvantage.	
I understand that if I withdraw during the study, my data will not be used.	
I understand that I have 2 weeks from the date of the interview to withdraw my data from the study.	
I understand that the interview will be recorded using MS Teams.	
I understand that my personal information and data, including audio/video recordings from the research will be securely stored and remain confidential. Only the research team will have access to this information, to which I give my permission.	
It has been explained to me what will happen to the data once the research has been completed.	
I understand that short, anonymised quotes from my interview may be used in material such as conference presentations, reports, articles in academic journals resulting from the study and that these will not personally identify me.	
I agree to take part in the above study.	

Optional: I would like to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed and am willing to provide contact details for this to be sent to.	

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……

Participant's Signature

……

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

CARLEEN ROSS

Researcher's Signature

……

Date

…………………..………

Appendix D: Intake Information to Participate in a Research Study

INTAKE INFORMATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

"How do adult dyslexics perceive their social interactions and self-identity within their communities?"

Contact person: Carleen Ross
Email: u2462896@uel.ac.uk

PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING	ANSWER HERE
Your name (first and last name)	
Have you received a formal diagnosis or classification as a Dyslexic from a qualified person or organization?	
Preferred pronouns? She/her, Him/he, They/Them	
Nationality	
What country do you currently live in?	
How old are you currently?	
What degree or level does your Dyslexia present as? (mild, moderate, severe, or not sure)	
Do you also have either ADHD or Autism, or both?	

How old were you when you were diagnosed/professionally classified as a Dyslexic?	

Participant's Name - (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……………………………………………………………………………

Participant's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………………
…

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) - CARLEEN ROSS

Researcher's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………………
…

Date

………………..……………………………….………………………………………
………………

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet

Ethics reference number: 202

Version: One

Date: December 12, 2024

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

How do adult dyslexics perceive their social interactions and self-identity within their communities?

Contact person: Carleen Ross
Email: u2462896@uel.ac.uk

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part or not, please carefully read through the following information which outlines what your participation would involve. Feel free to talk with others about the study (e.g., friends, family, etc.) before making your decision. If anything is unclear or you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above email.

Who am I?
My name is Carleen Ross. I am a postgraduate student in the Department of Psychology and Human Development at the University of East London (UEL) and am studying for a Master of Applied Positive Psychology Coaching Psychology degree. As part of my studies, I am conducting the research that you are being invited to participate in.

What is the purpose of the research?
I am conducting research into understanding how dyslexics experience interpersonal interactions and themselves within social situations. With this understanding professionals, researchers, and dyslexics can be to further their understanding of this processing style.

Why have I been invited to take part?
To address the study aims, I am inviting professionally diagnosed and classified female Dyslexic adult individuals over the age of 25, with no other known comorbidity (diagnosis of ADHD or Autism), English speaking and from either the USA, Canada, or the UK to take part in my research. If you meet the above criteria and have access to the internet and a working computer with a camera you are eligible to take part in the study.

It is entirely up to you whether you take part or not, as participation is voluntary.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to take part?
If you agree to take part, you will be asked to share how you as an adult dyslexic experience life in the social world.

- Participants will be asked to participate in a 60-to-90-minute semi-structured interview where they will be asked various questions about what they experience life as a Dyslexic individual.
- If further clarification is needed the participant may be invited to an additional meeting to clarify dialogue shared in the first meeting.
- All interviews will be delivered online through MS Teams meeting link and will be recorded (audio/video).
- The interview will be structured as an informal conversation, allowing the participant to share what they would like to share through the question prompts.

Can I change my mind?
Yes, you can change your mind at any time and withdraw without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. If you would like to withdraw from the interview, you can do so by telling me at any time during the interview. If you withdraw, your data will not be used as part of the research.

Separately, you can also request to withdraw your data from being used even after you have taken part in the study, provided that this request is made within 2 weeks of the data being collected (after which point the data analysis will begin, and withdrawal will not be possible).

Are there any disadvantages to taking part?
- Although the risk is minimal there is the possibility of psychological and/or physical distress that could be experienced because of taking part in the interview.
- To limit the risk of this potential risk the participant only needs to share what they are comfortable with regarding the context of the questions asked. At any time, the participant can end the interview allowing them full control over their participation.
- If needed supporting agencies will be provided to further support the participant if needed.

How will the information I provide be kept secure and confidential?

- Participants will not have their names or personal information used within the result section of the research. To adhere to this participant names will be replaced to use a labelling system (Participant A, B, etc.). If any self-identifying information is given by the participant during

the interview this data will be generalized, so that the exact information is not known, as to keep the privacy of the participant.

▪ The personal contact details of the participants will be stored on the University of East London's OneDrive storage system, until April 30, 2025, and at this time all information will be deleted.

▪ Research data will be stored on a password protected computer and on the University of East London's OneDrive.

▪ All data be transferred through the secure UEL email system.

▪ Research supervisors and the researcher will have access to the anonymised data.

▪ Research data be anonymised through a labelling system on Participant A, B, C, etc.

▪ Supervisors, researcher, and examiners will see the anonymised data.

▪ Once the study has been completed the personal data which was collected will be deleted, including the contact details of participants, interview recordings and transcripts.

▪ The researcher will be responsible for the data collected and if participants would like to take part in future studies, the researcher will keep this information on a password protected computer.

▪ If appropriate, confidentiality may need to be broken if it comes to the researcher's attention that the participant maybe of risk to themselves or another. If this is to occur a direct conversation will be held between the researcher and the participant and the appropriate authorizes will be contacted.

For the purposes of data protection, the University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University processes this information under the 'public task' condition contained in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Where the University processes particularly sensitive data (known as 'special category data' in the GDPR), it does so because the processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information about how the University processes personal data please see www.uel.ac.uk/about/about-uel/governance/information-assurance/data-protection

What will happen to the results of the research?
The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. The thesis will be publicly available on UEL's online Repository (Registry of Open Access Repositories, ROAR). Findings may also be disseminated to a range of audiences (e.g., academics, clinicians, public, etc.) through journal articles, conference presentations, talks, magazine articles, blogs. In all material produced, your identity will remain anonymous, in that, it will not be possible to identify you personally (personal identifying information will be removed or generalized so that you would not be recognizable).

You will be given the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed for which relevant contact details will need to be provided, if this is of interest to you.

Anonymised research data will be securely stored by Dr. Luz Gutierrez Menendez for a maximum of 2 years, following which all data will be deleted.

Who has reviewed the research?
My research has been approved by the Department of Psychology and Human Development Ethics Committee, Reference Number: [insert reference number which appears in the Ethical Approval Letter]. This means that the Committee's evaluation of this ethics application has been guided by the standards of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?
If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Carleen Ross, u2462896@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr. Luz Gutierrez Menendez, Department of Psychology and Human Development, School of Childhood and Social Care, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
Email: l.gutierrez-menendez@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, Department of Psychology and Human Development, School of Childhood and Social Care, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

Participant A (PA) Participant B (PB) Participant C (PC) Participant D (PD)

Group Super Ordinate Themes for Discovery of The Dyslexic Social-Concept

SUPER-ORDINATE GROUP THEMES	THEMES	PARTICIPANT SUPER-ORDINATE THEMES
SAFE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS	SOCIAL ALLIES	Supportive allies (PA) Development of positive social connections (PB) Positive Social Outcomes (PC) Socially supported for success (PD)
	SOCIAL SKILLS FOR SOCIAL SUCCESS	Required skills for social interactions (PA) Social benefits for social connections (PB) Creation of Empathetic Encounters (PD) Social benefits for social connections (PB)
UNSAFE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS	SOCIALLY DIMINISHED FOR CONNECTION	Expectations to present as typical (PA) Socially misrepresented (PC) Negative social interactions traits (PB)
	SOCIAL THREATS	On Own (PB) Threatening Environments (PC) Creation of the THEM situation (PD) Public perceived perception of worth (PA)
	SOCIAL DEFENCE TACTICS	Social Defense Mechanisms (PC) Dyslexic Defense Tactics (PD)

Outlying personal super-ordinate theme that did not align with another:

DYSLEXIC SOCIAL INTERFERENCE	Hinderance of self with interactions with others (PA)

	Dyslexic interference with social interactions (PB)
	Dyslexic Social Issues (PD)

Identifying Recurrent Super-Ordinate Themes Among Participants

IDENTIFYING RECURRENT THEMES FOR SOCIAL PERCEPTION					
Super-ordinate themes	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Present in over half the sample?
Social Allies	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Social skills for social success	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
Socially diminished for connection	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Social Threats	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Social Defence Tactics	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES

Dyslexic social interference	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES

Convergent or Commonality of Super-Ordinate group themes

Super-ordinate themes	Similarity between participants	Theme relationship
Social Allies	4/4	Convergent
Social skills for social success	3/4	Convergent
Socially diminished for connection	3/4	Convergent
Dyslexic Social Interference	2/4	Commonality
Social Threats	3/4	Convergent

Social Defence Tactics	2/4	Commonality

Convergent theme relationship: high levels of similarity between participants.
Commonality theme relationship: multiple participants share this thematic trait.
Individuality theme relationship: only one participant illustrates this finding.

Appendix G: Debriefing Form

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF SHEET

"How do adult dyslexics perceive their social interactions and self-identity within their communities?"

Thank you for participating in my research study on exploring how adult dyslexia influences interpersonal communication. This document offers information that may be relevant in light of you having now taken part.

How will my data be managed?

The University of East London is the Data Controller for the personal information processed as part of this research project. The University will ensure that the personal data it processes is held securely and processed in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. More detailed information is available in the Participant Information Sheet, which you received when you agreed to take part in the research.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The research will be written up as a thesis and submitted for assessment. The thesis will be publicly available on UEL's online. Findings may also be disseminated to a range of audiences (e.g., academics, clinicians, public, etc.) through journal articles, conference presentations, talks, magazine articles, blogs. In all material produced, your identity will remain anonymous, in that, it will not be possible to identify you personally, all personally identifying information that is shared within the interview will be generalized so that your identity could not be determined.

You will be given the option to receive a summary of the research findings once the study has been completed for which relevant contact details will need to be provided.

Anonymised research data will be securely stored by Dr. Luz Gutierrez Menendez for a maximum of 3 years, following which all data will be deleted.

What if I been adversely affected by taking part?

It is not anticipated that you will have been adversely affected by taking part in the research, and all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise distress or harm of any kind. Nevertheless, it is possible that your participation – or its after-effects – may have been challenging, distressing or uncomfortable in some way. If you have been affected in any of those ways, you may find the following resources/services helpful in relation to obtaining information and support:

- UEL students: connection for support with the UEL wellness centre at wellbeing@uel.ac.uk (020)-8223-4444
- UK participants please connect with support through 1-1-1
- Canadian participants please connect with support through Canadian Suicide Crisis Helpline 9-8-8 and for general mental support contact 833-456-4566.
- USA participants please connect with support through 9-8-8 or start a chat at 988lifeline.org.

Who can I contact if I have any questions/concerns?

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Contact person: Carleen Ross
Email: u2462896@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact my research supervisor Dr. Luz Gutierrez Menendez. Department of Psychology and Human Development, School of Childhood and Social Care, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
Email: l.gutierrez-menendez@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of Ethics Committee: Dr Trishna Patel, Department of Psychology and Human Development, School of Childhood and Social Care, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
(Email: t.patel@uel.ac.uk)

Thank you for taking part in my study