

# Co-creating understanding in outsider research: the importance of consultations with people who experience multiplicity

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## 1. Background

- Multiplicity is the experience of having more than one self, person, or identity within the body (Spanos, 1994).
- Multiplicity is thought to be conceptually different to Dissociative Identity Disorder (Ribáry et al., 2017).
- Multiplicity can be associated with a lack of distress and impairment in functioning.
- People who identify as multiple can have their experiences perceived only as distressing by the medical profession (Parry et al., 2018).
- People with lived experiences should be empowered to inform their care, where care is needed and wanted (Eve & Parry, 2021).

**The term multiplicity describes an experience—it is not a diagnosis. It is valuable for many people.**



## 2. Conducting outsider research

- As an outsider who lacks personal experiences of multiplicity, it was vital to facilitate the community to guide the research.
- It was important for the PhD to be focusing on the areas of importance to the multiplicity community.
- The consultation ensured that the grounded theory study was informed by lived experiences from the first stage, truly reflecting their experiences throughout.
- The consultation allowed respondents the chance to share their stories of multiplicity.

## 3. Consultations to co-create understanding

- Pre-research stage—asking questions about *how* research should be designed, instead of asking formal research questions.
- Getting a range of perspectives helps to inform the research focus, research design, and interview questions.
- Social media was used as a recruitment tool—there is a supportive, open community on Twitter who engaged positively with the consultation.
- An online consultation approach was used due to COVID constraints.

## 4. Responses, 6 themes

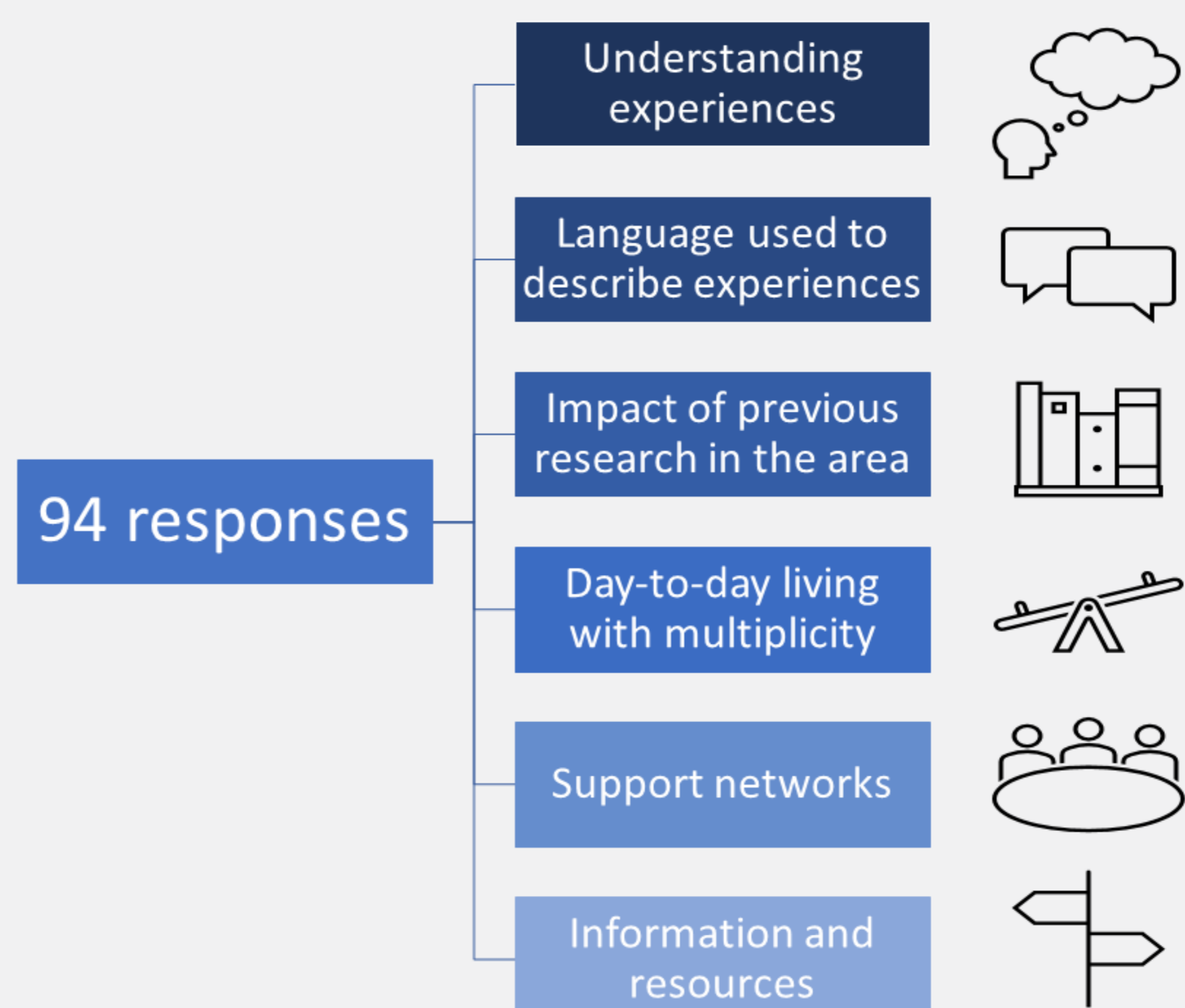


Figure 1: Six main themes identified from the online consultation with experts-by-experience, professionals, and support networks

## 5. Conclusions

- The current system does not work for the multiplicity community who require tailored understanding, information, language, and support.
- Many respondents went on to complete the formal study, and could see their involvement in the development of the focus of the PhD.
- Co-creating research can aid validation, awareness, and relevance.
- Voices and experiences of young adults with multiplicity need to be carefully considered and centred within further research.

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