The Post-16 Education Experiences of Transgender Young People in the UK: Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

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Date of submission for examination: October 2021

Abstract

Aims: This study explores the post-16 education experiences of transgender young people to inform the practice of Educational Psychologists. Currently, little is known about the needs of transgender students, and such knowledge is essential to inform the implementation of appropriate and effective supports for these youth in schools. EPs are uniquely placed to provide intervention at the individual, school and familial levels to support transgender students.

Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven A-level transgender students. Interview data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Findings: Five overarching themes emerged from participants' narratives: Social transition at school; Navigating school as a transgender student; Bullying, transphobia and peer relations; Students' ambivalent experiences of staff; and Experiences at the systemic level of school.

Limitations: Participants were recruited from community Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth groups. By engaging in these groups, they accessed both direct and indirect support in relation to school. This may have influenced their experiences reported in this study as their needs may not have been as extensive as transgender students without access to such groups/supports.

Conclusions: Findings identify that transgender young people experience unique challenges and have distinct needs at school. Findings support previous evidence that transgender students often experience negative school environments; however, this did

not diminish the complexities of participants' experiences as individuals and as a group of students. Implications of the findings for EP practice are discussed.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the young people who took part in this study. Thank you for your time and sharing your stories with me. I have learned so much because of you and I hope I have done justice to your words. Thank you also to the participating organisations who took an interest in the study and shared it with their members.

To my supervisor, Dr Judith Mortell, thank you for your patience (!), encouragement, support and amazing ability to be devil's advocate when I needed it.

To my family, thank you so much for your unwavering interest, encouragement and support throughout the past number of years. I am eternally grateful.

To my husband, there really are no words. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your unfaltering belief that I should, could and would do this. I could not have done it without you.

To Cillian, I am dedicating this research to you, as the best interruption to my studies I could ever have imagined.

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List of abbreviations

APA	American Psychological Association
BPS	British Psychological Society
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DFE	Department for Education
EA	Equality Act
EP	Educational Psychologist
FTM	Transgender Female to Male
GEO	Government Equalities Office
GIDS	Gender Identity Development Service
GSA	Gay-Straight Alliance
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender
MTF	Transgender Male to Female
NASP	National Association of School Psychologists

NSSI	Non-Suicidal Self Injury
RE	Relationships Education
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SRE	Sex and Relationships Education
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
WEC	Women and Equalities Committee

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and chapter overview

Transgender young people are disclosing their gender identities and seeking treatment and support at an unprecedented rate in the UK (Women and Equalities Committee (WEC), 2016). As a result, schools are increasingly likely to have transgender youth in their care; however, research shows that educators currently do not feel fully prepared to work with these students, signalling a growing need for guidance in the area (Bowskill, 2017). Through their work with schools and other external agencies, Educational Psychologists (EPs) are also increasingly likely to encounter situations of working with transgender students. Indeed, EPs may be among the first professionals to be consulted by schools and families when looking to ensure supportive and inclusive environments for these youth (Davy & Cordoba, 2020). The positioning of EPs working across the levels of children and family, school and local authority means that they are well placed to support knowledge, understanding and practice in this area (Yavuz, 2016). However, at present, government agencies and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) commissioners assert that not enough is known about the needs and strengths of transgender students, despite that such knowledge is vital in determining how to ensure that school based and related supports are appropriate and effective (Youth Chances, 2014). Within the UK, a lack of gender diverse themed research or conceptual articles in the educational psychology and related literature stands out as an issue that needs to be addressed with some urgency.

This introductory chapter begins by briefly discussing terminology in the area and the prevalence rate of transgender people in the UK. It then outlines the national context for transgender young people and discusses the roles of schools and EPs in supporting

them. The rationale for the current research is provided, and the chapter concludes by detailing the researcher's position in relation to the study.

1.2 Transgender terminology

Terminology describing transgender identities is continually evolving (Sausa, 2005). While the terms specifically identified by each participant were used during their interviews and when referring to them in the write up of this study, the term transgender was used for the remainder of the write up for ease of reading and consistency. This term was used as it has come to serve as an umbrella term for various gender diverse people and identities, including transgender men and transgender women (people who view their gender identity as not corresponding with their sex at birth) and people with non-binary identities (those who view their gender identity as not falling within the two terms of male and female) (Read, Sargent & Wright, 2020; WEC, 2016). For the purposes of this research, the term transgender referred to gender diverse people who identify as being transgender, including, but not limited to those who find their sexed bodies uncomfortable or distressing.

1.3 Prevalence of transgender people in the UK

While there are no official records of the number of transgender people living in the UK, estimates suggest that approximately 1% of the population is gender incongruent (WEC, 2016). However, the number of children and young people identifying as transgender is increasing and statistics from the national Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) revealed that referrals for under 18s almost quadrupled from 678 in 2014 to 2015 to 2,590 in 2018 to 2019 (The Guardian, 2019). Whilst this number may not reflect an increase in the number of children and young people whom are transgender per se, it may reflect that individuals are increasingly openly identifying - socially transitioning or 'coming out' - as transgender, and at a younger age. Research indicates that children become aware of

gender constancy at around four years (Szkrybalo & Ruble, 1999) and the medial age for realisation of gender identity is five (Kennedy & Hellen, 2010). Indeed, Kennedy (2008) found that up to 80% of transgender adults were aware that they were transgender before they left primary school.

1.4 The current national context for transgender young people

From 2010, the Equality Act (EA) has given transgender people protection in their own right against discrimination; however, current evidence suggests that there are more risk than protective factors for transgender youth in the UK today. Research has found that LGBT people face discrimination, harassment and bullying in education, at work and on the street, hate crime and higher inequalities in health satisfaction and outcomes than people outside of the LGBT community (Government Equalities Office (GEO), 2018a). In order to develop a better understanding of the experiences of LGBT and intersex people in the UK, the government conducted a nationwide survey in July 2017. The survey, which ran online for three months, asked LGBT and intersex people over the age of 16 for their views on public services and about their experiences more generally of living as a LGBT person in the UK. The survey received over 108,000 valid responses, which makes it the largest national survey to date of LGBT people anywhere in the world. 13% of the respondents were transgender and over two thirds (69%) of the respondents were aged between 16 and 34.

In the summary report of the survey published in July 2018, it was reported that, on average, respondents were less satisfied with their lives than the general UK population, and that transgender respondents were the least satisfied. Over half of the

respondents (56%) felt comfortable being LGBT in the UK; however, as with life satisfaction, transgender respondents felt less comfortable. Indeed, only 5% of transgender respondents aged under 25 said that they felt very comfortable. 59% of transgender women and 56% of transgender men who responded said they had avoided expressing their gender identity for fear of a negative reaction from others. For non-binary respondents, the figure was much higher at 76%. A quarter (24%) of respondents were not open about being LGBT with any family members they lived with, with younger people being the most likely not to be open. In total, 40% of respondents had experienced an incident in the 12 months preceding the survey, committed by someone they did not live with and because they were LGBT. The large majority of the most serious incidents respondents experienced went unreported.

In terms of education, respondents to the survey who were in education at the start of the 2016-2017 academic year were asked a series of questions about their experiences. Only 3% of respondents reported that they had discussed sexual orientation and gender identity at school. Where these topics were discussed, only 9% felt that the discussions had prepared them well for later life as an LGBT person. A third of respondents said they experienced a negative reaction at school due to them being, or people perceiving them to be, LGBT. Negative reactions included disclosure of LGBT status without permission (21%), verbal harassment (19%) and exclusion from events or activities (6%). Some respondents had experienced sexual and physical harassment (2% and 2% respectively), with those with minority gender identities having the worst experiences. The most frequent perpetrators of the most serious incidents were other students (in 88% of cases). However, almost a tenth (9%) were committed by teaching staff. A high number (83%) of the most serious incidents went unreported. Of the transgender respondents who

transitioned while at school, 36% said that their school was ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ supportive of their specific needs. Only 13% said that their teachers were ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ understanding of the issues faced by transgender pupils.

As a result of the survey, the government published a LGBT Action Plan setting out how they planned to respond to its findings. This was a four year plan containing more than 75 commitments aimed at improving the lives of LGBT people in the UK. In terms of education, the plan vowed to tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools and the wider education system and to update the Relationships Education (RE, primary school) and Sex and Relationships Education (RSE, secondary school; DfE, 2019) guidance to support governmental reforms to these subjects. The plan also aimed to publish an update to guidance for schools on how to apply the Equality Act 2010, and a comprehensive guide for schools on how to support transgender pupils. In the annual progress report 2018-2019, the committee reported that it had completed an anti-homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying programme in more than 1,800 schools and also completed the guidance to the new reforms to RE and RSE. Indeed, the new statutory curriculums were rolled out in schools in September 2020. However, to date, the updated guidance for schools on the Equality Act, and on how to support transgender pupils, remain incomplete.

With a specific focus on secondary schools, Stonewall, a LGBT rights charity in the UK, commissioned the Centre for Family Research at the University of Cambridge to conduct a survey with young people who are LGBT on their experiences in secondary schools and colleges in 2016. 3,713 LGBT young people aged 11-19 completed the online questionnaire. 16% of respondents identified as transgender and a further eight per cent

said they were questioning their gender identity. Although this was the third school report published by Stonewall, it is the first to include the specific experiences of transgender students.

In terms of its findings, nearly half of LGBT pupils (45%), including 64% of transgender pupils, reported being bullied for being LGBT at school. Almost half (46%) had heard transphobic language 'frequently' or 'often'. Nearly one in ten transgender pupils (9%) reported being subjected to death threats at school. Almost half of LGBT pupils (45%) who were bullied for being LGBT never told anyone about the bullying. In terms of school response, less than a third of bullied LGBT pupils (29%) reported that teachers intervened when they were present during bullying. Seven in ten LGBT pupils (68%) reported that teachers or school staff only 'sometimes' or 'never' challenged homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language when they heard it. Seven in ten (68%) reported that their schools said homophobic or biphobic bulling is wrong, but only four in ten (41%) reported that their schools said transphobic bullying is wrong. In terms of the curriculum, two in five LGBT pupils (40%) had never been taught anything about LGBT issues at school. Three in four (77%) had never learnt about gender identity and what transgender means. In terms of support, more than half of LGBT pupils (53%) said there was not an adult at school they could talk to about being LGBT. Just three per cent knew of an openly transgender member of staff. More than two in five transgender pupils (44%) said that staff at their school were not familiar with the term 'trans' and what it means. One in three transgender pupils (33%) were not able to be known by their preferred name at school, and three in five (58%) were not allowed to use the toilets they felt comfortable in. In terms of well-being and mental health, two in five pupils who had been bullied for being LGBT (40%) had skipped school because of this bullying. Half of

bullied LGBT pupils (52%) felt that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying had a negative effect on their plans for future education. More than four in five transgender young people (84%) had self-harmed (compared to 61% of LGB students) and more than two in five transgender young people (45%) had attempted to take their own life (compared to 22% of LGB students).

Despite a dearth in the academic literature pertaining to transgender young people's experiences of school in the UK, (as shall be evidenced in the next chapter), Saunston and Sampson (2011)'s finding that a lack of teaching around sexual diversity had overwhelmingly negative effects for LGBT students was in keeping with the findings of the above national surveys. However, in contrast to the surveys, Leonard (2019) highlighted that when facilitated to, transgender students were willing and able to explore their more positive experiences of school. Indeed, in his study, transgender students raised the importance of language as a means of asserting their own identities and for others to demonstrate their respect and acceptance of this. They also raised the importance of individual teacher support, whole school approaches, community and their ability and capacity to draw upon their own skills and resiliency as factors which contributed to their positive experiences of school. Similarly, although Freedman (2019) found that transgender young people's experiences of school were largely negative, she also identified supportive school staff as a key factor in helping transgender students have more positive experiences of school.

1.5 The roles of schools and educational psychologists in supporting transgender students

On the whole, the above findings suggest that LGBT, and in particular transgender youth in schools face unique challenges, have distinct needs and more often than not experience negative school environments. Indeed, one of the key recommendations of the Stonewall report was that schools should provide specific support for transgender students. However, to date, there has been little exploration on the role of the school in supporting these students (Bowskill, 2017) and, as a result, many schools find themselves responding to transgender students in reactive ways (Davy & Cordoba, 2020). This is against a backdrop of evidence which shows school support as pivotal in improving academic, social, emotional and psychological outcomes for LGBT students (Seelman, Forge, Walls & Bridges, 2015) and indicates that teachers and educators have significant responsibility in providing support to make positive difference to transgender students' experiences of schooling.

In 2009 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2009, p.39) asserted that, *'EPs may provide consultancy support to tackle sexist, sexual or transphobic bullying in schools'*. Subsequently, the WEC (2016) called for increased access for transgender young people to professionals, including EPs. Indeed, in 2019 the British Psychological Society (BPS) published guidelines for psychologists working with gender, sexuality and relationship diversity, and stated that psychologists should recognise the needs and issues of gender diverse young people and their particular vulnerabilities and risks. As stated, EPs are well placed to provide consultation and intervention at the individual, school and familial levels to support transgender students; however, in their first report on the issues of equality affecting transgender people, the WEC (2016) reported that access to EPs for transgender students was limited and that

more needs to be done to ensure that gender diverse young people and their families get sufficient support at school.

1.6 Rationale for the current study

Despite the above recommendations, a relatively significant body of research has highlighted that EPs currently do not feel prepared to address the needs of transgender students in schools (Arora, Kelly & Goldstein, 2016; Bowers, Lewandowski, Savage & Woitaszewski, 2015; Bowskill, 2017; McCabe & Robinson, 2008). Indeed, there appears to be an urgent need to align the professional development of practising EPs and the curriculum for trainee EPs with the aforementioned BPS practice guidelines (BPS, 2019; Brown & Njoko, 2019). In order to support this, exploration of the experiences of transgender students from an educational psychology perspective is needed. Hence, the current research aimed to explore the school experiences of a group of transgender students to begin to inform EP knowledge and practice.

1.7 Researcher's position

The researcher's work as an EP with a number of transgender young people brought her to this topic for her doctoral research. However, despite (relative) experience of working with transgender students and further professional development in the area, the researcher recognised (and continues to recognise) that she was not immune to internalising prevailing social norms and values throughout the course of the research, in particular as transgender people and their identities were so frequently and contentiously discussed and debated in UK politics and media. The researcher was also aware of the influences of her own identity as a non-transgender female on the research and, in particular, how this aspect of her identity may have made it harder to build a rapport with the young people who participated in the study. However, at the same time, the researcher hoped

that this afforded her a certain distance from the research which meant that she could be more curious and ask clarifying questions when gathering information about the participants' experiences. On the whole, in order not to unintentionally reproduce stereotypes and/or misconceptions in the research, the researcher always strove to approach it with the question of how it might benefit transgender students. The researcher's position was also informed by social constructivism which shall be discussed in chapter 2.

2 Literature review

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter seeks to provide a context for the study by presenting what is already known in the area. To establish this, a systematic search was undertaken to answer the literature review question (LRQ): *What does research tell us about the lived school experiences of transgender students at secondary school to date?* The findings of this review revealed that very little is currently known and so a wider narrative review of the LGBT literature was undertaken to explore what could be drawn from this research to gain some insights into the experiences of transgender students at secondary school.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part 1 details the search strategy utilised by the researcher to find the literature included in the review. Part 2 presents the narrative review of the LGBT literature. Part 3 presents the findings of the review and answers the LRQ. The chapter concludes by detailing the absence of transgender students in the educational/school psychology literature.

2.2 Part 1: Search strategy

A search of the following databases was conducted on 10th February 2021 using a programme which allowed a unified search of all databases available to the researcher's University library: PsycINFO, Education Source, ERIC, PEP Archive, SocINDEX with Full Text, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection, PsycARTICLES, PsycBOOKS, MEDLINE, Health Business Elite and CINAHL with Full Text. To ensure search terms captured all of the available literature, the researcher utilised her further training on terminology in the area of gender diversity to determine possible variants for

the term ‘transgender’. These included ‘gender diverse’, ‘gender variant’ and ‘gender non-conforming’. Following this, a search was carried out for each term and combined AND ‘school’. Limiters for the searches included ‘abstract’, ‘Boolean phrase’, ‘peer reviewed’ and research in ‘English’ as per the inclusion/exclusion criteria set out below in Table 1. As the search for ‘transgender’ AND ‘school’ yielded a large number of articles (3,751), a further limiter (subject – ‘schools’) was applied to ensure the focus of the studies was school based experiences. These searches identified 235 articles. As the latter search was limited by subject in order to ensure that no pertinent literature was missed, the database PsychINFO was searched separately using ‘transgender’ AND ‘school’ with the following limiters: ‘abstract’, ‘Boolean phase’, ‘peer reviewed’ and research in ‘English’. This search was also limited by age to ‘adolescence’. Once duplicates from the previous searches were removed, this search yielded 176 articles. Finally, leading educational psychology journals were searched individually using the above combinations of search terms. These searches did not yield any studies to be included in the review and a discussion of this is provided in Part 3, section 2.6.

Following this, the researcher applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria through screening the abstracts of the 411 identified papers. This screening resulted in a total of 72 articles remaining. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were then applied to the full articles, which resulted in six papers being included (see Appendix A for the list of included papers and Appendix B for the list of excluded papers and their reason for exclusion). While no parameters were set on the date of publication of the articles, no study published prior to 2004 was identified, suggesting the relevancy of the area to today.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
• Papers written in English • Papers that were peer reviewed and published • Papers exploring or evaluating the subjective school experiences of transgender students • Papers that focus on transgender students at second level	• Papers not written in English • Papers that were not peer reviewed and published, including dissertations • Papers that focus on the school experiences of LGB students • Papers that focus on transgender students at primary and college/university levels

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Of the six included articles, three were qualitative and three mixed methods. Therefore, the following evaluation tools were used to critically appraise them:

- For qualitative studies: Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018)
- For mixed methods studies: Evaluative Tool for Mixed Methods Studies (Long, 2005)

Appendix C provides a summary of the appraisals and Part 2 will now provide a summary and critique of each.

2.3 Part 2(a): The school experiences of transgender students as part of the LGBT community

2.3.1 Overview

The systematic literature review drew upon research about the lived school experiences of transgender students. However, the inclusion of only six papers belied the amount of literature that has been published about the school experiences of transgender students when they are included within the LGBT umbrella. While there is widespread scepticism of the representation and benefit of this literature to transgender students (Clark et al.,

2014), the researcher deemed it important to include an overview of it to contribute to determining what the literature tells us about the school experiences of transgender students to date.

2.3.1.1 Overview of quantitative research

The largest body of this research was quantitative and predominantly focused on the victimisation of LGBT students and its negative impact in the USA. Indeed, social transition was shown to be related to high victimisation which, in turn, was related to negative academic outcomes both directly and indirectly via diminished well-being (Kosciw, Palmer & Kull, 2015). Similarly, victimisation was shown to lead to statistically higher truancy, lower grades, greater expectations not to finish high school and lower expectations to attend a four-year college for LGBT students than their non-LGBT peers (Aragon, Poteat, Espelage & Koenig, 2014). Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni and Koenig (2011) found that victimisation had universal negative effects on LGBT students' school belonging, while Kosciw and Pizmony-Levy (2016) revealed that negative school climates affected school belonging and absenteeism of LGBT students similarly in both the USA and Israel.

In the same study, Kosciw and Pizmony-Levy (2016) found that LGBT students in the US were more likely to experience assault at school. More recently, Norris and Orchouski's (2020) survey of dating and sexual experiences showed that LGBT students were more likely than non-LGBT youth to experience threatening behaviour and sexual abuse in a dating relationship. LGBT youth also reported engaging in riskier sexual behaviour than heterosexual youth, even after peer victimisation was accounted for (Robinson & Espelage, 2011, 2012).

Research into the victimisation of LGBT students also demonstrated links between it and increased mental health risk behaviours and mental health difficulties for LGBT youth. Hatchel, Espelage and Huang (2018) found that peer victimisation was an antecedent to depressive symptoms for LGBT students (but that school belonging mediated this association). Huebner, Thoma and Neilands (2015) found that anti-LGBT victimisation at school was associated with substance abuse, and in a follow-up study that intention to use drugs, peer victimisation and depressive symptoms predicted both suicide ideation and attempts. Similarly, Hatchel, Valido, Pedro, Huang and Espelage (2019) found peer victimisation to be positively associated with suicidality and negatively associated with school belonging and self-compassion. Outside of the USA, in New Zealand, Espelage, Merrin and Hatchel (2018) found that LGBT students with lower rates of victimisation had significantly lower rates of suicidality compared to LGBT youths with high rates of victimisation.

A relatively more limited number of studies focused on protective factors for LGBT students, and again, were predominantly undertaken in the US. Kull, Greytak, Kosciw and Villenas (2016) found that LGBT students in schools with specific anti-bullying protections in their policies reported greater school safety, less victimisation and less social aggression than students with generic policies or no/unidentified policies. Similarly, Day, Loverno and Russell (2019) found such school policies to be associated with more positive experiences and perceptions of school climate for LGBT youth. Gower et al. (2018) found that students attending schools with more supportive LGBT climates reported lower odds of bullying and Snapp, McGuire, Sinclair, Gabrion and Russell (2015) found that supportive curricula was related to LGBT students feeling safer at school. Collectively, these findings highlight the importance of inclusive policies and

practices that address the specific needs of LGBT students. Indeed, they become even more important in view of the finding that educators may perceive higher levels of support for LGBT students from school personal and peers than actually reported by LGBT youth (Crothers et al., 2017).

The majority of research on protective factors for LGBT students has focused on US-based GSAs at school. Marx and Kettrey's (2016) meta-analysis found that GSA presence was associated with significantly lower levels of LGBT students' self-reports of homophobic victimisation, fear for safety and hearing homophobic remarks. In the largest single study, Poteat, Sinclair, DiGovanni, Koenig and Russell (2012) found that youth in schools with GSAs reported less truancy, smoking, drinking, suicide attempts and sex with casual partners than in schools without, with the difference being more sizable for LGBT students than their non-transgender, heterosexual peers. Similarly, Loverno and Russell (2021) found that GSAs may be beneficial for all students who experience a negative school climate, and that they are particularly protective for transgender students. Indeed, Seelman et al. (2015) found that the larger, more active, more visible and more supportive a GSA was perceived to be, the more all students engaged at school. Conversely, Heck et al. (2014) found that LGBT students without a GSA at school were at increased risk for using cocaine, hallucinogenics and marijuana. This is supported by Colvin, Egan and Coulter's (2019) finding that GSAs are important for decreasing mental health risk behaviours and supporting the mental health of sexual/gender minority students.

2.3.1.2 Overview of mixed methods research

Using a mixed methods design of surveys and structured interviews, Reygan (2009) explored the school based experiences of LGBT youth in Ireland and found that the majority did not consider school a safe place; almost half reported that homophobia impacted negatively on their studies and one fifth left school early as a result. Interestingly, apart from this study, the remainder of the mixed method research focused on protective factors for LGBT students. Using the quantitative and qualitative results of a national survey on homophobia and transphobia in Canada, Tracey, Taylor and Campbell (2016) demonstrated that modest efforts to shift the balance of 'heteronormative discourse' on behalf of LGBT students had positive effects on their experiences and perceptions of school. Similarly, Jones and Hiller (2012) utilised national data to reveal significant correlations between LGBT-specific policies and a variety of well-being and psycho-social outcomes for LGBT students. On a smaller scale, Wernick, Dessel, Kulick and Graham (2013) demonstrated the positive impact of a youth-led performance and dialogue in cultivating LGBT anti-bullying behaviours among students.

2.3.1.3 Overview of qualitative research

Qualitative research on the school experiences of LGBT students has also been dominated by studies from the US and themes have followed much the same pattern as those of quantitative research. Grossman et al. (2009) conducted focus groups with LGBT youth exploring their experiences of school violence and identified core themes as a lack of community for LGBT students and a lack of empowerment or agency to protect and support themselves and each other. Additional themes around negative attention, including harassment and physical violence were also raised by each group. The focus groups ended by asking participants to recommend actions for the prevention of violence against LBGT students and led the authors to conclude that one of the most protective

factors felt by participants was that of supportive staff actions – that is, when staff recognised them for their gender and sexual identity, and respected and supported this. Elsewhere, Craig, McInroy and Austin (2018) illuminated the specific physical and emotional safety needs of racially and ethnically diverse LGBT students, while Gato et al. (2020) identified victimisation, coming out experiences, support networks and demands over a lack of LGBT information at school as the main themes capturing Portuguese LGBT students' experiences. Leung and Flanagan's (2019) unique study using two novel qualitative methodologies, photo-voice and mobile interviewing, highlighted the benefits of listening to the opinions of LGBT students that are contextualised in the environments in which they are experienced.

Interestingly, the largest cohort of qualitative research on LGBT youths' school experiences has been on the curriculum. In the first UK study in the review, Saunston and Simpson (2011) conducted interviews with English teachers and LGBT youth who attended or had recently left secondary school in Birmingham. They found that issues around sexual diversity were absent from the curriculum, while other forms of diversity were more visible. As a result, the authors argued that teachers were not explicitly encouraged to explore sexual diversity in their teaching and that the effects of this on LGBT students were overwhelmingly negative. In the USA, Jarpe-Ratner (2020), through observations, interviews and focus groups, examined the extent to which an intentionally designed curriculum that was inclusive of LGBT identities was truly experienced as inclusive by students and teachers. Unfortunately, they found it was not. Similarly, Gowen and Winges-Yarez (2014) and Snapp, Burdge, Licona, Moody and Russell (2015) revealed through focus groups that LGBT students perceived sexuality education as primarily exclusive. Finally, young people speaking in Linville's (2011) action research

project suggested that accurate and comprehensive information about sex, sexuality and gender - not just for themselves, but also for their peers, teachers and school authorities - may have improved their level of belonging in schools.

Research on GSAs did not feature as strongly in the qualitative literature as it did in the quantitative. However, one exception to this was St. John et al.'s (2014) study whereby they found that apart from providing direct support, GSAs also decreased isolation by connecting LGBT students with other LGBT community members, events and resources. This finding becomes important in light of Mulcahy, Dalton, Kolbert and Crothers (2016) assertion that LGBT students may avoid identifying a potential informal school personnel mentor because they may be too concerned about mentor acceptance.

2.4 Part 2(b): The school experiences of transgender students through the lens of LGBT research

A number of studies have attempted to extrapolate the data pertaining to transgender students collected as part of primary LGBT research in an attempt to further explore and illuminate the specific experiences of these students. In such a study, Day, Perez-Brumer and Russell (2018) used data from the California Healthy Kids Survey to show that transgender students were more likely to experience victimisation and bias-based bullying; more negative perceptions of school climate and also be truant more often from school than their non-transgender peers. Similarly, using a LGBT Teen Study, Murchison, Agenor, Reisner and Watson (2019) found that sexual assault was highly prevalent in transgender and non-binary youth and that restrictive school restroom and locker room policies may be associated with this risk.

In a second study using the California Healthy Kids Survey, and in line with the findings of the LGBT studies above, Hatchel et al. (2019) found that not only were transgender students exposed to victimisation, but also that such victimisation predicted mental health issues (like suicidal ideation) and diminished school belonging. Similarly, using the Minnesota Student Survey, Taliaferro, McMorris and Eisenberg (2018) examined associations between social connectedness and non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) among transgender/gender non-conforming youth and found that almost 55% of transgender students engaged in NSSI and 40% reported repetitive self-injury. Parent connectedness, connections to non-parental adults and school safety emerged as robust protective factors in this study, leading the authors to conclude that strategies to prevent/reduce NSSI should focus on fostering connections with prosocial adults and ensuring schools represent safe places for transgender students. The first nationally representative survey to report the health and well-being of transgender students in New Zealand revealed that they had compromised health and well-being relative to their non-transgender peers, in particular with regard to perceiving that a parent cared about them, depressive symptoms, suicide attempts and school bullying (Clark et al., 2014).

As with the above literature on LGBT students, a more limited number of studies explored factors to protect transgender youth from such health problems. Using the same survey data as Taliaferro et al. (2018), Gower et al. (2018b) examined associations between eight protective factors (including school based ones: friends, adults in the community, teachers and feeling safe at school) and depression, suicidality and substance use among transgender and gender diverse students. They found that feeling safe at school and connected to adults in one's community protected against depression, while suicidality and teacher connectedness buffered the risk of substance abuse. Similarly, in

Australia, Ullman (2017) revealed the significant predictive impact of teachers' positivity on gender diverse students' sense of connection to their school environment, and highlighted the need for educators to be more knowledgeable and affirming of gender diversity. Finally, Greytak, Kosciw and Boesen (2013), using data from a larger study on the school experiences of American LGBT youth, examined the variability and effectiveness of LGBT-related school resources for transgender youth as compared to LGB non-transgender youth. All four resources examined – GSAs, supportive educators, LGBT-inclusive curricula and comprehensive anti- bullying policies which included specific protections for LGBT students, were related to decreased absenteeism. Three of the four resources (expect for anti-bullying policies) were related to lower levels of victimisation, with the positive effects of policies and GSAs found to be even stronger for transgender youth.

2.5 Part 3: The school experiences of transgender students

2.5.1 Overview

As evidenced, a relatively small body of research which focused on the lived secondary school experiences of transgender students was captured through the systemic search for this review. These studies (three qualitative (Evans & Rawlings, 2019; Sausa, 2005 and Wyss, 2004) and three mixed methods (Jones et al., 2016; McBride and Schubotz 2017 and McGuire, Anderson, Toomey& Russell 2010) shall now be summarised and critiqued.

2.5.1.1 Qualitative studies

Wyss' (2004) study explored the experiences of harassment and violence endured by seven gender non-conforming students in the US. Wyss (2004) collected data through interviews and questionnaires and presented findings under the headings of 'incidents of violence' and 'reactions to violence'. Wyss (2004) found that the large majority of participants in the study were victimised to some degree, although the frequency and severity of what they encountered varied. Wyss (2004) also discussed the avoidance techniques and self-defence strategies the participants used to protect themselves from the violence, as well as the coping mechanisms they drew on post-harassment. Regarding the latter, Wyss (2004) reported that many participants felt unable to discuss their concerns with others due to either shame or a lack of response to previous disclosures. Other participants reported responding to violence by engaging in unsafe practices such as unsafe sex or substance abuse. Wyss' paper concluded by suggesting specific areas for school-based and cultural reform that she believed would protect gender non-conforming students. These included training for all educational staff; up-to-date writings on the issue in all libraries; explicit inclusion for LGBT youth in anti-bullying, suicide prevention and other non-discrimination policies and lastly, but most pertinent to the current research, that school psychologists be trained to deal knowledgably and sensitively with gender non-conforming students.

A strength of this study was that Wyss ascertained the credibility of her findings through respondent validation; however, no discussion around analysis of the data was included. It was also a limitation that participants had either graduated or dropped out of education one to five years prior to the research commencing, which may have led to some difficulties and/or bias in their recall. Further weaknesses of the study were that

ethical considerations were not thoroughly discussed, and the researcher's position was not made clear.

Sausa's (2005) study described the school experiences of 24 transgender youth (ages 14-21) in Philadelphia and also presented their recommendations for improving school environments. Sausa (2005) collected data through semi-structured interviews and subsequent content analysis revealed 12 major themes which Sausa (2005) presented under the headings of 'harassment and violence in the educational school system', 'problems with gender-segregated school facilities' and 'lack of trained educators and school staff'. The study revealed that 96% of the participants experienced verbal harassment in school, and 83% experienced physical harassment. This led to 75% of participants reporting not feeling safe in school, with the same percentage dropping out before statutory school completion. Further common themes for experiences among participants were difficulties with gender-segregated facilities and activities (such as gym classes, locker rooms and bathrooms); harassment from teachers and staff; a lack of staff advocacy and support and problems related to procedures, policies and resources (e.g., use of pronouns).

A strength of this study was that participants provided recommendations for schools in supporting transgender students. These included creating gender neutral bathrooms; implementing an anti-harassment policy; allowing transgender youth to join sports teams according to their self-identified gender; avoiding treating transgender youth differently in regards to dress code; asking transgender youth what name and pronouns they wish to use and addressing these administratively; remaining up to date on the language used by transgender youth; receiving training so that staff are knowledgeable

with regard to transgender youth; designating a specific transgender advocate for students and initiating a gender-focused support group such as a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). An additional strength of this study was its internal validity, whereby questions for the interview were based on six preliminary interviews with transgender youth and supporting transgender adults. Similarly, Sausa (2005) held three 'member check' interviews post analysis to confirm themes with participants and solicit feedback. However, weaknesses of the study were that no details were provided with regard to the content of the interview tool, data analysis techniques or the researcher's position. The paper would also have benefited from detailing a more thorough consideration of the ethical issues of working with this vulnerable population.

Evans and Rawlings (2019) explored the positive school experiences of three transgender students in Australia. They collected data through semi-structured interviews and subsequent thematic analysis revealed 12 major themes, grouped under three headings – 'significant people'; 'relationships and dialogue' and 'groups and materials'. While the first two themes related to relationships with staff and the characteristics that made these relationships positive for the participants, the final theme related to the participants' experiences with school-wide initiatives which centred around the groups and materials made available to them. This included data pertaining to school uniforms, the availability and promotion of written resources and certain physical spaces within the schools. All of the themes were found to contribute to safer and more supportive learning environments for the participants.

The goal of Evan and Rawlings' (2019) study was to provide educators with examples of positive teaching practices that they can draw from to support transgender

students within their classrooms. To conclude, they called for more professional development in the area around terminology; that staff should be provided with the skills to have meaningful relationships and dialogues with transgender students; resources should resist the presumption of 'cisgender normativity' and finally, that schools should encourage the creation of LGBT student associations. The study also demonstrated that respecting and reinforcing students' right to utilise their preferred pronouns and names at school was affirming and empowering for them.

This study had many strengths including its research design and methodology. However, weaknesses of the study included its low number of participants and that recruitment relied on existing contacts of the primary researcher. Similarly, as participants were 17 to 26 years their experiences at both school and/or university were included and not differentiated. Furthermore, only students whom had positive experiences were invited to participate, and although the authors stated that participants reflected about the range of difficulties they experienced at school, the data was not included or detailed elsewhere in a second paper.

2.5.1.2 Mixed methods studies

McGuire, Anderson, Toomey and Russell (2010) utilised a multi-method approach to examine the issues that transgender students encountered in school environments in California. They triangulated survey data collected at middle and high schools (total n=2260, 68 transgender students) with data collected through focus groups with transgender students (n=35; age range 12-23). During the focus groups, transgender youth's experiences of school harassment, school strategies implemented to reduce harassment, the protective role of supportive school personnel, and individual responses

to harassment, including dropping out and changing schools were examined. Survey data was statistically analysed through a series of comparisons between transgender and non-transgender youth on a number of measures as determined by the survey questions (e.g., 'school has a policy', 'know where to get info'). Focus group transcripts were broken down into 'idea segments', which were then coded by two raters to determine the relative prevalence of each of the primary themes.

In both studies, the researchers found that school harassment due to transgender identity was pervasive, and that this harassment was negatively associated with feeling safe at school. When schools took action to reduce harassment, students reported greater connections to school personnel and, in turn, these connections were associated with greater feelings of safety. Focus group data also illuminated specific processes schools could engage in to benefit transgender youth and also how the youth experienced these interventions.

A strength of this study was that in recognition of the limitation of the small proportion of transgender students in the survey, the authors also conducted focus groups to expand and triangulate the data. The study's qualitative and quantitative findings also converged on the finding that school environments were unsafe for transgender youth and that school efforts to promote safe environments can help. The value of trusting adult relationships was also supported in both studies. A further strength of the study was that its quantitative aspect examined the cumulative impact of multiple protective contextual factors. Also, the authors made several worthwhile suggestions for future research.

A weakness of the study was that the survey analyses were limited by the small sample size of transgender students and that as a result, manifest variables were used. The focus groups were also limited by a number confounding variables. To begin with, more participants were transgender female to male (FTM) than transgender male to female (MTF) and the MTFs were older and more likely to have been out of school. Additionally, most of the MTFs did not begin the transition process until after leaving school, meaning that they may have had fewer school experiences to draw from. A further weakness of the study was that although two coders assured more reliability of the focus group data, data analysis details were lacking. Whilst some ethical considerations were discussed, there was no discussion of the potential implications of the monetary incentive offered to the young people for their participation in the study.

Jones et al. (2016) explored the school experiences of Australian transgender and gender diverse students. Data was collected through an online survey of 189 transgender and gender diverse students aged 14-25 years and 16 online follow-up interviews with members from this group. Survey data were analysed using SPSS and interview data in a grounded manner. Findings included a merging of both quantitative and qualitative data under the headings of 'general school experience'; 'basic record keeping'; 'sexuality and puberty classes'; 'counselling'; 'segregation of facility use'; 'uniform'; 'staff'; 'supportive classmates'; 'positive outcomes of activism' and 'types of activism'. Key findings included that just under one-tenth of transgender and gender diverse students had formally changed their gender on their school records; however, a further 41% wanted to do so. With regard to sexuality education, two-thirds rated their schools' provision as 'mostly inappropriate', with less than 10% rating theirs as 'mostly appropriate'. Over 40% felt that gender segregation was too often applied at their school, and over one-third

felt that the changing rooms and toilets were ‘mostly inappropriate’. Participants who reported receiving no teacher support were over four times more likely to leave school and were twice as likely to hide at lunchbreak. They were also at an increased risk of various types of harassment and abuse (via mobile phones, written and discriminatory language). Students whose teachers’ use of pronouns, name or identity was perceived as ‘mostly inappropriate’ experienced increased abuse from peers and suffered poorer educational outcomes compared to those whose teachers used appropriate language – highlighting the influencing factors of teaching staff in this study. About two-thirds of participants experienced verbal abuse on the basis of their gender identity and 21% experienced physical abuse. Over 90% of the participants who had experienced physical abuse had thought about suicide. A key protective factor revealed in the study was that participants with supportive classmates were less likely to experience various forms of harassment and discrimination. Also, younger participants (14-17) were more likely to have been provided with trans-inclusive counselling at school, suggesting a more recent increase in support for these students.

A strength of the study was that the researchers worked with a community advocacy group of transgender, gender diverse and intersex people to advise on the study’s design. This ensured the construct validity of the study and also increased the credibility and dependability of its design. A further strength of the study was its recruitment process and participant numbers. However, there were a number of weakness to the study, including a lack of details regarding the survey, interview and data analysis procedures used. Similarly, whilst some ethical considerations were discussed, this was not appropriate to the nature of the study and the potentially vulnerable participant

population it involved. Finally, the authors only very briefly reflected on the implications of their findings for school practice.

McBride and Schubotz (2017) investigated the educational experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming youth in Northern Ireland. Through a mixed methods design, data from an annual attitude survey of 16 year olds (n =1939; transgender/gender non-conforming youth = 10) was triangulated with findings from five semi-structured interviews conducted with transgender and gender non-conforming youth (age range 12-23). Analysis of the survey data found that transgender and gender non-conforming youth were more likely to experience both homophobic and transphobic abuse than either non-transgender, heterosexual or non-transgender, non-heterosexual students. They were also more likely to experience this abuse more frequently. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed three themes in which showed how transgender and gender non-conforming youth's experiences of homophobia and transphobia were connected to, what the authors termed, 'heteronormative' structures, ethos, curriculum and policies of schools. As a result, the authors concluded by recommending 'counter-heteronormative' interventions that could aid educators and schools to benefit transgender and gender non-conforming youth.

As with McGuire et al.'s (2010) study, a strength of this study was its triangulation of survey data with interview data. The authors were also the first to state their positions as 'gender conformists' (i.e., they were not gender diverse). However, a major weakness of the study was its very limited information on data collection and analysis, making the study not replicable and its validity less confirmable.

2.6 Absence of transgender students in the Educational Psychology literature

As evidenced above, research with regard to transgender young people at school has begun to increase; however, this has not been replicated in the published school/educational psychology literature. The earliest articles the researcher found were a mini-series dedicated to LGBT youth in the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)'s journal, *School Psychology Review,* in 2000. The mini-series described possible risk factors that may exist for LGBT youth and recommended intervention and prevention programmes; however, it did not include any direct research with transgender or LGBT youth. Following this, a special topic on promoting social justice in the fourth issue in 2008 explored how graduate students in education, school psychology and counselling were being prepared to help ensure an equal and safe learning environment for LGBT youth (McCabe & Robinson, 2008). The following year, in 2009, an exploratory study investigated the strategies used by GSA advisers when advocating for LGBT youth in school and there implications for school psychologists (Graybill, Varjas, Meyers & Watson, 2009). Articles on GSAs were the only research directly related to LGBT youth in schools in the American Psychological Association (APA)'s *School Psychology Quarterly/School Psychology* (Heck, 2011; Chong, Poteat, Yoshikawa & Calzo, 2019).

Articles on transgender young people remained completely absent from the educational psychology literature until an article was published in the December 2016 issue of *Educational Psychology in Practice.* This piece explored the potential implications for EPs around the area of gender diversity by working through three hypothetical practice examples (Yavuz, 2016). The following year, a study in *Educational and Child Psychology* explored how educational professionals can improve outcomes for

transgender children and young people (Bowskill, 2017). More recently, the journal included a review of the literature to identify and explore the beliefs that influence children and young people's attitudes towards transgender people (Read et al., 2020). Transgender students have remained completely absent from the *British Journal of Educational Psychology.*

Most likely in response to the increasing visibility of transgender young people in UK society, and in an attempt to address the lack of research in the area, a number of unpublished doctoral theses emerged at the time of the researcher's literature search. Indeed, it is acknowledged that by not including this unpublished literature in the systematic review, it's comprehensive and timely nature may have been lessened. Freedman (2019) explored the experiences of four secondary school age transgender young people and their mothers in relation to home, community and school to inform the work of EPs. Leonard (2019) explored the positive school experiences of three transgender young people aged 16 to 18, in order to promote and advocate for these for others. Charlton (2020) explored school staff's views regarding transgender students and the role of the EP and found that participants valued the potential contribution EPs could have in the area. Finally, Court (2020) explored the constructs held by seven Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) and EPs in relation to supporting children and young people who self-identify as gender variant. She found that participants' constructions varied considerably, which led her to conclude that there needs to be continued research and engagement in the area before definitive roles for EPs can be established.

2.7 Summary of research findings and contribution of the current research to the literature

The findings from the above reviews converge to highlight that, to date, research on victimisation dominates the literature on the school experiences of transgender students. Reviewed studies consistently found that transgender students received high levels of verbal, physical and sexual harassment and assault from their peers and, to a lesser extent, school staff. Furthermore, the literature revealed that transgender students were more likely to be the recipients of harassment and violence than both their non-transgender, heterosexual *and* non-transgender, LGB peers. A related common theme in the research was the effect that this harassment and violence had on transgender students' feelings of safety and belonging at school, and also on their mental health and related risk taking, including substance abuse, depression, NSSI, suicidal thoughts and suicide. However, reviewed studies including or focusing on protective factors for transgender students revealed that although school environments were frequently unsafe for these youth, school efforts to promote safe environments were not futile and can help. In particular, the literature revealed trusting relationships with school staff and systemic endeavours such as anti-bullying polices, inclusive curriculum and GSAs as robust protective factors.

As evidenced through this review, at present, there is a relative dearth in the literature pertaining to the lived experiences of transgender youth in schools, particularly in the UK. As a result, the voice of the young person is distinctly lacking in the literature in the area (Bowskill, 2017). Furthermore, there has been no published study to date in the area from an educational psychology perspective. The current study aimed to address these current gaps in the literature by exploring the school experiences of UK-based transgender young people in terms of the subjectivities and complexities inherent in their lived experiences. It was hoped that by doing this, EPs may begin to be better informed as to how to support transgender students, their schools and families.

3 Methodology

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter begins by outlining the study's research question, aims and purpose. It then examines the philosophical underpinnings of the study by detailing its ontological and epistemological positioning, as well as its qualitative research design. The chapter then provides an overview of the study's chosen methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The research procedure is described, including details on participants and the methods of data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes by detailing how the ethical considerations of the research were addressed, as well as how its validity and reliability were promoted.

3.2 Research aims, question and purpose

The aim of the study was to gain an understanding of how transgender young people experience school. The overarching research question was: *'What are transgender students' experiences of post-16 education?'*

The purpose of the study was primarily exploratory; however, there was also an emancipatory emphasis which became more pertinent as the researcher came to realise how strongly participants wished to advocate for themselves and their peers whom also identify as transgender.

The aim and purpose of the research were met through the choice of methodology, which shall now be detailed in full.

3.3 Philosophical underpinnings of the research

What research questions are asked and how they are answered is affected by one's philosophical position (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). As Lyons (2016) details, the research questions posed; the status given to the data; how one conceptualises their role as researcher and the conclusions drawn from the data are all influenced by the philosophical basis of the research. In this regard, the ontological and epistemological positions which informed the goal of this research and the choices made about method selection are now detailed.

3.3.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to what knowledge is or what can be known and is concerned with the nature and structure of reality (Crotty, 1998). Perceptions and definitions of reality can be seen on a continuum from absolute realism through to absolute relativism (Willig, 2008). Realism asserts that reality is single, objective and separate from human thought, culture and belief. However, relativism differs by suggesting that multiple realities exist, which are entwined with the meaning each individual makes about life.

This study espoused an ontological position closer to the relativist end of the continuum, believing that individuals construct reality by interpreting their experiences. Meaning is therefore created through interactions and shared experiences an individual has with others, their environment, culture and language (Bredo, 1994).

3.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology refers to how we know what we know and the theory of knowledge. Epistemology can be affected by ontological position and like ontology, it can be seen as a continuum from positivism to constructionism (Willig, 2008). Positivism relates to realist ontology, asserting that knowledge is objective and can be directly gained through observation and experiment (Creswell, 2009). On the other end of the continuum, constructionism views knowledge as gained though interpretation and shaped by language (Gergen, 1999).

This study's epistemology is social constructivism. Within social constructivism, each individual constructs their perceptions of reality in relation to their experience of the world and their interactions with others (Gergen, 1999). Experiences are mediated through history, culture and language. Although similar to social constructionism, social constructivism relates more to the individual experience of understanding, than the social processes affecting their understanding. Within social constructivism, linguistics is crucial in understanding how and why the storyteller chooses particular words and narrative styles to communicate experiences and how this affects a listener's understanding (Burr, 2003). In this instance, this study perceived that multiple, but equally valid accounts of the world can exist at the same time.

3.4 Research design

3.4.1 Qualitative

A researcher's ontological and epistemological position should inform which type of research design is appropriate for a study. Qualitative methodology is underpinned by

constructivist or constructionist epistemologies and aims to understand how people experience their lives. Qualitative methodology is in contrast to quantitative methodology, which most often employs positivist epistemology and quantifies information through number data to ascertain generalisations. The aim of this study, to explore the post-16 education experiences of transgender students, aligned most appropriately with qualitative methodology. I will now define and present an argument for choosing IPA.

3.4.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

3.4.2.1 Overview of IPA as a methodology

IPA is a modern qualitative methodology which has rapidly grown in influence since Johnathon Smith first outlined it in the mid-1990s (Howitt & Cramer, 2016; Smith, 1996). While originally the application of IPA was in the fields of health and clinical psychology, it has increasingly been adopted in other fields of psychology, including educational (Howitt & Cramer, 2016). The aim of IPA is to explore in detail individual personal and lived experience and to examine how participants are making sense of their personal and social world (Smith & Eatough, 2016). The main currency for an IPA study is the meanings that particular experiences, events and states hold for participants (Smith and Eatough, 2016).

3.4.2.2 Theoretical underpinnings

IPA has theoretical origins in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith & Eatough, 2016). Each shall now be discussed in turn.

IPA is part of a small family of methodologies informed by phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology was first developed by Husserl in the early 20th century and focuses on the philosophical study of 'being', or conscious experiences (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2015; Oxley, 2016). Husserl rejected the influential positivist ideas of the time, that there is an objective physical world which exists independently of the mind. Instead, he argued that we cannot know the physical world (even whether it exists) except in terms of how it is experienced through human consciousness (Howitt & Cramer, 2016). Husserl developed a series of steps referred to as 'reductions', which involve 'bracketing' preconceptions and pre-existing knowledge to try to get to the essence of a phenomenon (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2015). However, as it is not easy to put aside one's own interpretation of the world, 'reductions' are difficult to apply in a practical sense. This difficulty with Husserl's work was recognised by Heidegger (1962, 1927). Heidegger argued that we cannot achieve reductions as understanding is always drawn from our own position. As a result, he suggested that the closest we can get to fully understanding a phenomenon is through interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). Heidegger's work expressing phenomenology as explicitly interpretative is key to IPA, which as the name suggests, is an interpretative and phenomenological approach (Oxley, 2016). As Smith and Osborne (2015) summarise, IPA is phenomenological in that it is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself.

Heidegger also developed the idea of hermeneutics, which is a theory of interpretation and is central to phenomenological philosophy. Hermeneutics is based upon the idea that there is a dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, a hermeneutic circle, whereby *'to understand any given part, you look to the whole; to*

understand the whole you look to its parts' (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). As explained above, IPA researchers encourage participants to describe and reflect on experiences they encounter, which involves them thinking about what experiences mean (that is, interpreting them). However, as researchers, we also come at an interpretative activity in attempting to make sense of what participants tell us. In this instance, a dual interpretative process or double hermeneutic is at work, in which *'the participant is trying to make sense of his/her world and the researcher is trying to make sense of how the participant is trying to make sense of his/her world'* (Smith & Osborne, 2015, p. 83). Thus, hermeneutics phenomenology recognises that the researcher's views of the world are inextricably intertwined with the way in which they interpret a participant's experience. As Oxley (2016) asserts, this needs to be acknowledged by the researcher and can be done by actively and continually reflecting on what they bring to the process.

Smith and Eatough (2016) argue that the double hermeneutic can be looked at another way. As IPA combines an empathic hermeneutics with a critical hermeneutics it tries to understand a phenomenon from the point of view of a person, while also asking curious and critical questions of their accounts (Smith & Eatough, 2015; Riceour, 1970). As Smith and Eatough (2016) assert, allowing for both aspects in the inquiry is likely to lead to a richer analysis and do greater justice to the totality of the person. However, it is necessary for an IPA analysis to begin with an empathetic stance before adding a critical layer during the later stages of analysis.

IPA is interested in the detailed examination of experiences and in understanding how particular people have experienced particular events. This idiographic mode of enquiry contrasts with the nomothetic approach dominant in psychology. In a nomothetic

study, analysis is at the level of groups and populations and probabilistic claims are made about individuals. In contrast, an idiographic study does not eschew generalisations, but rather works from individual cases very cautiously to make general claims. As data has been derived from the examination of individual case studies, an idiographic approach also makes it possible to make specific statements about individuals (Smith & Osborne, 2015). Therefore, as Smith and Eatough (2016) point out, from an IPA study the reader should be able to learn something about both the important general themes in the analysis, and also about the narrative life world of the particular participants who have told their stories.

IPAs emphasis on sense-making by both the participant and the researcher means that it can be described as having cognition as a central analytic concern, and this suggests an interesting theoretical alliance with the cognitive paradigm that is dominant in contemporary psychology. IPA shares with cognitive psychology and social psychology approaches, a concern with mental processes (Smith & Osborne, 2015). However, IPA strongly diverges from mainstream psychology when it comes to deciding the appropriate methodology for examining such phenomena. While mainstream psychology is strongly committed to quantitative and experimental methodology, IPA employs in-depth qualitative analysis. To summarise, Figure 1 shows a diagrammatic overview of the research strategy leading to the researcher's choice of IPA.

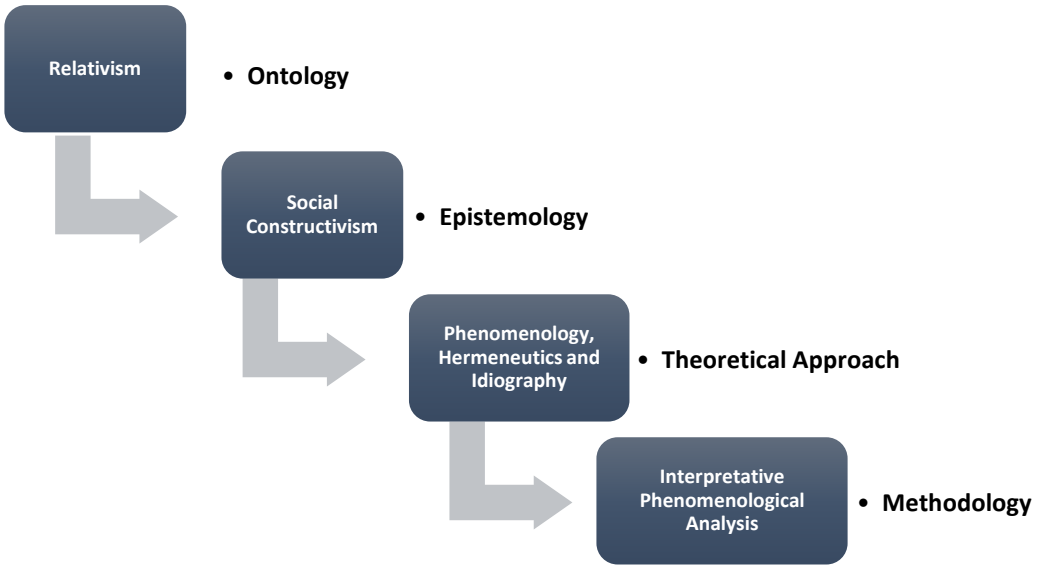

Figure 1. The philosophical underpinnings of the research strategy

3.4.2.3 Criticism and alternative approaches to IPA

Although the researcher will shortly argue for the use of IPA in this study, there are some criticisms to this approach which shall now be addressed.

Willig (2008, p. 66) argued that IPA is dependent on language and that language *'constructs rather than describes reality'*. However, as discussed, IPA has a theoretical commitment to the person as a cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being and as a result assumes a chain of connection between people's talk and their thinking and emotional state (Smith & Osborne, 2015). As Howitt and Cramer (2016, p.457) summarise, *'IPA is not particularly interested in how language is used, but rather it is interested in what people can tell us about their experiences through language'.*

IPAs relationship with cognition has also been criticised. Willig (2008, p.69), for example, stated that cognition is not *'compatible with some aspects of phenomenological thought'*. However, as discussed above, Smith et al. (2009) argued that an integral

component of IPA is cognition as it invites participants to self-reflect and utilise cognitive faculties such as reasoning and memory. Willig (2008) also argued that IPA is purely descriptive about an experience occurring as it does not explain why any given phenomena of experience takes place. However, Fade (2004) argued that through the exploration of relationships and patterns underlying narratives or the comparison of themes emerging in different cases, theories can be generated in an IPA study's discussion and thus, IPA can be both exploratory and explanatory. Indeed, Smith et al. (2009) argued for 'theoretical generalisability', where the reader may be able to access the evidence in relation to their existing professional and experiential knowledge.

A number of researchers have also examined and criticised IPA as a result of the poor application of the approach in published research. In their review, Brocki and Wearden (2006) identified that limited descriptions of the process of interviewing made it difficult to evaluate how the interview process influenced participants' responses. They also suggested that the individual and idiosyncratic aspects of participants' data could be lost through the process of looking for similarities and differences across a larger sample. Possibly as a result, they noted that in some papers the final themes simply reflected the questions on the interview schedule. Indeed, Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2015) also raised the criticism that IPA researchers often lack confidence in raising the level of interpretation in analyses and, as a result, a broadly descriptive IPA emerges that lacks in depth and demonstrates little difference to a standard thematic analysis. Brocki and Wearden (2006) also criticised researchers for not being open about their own views and preconceptions and so the impact of these upon analysis could not be considered.

Despite the above criticisms, the researcher proceeded to choose IPA for a number of reasons. On the whole, it was felt that IPA was the most appropriate methodology to answer the study's research question and meet its aim. The study's goal was to explore the experiences transgender students have of school. This type of research was clearly suited to a qualitative approach, as experience and perceptions are not easily categorised or translated (Oxley, 2016). In a similar vein, IPA's idiographic nature fit with the researcher's social constructivist epistemological stance. IPA facilitated the researcher to interpret the data collected and indeed, its interpretative stance is what sets IPA apart from other qualitative approaches. IPA enabled a unique spotlight to be shone on the experiences of this cohort of students and so it can be deemed a useful methodology in terms of its relevance to the work of EPs. Smith and Osborne (2015) also assert that IPA is especially useful when one is concerned with complexity, process and rarity, which this study was.

Several methods were considered for the purposes of this study including IPA and grounded theory. As Smith et al. (2009) pointed out, grounded theory is often seen as the main alternative method for someone considering IPA for a research study. Indeed, there is a considerable overlap between what IPA and grounded theory can do, and both have a broadly inductivist approach to inquiry. A grounded theory study of the same broad topic would have pushed towards a more conceptual explanatory outcome based on a larger sample and where the individual accounts would have been drawn on to illustrate the resultant theoretical claim. By contrast, an IPA study offered a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the lived experience of a small number of participants with an emphasis on the convergence and divergence between them (Smith et al. 2009). As this study sought to explore a relatively unexplored phenomenon and, as such, was not at the

stage to explain it, IPA was deemed the more appropriate methodology of the two. Discourse analysis was also considered as it acknowledges the power of language and the effect of social influences upon an individual. However, the role of cognition in IPA in the process of meaning-making meant that by using IPA the researcher could explore and interpret conceptual as well as linguistic elements of the narratives of participants, and for this reason IPA was again deemed the more appropriate methodology to utilise.

3.5 Research procedure

3.5.1 Overview of participant recruitment process and participant information

3.5.1.1 Context of the study

Following much informal research, the researcher utilised the LGBT+ Consortium to identify suitable community based organisations to contact in order to reach potential participants for the study. The LGBT+ Consortium is an infrastructure and membership organisation for LGBT+ voluntary and community based organisations in the UK and, as such, it provided the researcher with the broadest listing and information regarding suitable organisations to approach in London. The researcher did not attempt to recruit participants from within her Local Authority so as to reduce the likelihood of a professional connection.

Following short listing of suitable organisations (namely by age group and location), the researcher made contact with each via phone and/or email. Three organisations (in North West, South West and East London) expressed further interest in the study and so the researcher visited each at an agreed time to meet with the organisation's lead. This meeting was to provide more information about the study,

answer questions and to provide each lead/organisation with an Organisation Information Sheet (see Appendix D for a copy of the sheet). Each of the three organisations visited agreed to become involved in sharing information about the study with the young people whom were members of their youth clubs. In order to do this effectively and with limited inconvenience to the organisations, it was decided that the researcher would visit each before a group session to introduce herself and the research to the young people and to leave Participant Information Sheets for their perusal (see Appendix E for a copy of the sheet). After introducing the study to the young people, the researcher remained behind to answer any questions potential participants had and also to be available should any wish to express an interest in participating. The leads of the organisations also agreed to feed back to the researcher should a young person express an interest to them for further information or to become involved.

From this point seven young people across the three organisations agreed to participate. Following discussion with the leads and the individual young people, it was decided that the interviews would take place before, during or after the usual youth club sessions in the respective organisations. Each organisation provided the researcher and participants with access to a quiet, private room within the clubs for the interview to take place.

3.5.1.2 Sample size and participant information

As stated, seven young people across three London LGBT+ youth clubs participated in the study. In general, IPA studies are conducted on relatively small sample sizes. While there is no exact figure as to how many participants should be included in an IPA study, Smith and Eatough (2016) assert six to eight participants as an appropriate number for a

doctoral IPA study. According to Smith and Eatough (2016), this number provides enough cases to examine similarities and differences between participants, but not so many that the researcher is in danger of being overwhelmed by the amount of data generated.

IPA researchers also try to find a homogenous sample. The reason for this is that if one is interviewing seven participants, it is not helpful to think in terms of random or representative sampling (Smith & Eatough, 2016). In this instance, the researcher used purposive sampling to find a closely defined group for whom the research question was significant. As a result, all but one of the participants in the study (Gene) openly identified as transgender. Gene's non-disclosed transgender identity only came to light during the interview process and as such, the researcher wanted to honour their commitment and contribution to the study and did not feel it ethical to exclude them (Gene's chosen pronoun). However, as homogeneity was needed to maintain the integrity of the study, the researcher made adaptions within the analysis process to accommodate for this anomaly (see chapter 4, section 4.7 for further details). All participants were aged between 16 and 18. This age range was chosen as the young people could consent to participating in the study themselves. It was also felt that young people of this age would be established at secondary school/college and more likely to have socially transitioned/be in a position to reflect on their experiences. All participants attended post-16 education in the city of London and were able to understand and speak English coherently. As detailed, the recruitment process and information sheets were designed and written to include participants of all transgender identities. Prior to recruitment consideration was given to the impact potential intersecting identities (e.g., a young

transgender, autistic person) may have on the homogeneity of the sample; however, such intersectionalities did not arise for any of the young people who took part in the study.

Table 2 below gives a brief summary of the participants by gender identity, age and school year. In line with the large majority of studies in the literature review, pseudonyms were given to the students and the organisations to protect their confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were made aware they would be given pseudonyms and agreed to this prior to consenting to participate in the study. Also, in line with the majority of studies in the literature review and the etiquette of the youth clubs, participants were invited to share their preferred pronouns with the researcher on first meeting. These preferred pronouns were then used for each participant for the remainder of their interview and the write up of the study.

Pseudonym	**Gender Identity/description provided by participant**	**Preferred pronouns specified**	**Age**	**Educational information**
Cedar	Gender fluid (described by participant as: *'a fluctuating* [between male and female] *gender identity'*)	They/them	18	Year 13 in mixed private 6th Form
Addison	Non-binary (described by participant as: *'neutral'*)	They/them	17	Year 12 in mixed public 6th Form college
Ali	Non-binary (described by participant as: *'gender neutral'*)	They/them	16	Year 12 in private all girls 6th Form
*Gene	Non-binary (described by participant as *'not female. Not male'*)	They/them	16	Year 12 in mixed public 6th Form college
Lee	Trans-male (described by participant as:	He/him	17	Year 12 in mixed public 6th Form

	'assigned female at birth but am male')			
River	Demi-girl (described by participant as *'between gender neutral and a girl'*)	They/them	17	Year 12 in mixed public 6th Form
Luca	Trans-male (described by participant as: *'female at birth, but identify as male'*)	He/him	17	Year 12 in mixed public 6th Form college

Table 2. Overview of participant details

3.6 Data collection

3.6.1 Use of semi-structured interviews

The aim of this study was to analyse in detail how transgender young people perceived and made sense of their experiences of school. It therefore required a flexible data collection instrument. Data can be collected for IPA studies in a variety of ways, including diaries, focus groups and interviews. However, the majority of IPA studies tend to use individual semi-structured interviews as it has been found that these offer the most opportunity for participants to give rich and detailed accounts of their experiences and views (Oxley, 2016). Indeed, Smith and Eatough (2016) consider this form of data collection to be exemplary for IPA research, as semi-structured interviews offer a structure for the researcher, but also allow the interview to be participant-led as questions can be changed or omitted, depending on the participant's account. This is important for an IPA study as the researcher wants the participant to talk about the aspects of their experiences that have significance for them rather than impose their own understanding of the phenomenon on their narratives (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriquez, 2011; Oxley, 2016). Fully structured interviews, questionnaires and unstructured participant diaries/accounts

were also considered for this study; however, it was concluded that they may not have allowed the same flexibility as the semi-structured interview did.

3.6.2 Interview schedule

With a semi-structured interview the researcher has a set of questions on an interview schedule, but the interview is guided by the schedule rather than dictated by it (Smith & Osborne, 2015). As Smith and Eatough (2016) point out, producing a schedule beforehand enables one to think explicitly about what might be covered in the interview. It also helps one to think of the difficulties that might be encountered, for example, around sensitive issues and how these could be addressed. Having thought in advance about the different ways the interview may proceed meant that when it came to the interview itself, the researcher could focus more thoroughly and confidently on what the interviewee actually said, which in turn facilitated the interview to flow more smoothly and naturally.

In line with Smith et al.'s (2009) recommendation of six to ten questions, six questions were developed for the interview schedule in this study. The questions related to the conceptual framework of the study with the initial questions being broader in focus, the middle questions more specific and the latter questions open for the participants to lead on what they felt had not been fully addressed or developed within the interview. The wording of the questions was carefully considered and the schedule included a range of question types (Smith et al., 2009). A number of questions contained specific prompts as it was envisaged that some participants may have difficulties in understanding or responding to questions. An appropriate level of generality in the questions was used. On the whole, the schedule aimed to be flexible, individualised, responsive, sensitive and collaborative. Therefore the order of the questions and whether they were used at all was

effected by the flow of the narratives and uninterrupted narratives were encouraged wherever possible. Appendix F contains a copy of the interview schedule.

3.6.3 Interview procedure, briefing and debriefing

The researcher began the interview by briefing each participant in a similar manner on the salient points in the information sheet. The aims and purpose of the research were explained and some information regarding the researcher's professional background was provided. A description of how the information gained in the interview would be audio-recorded, transcribed, analysed and disseminated was included and it was emphasised that anonymity would be protected. The purpose of the schedule was briefly explained and all participants were ensured that there were no right or wrong answers to questions and that they did not have to answer a question if they wished not to. The participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study and asked if they had any questions. Consent was then sought prior to beginning the interviews. A key goal of the beginning of the interview was to establish rapport with the participants, in order to facilitate and support them to explore their personal and potentially sensitive narratives. The researcher wanted to ensure that the interview offered them a space to talk, think and reflect on their experiences and to feel contained. Indeed, it was intended that this would fulfil the researcher's hope that the study would be in some way emancipatory for the participants in allowing them to have their voices and stories heard.

The researcher recognised that the participants would be most at ease somewhere familiar to them and so the interviews took place in their respective youth clubs at a time that suited them. They lasted for an hour, which is usual for this type of interview (Smith et al., 2009). Following each interview, the researcher offered the students some time and

space if they felt they needed it, having disclosed personal and sensitive information. The researcher debriefed the students and gave them an opportunity to share reflections and ask questions. It was once again explained to participants how the findings would be disseminated and they were also advised as to how they could access the research, or get in contact with the researcher again should they need to.

3.6.4 Pilot interview

After consideration the researcher decided not to conduct a pilot interview as part of this study. It was felt that it would be unethical to request a student to delve into their experience of a personal and potentially sensitive topic only for it not to be included in the research. Additionally, it was felt that conducting a pilot interview would not necessarily have prepared the researcher for the others, as every participant was likely to bring different issues, different feelings and a different dynamic to their interview.

3.7 Data analysis

IPA is not a prescriptive approach, rather it provides a set of flexible guidelines and this is particularly true when it comes to analysis (Smith & Eatough, 2016). However, all guidelines are characterised by certain common processes, such as shifting from the descriptive to the interpretative, as well as from the individual's particular experience to the shared experience of all the research participants (Smith et al., 2009). As literature regarding IPA does not stipulate that a unified method must be used, this study primarily followed the detailed stages of analysis as outlined by Smith et al. (2009):

(1) *Transcription and initial listening and reading:* the first audio recorded interview was played, the transcription read and then the audio recording listened to at the

same time as a second reading of the transcription. At this point, the researcher's aim was to become absorbed in the data, beginning the process of entering the participant's world (Oxley, 2016).

(2) *Initial notes:* initial notes of descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments were then added to the data as it was read, heard and re-read and re-heard several times (see Appendix G for an example excerpt). This was because there are three levels to exploratory coding in IPA. The first of these levels is descriptive and focuses on describing the content of the participant's account. The second level delves deeper and explores the linguistic components of what was said, considering how language is being used. The third and deepest level is the conceptual, engaging with the data at a more interpretative level and examining the meanings behind the data (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2015; Smith et al., 2009).

(3) *Emergent themes:* alongside further re-readings, comments were made with the intention of identifying emergent themes. As Oxley (2016) points out, this stage required an analytic shift as the researcher moved from working directly from the transcript to working with the analysis conducted with the exploratory coding. The researcher remained cautious during this stage that this process did not cause too much fragmentation to the participant's experience (Oxley, 2016).

(4) *Subordinate themes:* connections across the emergent themes were made in order to develop subordinate themes on further reviewing of the data.

(5) *Repeat of stages (1) to (4) for all participants:* stages one through four were then repeated with the remaining interviews.

(6) *Superordinate themes:* superordinate themes were then identified across the interviews. As one of the participants, Gene, did not meet the full inclusion criteria, they were not included at this stage of the analysis to ensure that the

sample remained as homogenous as possible. However, in order to honour their views and commitment to the research, their individual superordinate themes were compared to the main sample group, allowing similarities and differences to be observed.

(7) *Overarching themes:* five overarching themes were then created from the superordinate themes. (For clarity the full thematic development for each participant, including development of superordinate and overarching themes can be found in Appendices H, I and J)

3.8 Validity and reliability

As Yardley (2015, p. 257) states, *"evaluating the validity of research involves making a judgement about how well the research has been carried out, and whether the findings can be regarded as trustworthy and useful".* While such judgements are never easy, they can pose particular problems for qualitative research, and yet it remains essential for qualitative researchers to be able to show that their studies are sound and rigorous and yield findings that are as valuable as those from quantitative research (Yardley, 2015). To date, there is a tendency for psychologists to assume that the criteria for validity that are relative to quantitative studies can also be applied to qualitative studies (Yardley, 2015). In evaluating the quality of quantitative studies, statistical generalisability, objectivity and reliability tend to be used; however, due to the differences between the ontologies and epistemologies of quantitative and qualitative research, such methods of evaluation are clearly inappropriate for qualitative studies. As Yardley (2015) explains, most qualitative researchers believe that different people have different equally valid perspectives on 'reality', which is shaped by their context, culture and activities. As such, if there is no

one true 'perspective' on reality, one can question which perspective should be used to evaluate the validity of a study.

Whilst it is not easy to identify criteria that can be applied to all qualitative studies, researchers have tried to agree on common criteria that can be used to judge the validity of qualitative research. Their motives led to the development and publication of a number of guidelines for validity criteria that qualitative studies should meet (e.g., Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999; Heywood and Pigeon, 1992; Meyrick, 2006; Stiles, 1993 and Yardley, 2000, cited in Yardley, 2015). For the purposes of this study, Yardley's (2000, 2015) principles were used as they were specifically identified by Smith et al. (2009) for use in evaluating the quality of IPA research. Yardley's framework set out a core set of broad principles that are applicable to diverse types of qualitative research. Indeed, her criteria cover much the same content as emerged from a systematic review of 29 published sets of criteria (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008).

Yardley stated that validity could be divided into four key principles and each are now discussed in turn in relation to the current study:

(1) *Sensitivity to context:* Yardley (2000) identified a number of ways in which a qualitative study can be shown to be sensitive to context. To begin with, she identified that sensitivity to context could be established by an awareness of pre-existing theoretical and empirical literature and theory. Familiarity with the existing literature is necessary in order to formulate a research question that addresses gaps in current understanding, and to provide comparisons and explanations that help one interpret their findings (Yardley, 2015). To this end,

this study's aims, research question and methodology were developed following a thorough exploration of the literature and theory in the area of LGBT young people and school/education, as detailed in chapter 2. Yardley asserts that good quality research must also show that it is sensitive to the perspective and socio-cultural context of participants. To this end the researcher continued to reflect on the possible impact on participants of her characteristics as a non-transgender (cisgender), professional female. Another crucial way in which the study demonstrated sensitivity to participants' perspectives was by the construction of open ended questions for the interview that sought to encourage participants to respond freely and talk about what was important to them, rather than being restrained by the preoccupations of the research. Similarly, at the analysis stage, the researcher did not impose categories or meanings on the data, but was open to alternative interpretations and recognising complexities and inconsistencies in the participants' narratives. The analysis also aimed to remain sensitive to the data by giving participants a voice through using verbatim extracts throughout the findings section.

(2) *Commitment and rigour:* Yardley (2015) asserts that a researcher needs to show how they have carried out an analysis that has sufficient breadth and/or depth to deliver additional insight into the topic researched. Commitment and rigour were promoted in this study through defining the ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher; by providing an exploration of why IPA was chosen despite its criticisms; and through the process by which the participants were recruited – which was thoroughly considered to meet the research aims and the homogeneity criteria that Smith et al. (2009) stated is

necessary for the validity of an IPA study. Furthermore, throughout the study, the researcher sought to achieve unique insights through an empathic understanding of participants' perspectives resulting from extensive in-depth engagement with the topic and the data.

(3) *Coherence and transparency:* The coherence of a study means the extent to which it makes sense as a consistent whole. As Yardley (2015) details, this is determined by the clarity and power of the argument one can make for the study, and also the way it was carried out. To the end, the researcher considered and detailed throughout the research process and write up the fit between the theoretical approach adopted, the research question, the methods employed and the interpretation of the data.

The transparency of a report of a qualitative study refers to how well the reader can see exactly what was done and why (Yardley, 2015). To this end, the researcher provided thorough details of the methods used and supported these with a thorough paper trail. Indeed, the researcher provided an audit trail of each stage of the study to remain transparent about the thought processes and the decisions made throughout the study. Appendix G is an example of an analysed interview with emergent themes. Appendix H is the subordinate and emergent themes tables for each participant, alongside quotations from the interview. Appendices I and J are the final tables of superordinate and overarching themes.

As has been argued, qualitative research should acknowledge the role of the researcher in bringing their perspectives and interpretations into the construction of meaning. Therefore, reflexivity was an important component of this study. As qualitative research relies upon the researcher's

understanding and interpretation of the data, it was crucial that the researcher remained aware of her presumptions, biases and interpretations. Yardley (2008, p. 250) stated that reflexivity is the *"explicit consideration of the specific ways in which it is likely the study was influenced by the researcher".* Hence, with the aim of enabling readers to understand the reasons behind the choices in this research, excerpts from the researcher's reflexive diary which she kept throughout the process of the research are also included in Appendix K.

(4) *Impact and importance:* Yardley (2008) argues that the impact and importance of a study are the most significant components of critiquing a piece of research. The discussion chapter of this study aimed to outline how its findings contribute to the body of research in the field. On the whole, the study aimed to provide deeper insight into the post-16 education experiences of transgender students in order to expand EPs understanding from a theoretical perspective. However, in turn, it is hoped that this understanding will lead to applications that can have active, practical and real world change in EPs involvement with this student population, their families and schools. The plan for dissemination of the research findings to key stakeholders is outlined in section 6 of the discussion chapter, chapter 5.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Before undertaking the study a research protocol and an application for ethical review were submitted to the Tavistock's Research Ethics Committee. Full ethical approval was granted (see Appendix L for a copy of ethical approval). The protocol, application for ethical review and each subsequent stage of the research process adhered to the BPS Code

of Human Research Ethics (2014). The four areas of the BPS' code were used as a structure within which to address particular areas of ethical consideration. Throughout the entire research process, the researcher saw this element of the study as a dynamic process and, as a result, frequently referred back to the Code in the planning, implementation and reporting of the study. The researcher also endeavoured to take a self-reflective position to ethical considerations as advocated by Smith et al. (2009). As a result, research supervision was frequently accessed throughout the planning, implementation, analysis and write up phases of the study. Supervision involved reflectively exploring the process and the findings, but also the effects of the research on the researcher. The four areas of the BPS' Code will now be used as a framework to address the ethical considerations that formed part of this study:

(1) *Respect of the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities:* From the outset of the study, the researcher acknowledged and reflected on her duty to participants and she strove to actively respect their knowledge, insight, experience and expertise. The researcher respected the individual, cultural and role differences of the participants, including those involving age, disability, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, education, language and socio-economic status. The researcher actively sought to avoid any unfair, prejudiced or discriminatory practice. The nature of the research was explained to participants and it was accepted when individuals choose not to be involved, or would have been accepted had participants wished to withdraw their data. On the whole, throughout the study, the researcher strove to achieve a reasonable balance between protecting participants and recognising their agency and capacity.

As shall be detailed in full below, the researcher respected the privacy of participants and ensured that they were not personally identifiable. Confidentiality was ensured and the data collected about individuals and organisations was appropriately anonymised so that it could not be traced back to them by other parties.

(2) *Scientific integrity:* The BPS Code states that psychologists should be committed to ensuring that the scientific and scholarly standards of their research are accountable and of sufficiently high quality and robustness. Related issues of validity and reliability have already been addressed in detail in section 3.8; however, according to the Code, this value also includes consideration of potential risks of harm and protocols for addressing such difficulties. As such these issues are explicitly detailed in the section below.

(3) *Social responsibility:* The aim of generating psychological knowledge should be to support beneficial outcomes (BPS, 2014) and the BPS Code asserts that the researcher should have this as a fundamental purpose of one's research. In order to achieve this, the researcher ensured to work in partnership with others, most notably the participants, participating organisations, her research supervisor and other core staff at the Tavistock. The researcher aimed to be self-reflective throughout the research process and remained open to challenge. The researcher remained aware of her personal and professional responsibilities and sought to always work within the limits of her professional competence. The researcher remained (and remains) alert to possible consequences of unexpected as well as predicted outcomes of this work.

(4) *Maximising benefit and minimising harm:* The participants were central to this entire study and their emotional, social and psychological wellbeing, physical

health, dignity and personal values were held in mind throughout. The researcher endeavoured to identify and assess all possible risk at the outset of the study and developed a protocol for risk management as an integral part of its design (see Appendix M for a copy of the risk assessment). The potential emotional impact upon the participants of eliciting information that was of a sensitive, personal and emotional nature was considered. The participants were told they could refrain from answering any questions. The researcher also worked with the organisations to anticipate any safety issues and how to provide students with access to immediate support during or after an interview should it be needed. The researcher debriefed the participants and gave them the opportunity to share reflections and ask questions. As the researcher is a qualified and experienced EP with further training and experience in the area of working with transgender students, it was deemed appropriate that the participants could contact her directly following the interviews should they wish/need to.

In order to further minimise harm, the researcher ensured that students consented freely to participation on the basis of adequate information. As stated, an information sheet was given to students for them to keep and it offered a clear, honest and accurate statement of all those aspects of the research that were relevant for their decision about whether or not to agree to participate. In the information sheet the researcher aimed to be transparent about her professional and academic affiliations and qualifications, the research aims, the procedure for participants and how the results would be disseminated. The information sheet also gave contact details of the person who may be contacted in the case of any queries arising. Sufficient time was given for participants to absorb and consider the information and what was expected of their participation before they were

asked to make a decision regarding participation. Before each interview it was ensured that the participants had read and understood the contents of the information sheet, and if they had any questions. Participants were given a consent form to sign before the interview began (see Appendix N for a copy of the consent form). Two copies of the consent form were signed by the researcher and the consenting participant. One copy was retained by the participant and the other stored by the researcher (see below for further details of storage). As well as this, the researcher planned to revisit issues of consent within the interview itself for any unanticipated emerging sensitive issues. Participants could withdraw consent at any time up to the point that data analysis begun and they were made aware of this limit both in the information sheet and verbally prior to the commencement of the interview. The students were also advised of how they could obtain a copy of their recording/transcript if they wished to.

The researcher responded to the ethical framing protocols of openness, impartiality and confidentiality throughout the research. Subject to the requirements of legislation, including the Data Protection Act (1998, 2018), information obtained from and about participants remained strictly confidential. Confidentiality was in line with the University of Essex Guidelines - the data will be kept for one year on a secure memory device before being destroyed; paper documents shredded and electronic data fully deleted. Following transcription of the interviews, all identifiable names and organisations were deleted, and information about individuals and organisations was handled confidentially at all stages of the research, including the write up. The recordings and transcribed data were stored on an encrypted memory key. The audio files were deleted from the voice recorder following upload onto computer. All completed consent forms are

kept in a secure, lockable place, which only the researcher has access to. The database of any information gathered was also stored in a safe place. The digital recordings of the interview and the transcripts were stored using encoded names in password protected files on the researcher's computer. The information letter stated that confidentiality would be maintained up to a certain limit, for example, it included that the researcher's supervisor would be able to see the data. Participants were also informed that the researcher would break confidentiality if the participant disclosed something during the interview that caused safeguarding concerns.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines the findings of the study's interpretative phenomenological analysis, as described in the methodology chapter (section 3.7). The analysis aimed to answer the research question, *'What are transgender students' experiences of post-16 education?'*, and identified five overarching themes: Social transition at school; Navigating school as a transgender student; Bullying, transphobia and peer relations; Students' ambivalent experiences of staff; and Experiences at the systemic level of school. The chapter will begin by exploring these themes within the narratives of Addison, Ali, Cedar, Lee, Luca and River, and it shall then provide a comparison with Gene, who was not incorporated in the identification of overarching themes as they did not meet the full inclusion criteria (as detailed in chapter 3, section 3.5.1.2).

In order to uphold the individuality of the participants' experiences, each account will be described in turn when presenting the overarching themes and the researcher will highlight commonalities and differences between them. Full synthesis and interpretation of the data will follow in the next chapter. Similarly, it is important to note that although themes were separated during the analytic process, they did not present as distinct entities in the participants' narratives, and rather were highly related and intertwined. Finally, in order to evidence the analysis and any interpretations of the researcher, as well as maintain the phenomenological core of the research, quotations from each of the participants' transcripts will be included.

By way of introduction to each theme, a table will demonstrate how the subordinate themes from each participant and resultant superordinate theme(s) were drawn together to form each overarching theme. Of note, only the overarching theme 'Bullying, transphobia and peer relations' was comprised of more than one superordinate theme; however, each of the other superordinate themes were re-framed as overarching themes to accommodate for this, and also to enable their titles to more conceptually describe the theme that was captured. As previously stated, an audit trail of the analysis is provided in Appendices G-J.

4.2 Social transition at school

Overarching theme 1: Social transition at school		
	Superordinate theme 1	**Subordinate themes**
Addison	Coming out at school/college	1. Coming out repeatedly
**Ali*		*Theme not present in narrative*
Cedar		1. Ambivalent experiences of coming out at school
Lee		1. Coming out, staff support and peer acceptance
Luca		2. Negative experiences of coming out at college and resultant concerns
River		1. Coming out and remaining questioning

Table 3. Overarching theme 1: Social transition at school

4.2.1 Addison

Addison's account included details on not being able to come out at school, and the resultant, pressing need to come out at college. Addison was not out at school until the end of Year 11, and even then this was just to their close friends. Bullying at school prevented Addison from coming out there, as it appeared that from their perspective, coming out would have made the bullying even worse: *"...I couldn't have come out*

because of those bullies" (Lines 117-119). Addison felt that had they come out at school they *"…probably would have hated secondary more than I already did. And myself, more than I already did, if I'd come out in secondary"* (Lines 1737-1741). However, Addison became increasingly frustrated at not being able to come out towards the end, and likened the need to an escape: *"… I was ready, so very ready to come out by that point that I really wanted to get out"* (Lines 68-71). This feeling appeared to be bolstered by Addison joining and being out at a local LGBT youth club.

Addison saw the transition to college as an opportunity to come out and so *"immediately"* told registration: *"… 'My name is different to my birth name'"* (Lines 224-225). In this instance, Addison felt their name to be key to their transgender identity. Addison presumed the college's acceptance of their preferred name was as a result of their experience with other transgender students: *"…they probably had quite a few trans kids, 'cause in sixth form I think it's more, um, of a chance for people to come out…"* (Lines 236-239). Addison felt this *"chance"* to come out at college was as a result of self-discovery and the development of a sense of self throughout school:

"…because, in secondary, at the beginning, you probably have no idea [laughs] *who you are, and by the end, you have a relative idea if you've gone through the process of thinking about who you are"* (Lines 241-245).

A theme within Addison's accounts of coming out was that it is a continual process, in particular for a non-binary person:

"Like, you're always coming out. The rest of your life, you'll be coming out to people especially when you're non-binary. When you're trans, it's probably easier after you've—if you, after you transition" (Lines 1710-1715).

This continual coming out was a source of annoyance for Addison as it meant that their transgender identity could continue to be challenged by others: *"A constant annoying thing, when you come across that one person who has to argue with you, because they don't believe in non-binary people"* (Lines 1724-1727).

4.2.2 Cedar

Cedar detailed the negative and isolating effects not coming out at school had on them:

"…it was the sort of thing that--it was causing me a lot of problems. I was--I would sit at home in my room by myself listening to music, trying to s-some sort of sanity' (Lines 10-14);
'…it was very, very stressful for me" (Line 59).

As a result of these feelings, Cedar confided in a friend who encouraged and supported them to come out at school. However, when Cedar came out to staff, they were angered by their lack of support and inaction:

"…it was all a mess really 'cause the school offered no support at all basically.' (Lines 456-459);
"It was very badly executed. There was nothing really--It was just, it was, I'm-I'm going to say this, I'm putting it out, it was terrible. It was absolutely--There was--The way it was dealt with, the way everything was done, is--it wasn't great" (Lines 494-500).

Cedar had a more positive experience of coming out to their friends at school; however, their apprehension over coming out to them and desire to keep it discrete was suggested by their typing it on screen during a computer class: *"'Cause saying something and someone else hearing it. Just like, ugh, now I might as well just stand up and scream it in front of everyone"* (Lines 975-987). Cedar detailed how the peers they came out to were those they *"could trust"* (Line 922): *"Some that I knew that if I told them they wouldn't like start throwing hands or start doing stuff that would be unnecessarily bad…"* (Lines 924-931). This was in contrast to the fear Cedar felt over coming out to others, and as a

result of this, how they could not be their authentic self: *"I have to sort of keep it in and sort of kind of not be myself because I have to--because of the sort of fear that someone's going to--yeah. Who knows stab me or something like that"* (Lines1163-1169). Cedar suggested that they were not the only one who felt like this at school. When discussing why other LGBT peers did not come out they stated: *"It's definitely fear because-because of how certain people might react or do things against you"* (Lines 1203-1205).

Similar to Addison, Cedar felt they had been supported and given the confidence to come out to those they did as a result of their attendance and interactions at LGBT youth club (Lines 447; 692).

4.2.3 Lee

In contrast to Cedar's, Lee's experience of coming out at school was one of staff support and peer acceptance: *"…my school have been very, very supportive of um, my whole transition…"* (Lines 6-7); *"…they were very, very good with it – brilliant"* (Lines 164-165). Lee recalled how staff were *"very on it"* in anticipation of transphobia (Line 114): *"They were like, 'If anyone says anything you know, just come to us and we'll deal with it'"* (Lines 115-116). Similarly, when a staff member *"announced"* (Line 144) him to the class, Lee's peers were told to *"…treat him with respect and stuff"* (Line 143). Lee detailed how his transition and transgender identity *"…stemmed out from there…"* (Line 155) and that *"Everyone just kind of took it on board"* (Lines 157-158). Later in Lee's narrative, he reflected on how staff may have been supportive of his transition because he was one of the *"troubled young kids"* (Line 900). Lee contrasted his positive experience to his perception of what coming out in a religious school may have been like: *"My foster sister went to um, uh, a school that was very Catholic and strict. Um- and you*

know they would have never allowed that for, you know, a second" (Lines 824-827). Lee was not able to determine why coming out at his school was easier, and put it down to *"…a bunch of different things coming together…"* (Lines 833-834).

Lee detailed how a peer in his year transitioned at the same time as him; however, he not find it a support or helpful. Lee explained that he felt envious of this peer, as he commenced transitioning medically, when Lee could not afford to:

"It was more just a personality thing that didn't really work out, and um, he also, um, privately, was put on medical hormones, I think at 16, or just over 16. So now, he's got a deeper voice, and kind of, you know, he's started to, uh, medically transition, so I kind of resent that because I wasn't able to privately do that…" (Lines1949-1958).

4.2.4 Luca

As with Addison and Cedar, Luca's fear of bullying prevented him from coming out fully at secondary school: *"And I knew what other LGBT- LGBT kids had to go through when they did come out so I didn't disclose that information to anybody but my closest friends whilst I was attending"* (Lines 12-15). Also, Luca's overhearing of peers at college discussing transgender people in a negative way prevented him from coming out there: *"It's rather disinterest, um, or straight-up hatred or disgust. So then I was hesitant to tell the school or anyone else"* (Lines 25-30). However, Luca detailed how his transgender identity was revealed to his class by accident by a new teacher:

"And I hadn't changed my gender on the register yet. So, um, yes, so it had female next to my name and a new teacher came in and, um, I almost got marked absent because she just looked, turned around, and said, 'Luca. Where's Luca? Well, Luca is a girl. She is not here" (Lines 34-39).

Luca revealed the subsequent inexperience of his school in supporting his social transition through their liaisons with his mother: *"But eh the school said, 'We haven't dealt with any trans issues before. We're gonna need a letter from your mom"* (Lines 67-71). This made Luca concerned for future transgender students at the school whom may not yet have come out at home*:*

"…not only would they have outed that kid at home and the parents might not have, you know, liked it, and they wouldn't have been able to get their pronouns and gender changed at school" (Lines 108-113);
"…I feel like worried for other trans kids that might come to my school' (Lines 165-166).

This concern gave Luca a sense of impetus to try to make things better for future transgender students at the school: *'I want things to be better for the transgender kids and everyone else that's queer that will go to that school in the future…"* (Lines 656-658); however, as will be detailed below, he did not feel able to action this owing this his isolation as a LGBT student.

4.2.5 River

River first came out at school as *"agender"*. They recalled:

"I remember someone calling me a girl and I remember being like, 'Oh, well, not really'. And, uh, then they were like, 'Oh well. What do you mean? What do you mean you're not a girl?' And, um, yeah. I tried to explain to them and there was a lot of that for about six, seven months" (Lines 139-149).

River detailed how following this they were *"very much out and open"* (Line 175) with their agender identity, but the school had "*never really taken any steps"* (Lines 176-177) with regard to it. River contrasted coming out as agender to coming out as gay – finding

the response to the latter more positive, as they believed school staff and peers were more familiar and accepting of it:

"I feel like when I came out, when I was like, when I was openly gay like, oh, like that was fine, like a lot of people were- a lot of people were more open to that because you know, they'd heard of it before. Um, and it's- and it's- and it's more- and it's more accepted" (Lines 1288-1298).

4.3 Navigating school as a transgender student

Overarching theme 2: Navigating school as a transgender student		
	Superordinate theme 2	**Subordinate themes**
Addison	Navigating the logistics of school	1. Navigating college post social transition
Ali		3. Positive and negative aspects of the logistics of school
Cedar		4. Being mis-gendered and other negative aspects of school functioning
Lee		2. Name change, mis-gendering and physical isolation
Luca		3. Difficulties navigating school post social transition
River		6. Navigating school and feeling validated

Table 4. Overarching theme 2: Navigating school as a transgender student

4.3.1 Addison

Addison's account included both positive and negative experiences of navigating school as a transgender student. Prior to coming out at school or to their family, Addison had chosen their transgender name and had been using it at youth club (Line 183). As stated, they saw the start of college as an opportunity to use their preferred name and *"…start as a blank state…"* (Line 191) - again highlighting the significance of their name change in coming out and to their transgender identity. As Addison recorded their preferred name as their transgender name on the register, they did not have any difficulty with name change/use at college: *"…it was straight from the register"* (Lines 271-272); *"…there's*

no questions about that" (Line 409). However, later in their narrative, Addison reflected on how their birth name remained their official name at school and, as such, it continually acted as a reminder of the impermanency of their transgender name and identity: *"'Cause when you log on to the computers, it's on the screen and big. So it's a bit annoying, but it's, uh, it's 'cause it's in their system as my birth name"* (Lines 452-458).

Addison was not as easily able to change their pronouns at college; however, since they *"told"* staff *"about it, they usually do"* (Lines 322-323). Addison expressed admiration for their teachers who self-corrected on using the incorrect pronoun, but said:

"With the other ones, I'm not either sure if it's because they didn't take it into account when they were told, or if they haven't exactly been told for sure. Um, but i- in general, I think it's a little bit of a mix" (Lines 332-340).

Later in their narrative, Addison added that the members of staff who did not use their preferred pronouns were *"…all much older women…"* (Lines 1212-1213). Possibly as a result of their age, Addison appeared uncomfortable and hesitant to correct or challenge them on this: *"…it's a bit awkward having to tell"* (Line 1703).

Addison appeared relieved that school uniforms were not an issue for them at college: *"…couldn't care less whether you literally wore a bra to school"* (Lines 579-580). However, they were frustrated at having to use the disabled toilets in the absence of a gender neutral one: *"It's a bit annoying, because I'm not disabled"* (Lines 636-637). Indeed, for this reason, Addison frequently waited until they got home at the end of the day to use the bathroom (Line 647).

4.3.2 Ali

As a result of a new Head-teacher and her supportive and proactive stance towards LGBT students, Ali navigated school as a transgender student with relative ease. Ali detailed how changing pronouns was not a *"massive deal"* for them, because their school had *"…generally taken measures to stop referring to all the students as girls and other such useful things"* (Line 86-90). Similarly, the school put no constraints on dress-code (Line 259) and although management were only in the process of establishing gender neutral toilets and changing rooms, Ali had not *"…felt the need to use anything other than the female…"* ones up to that point (Lines 280-281).

4.3.3 Cedar

Cedar's experiences of navigating school as a transgender student were overwhelmingly negative. They appeared frustrated and disappointed that their teachers did not use their preferred pronouns, despite confirmation from management that this would happen. They also felt teachers' mis-gendering of them was deliberate:

"Still, every single lesson I go to it's like he/him, this, that, the other, and it's just like, this is--I-I thought you [their deputy head teacher] *sorted it out. I thought you even printed me out a letter saying, 'Oh, this is something that I did. This is something that the teachers will do.' Nothing resulted"* (Lines 104-109).

"…if those mistakes are happening on, and on and on, then thi--that's not a mistake. That's just purposefully doing that" (Lines 121-124).

Cedar's non-binary gender identity appeared to leave him feeling excluded and almost abandoned at school at times:

"Every single lesson is the sort of thing that-- it's the stupid things like, 'Oh boys in this group, girls in that group' and I'm just like there like, 'Okay, I guess I'm getting left out here. I guess I'm not--I don't exist in this teacher's eyes" (Lines 323-333).
"… 'Cause like you-you offer all this stuff like, 'Oh that's what you guys have to wear, that's what you girls have to wear', and then the people in the middle are just left there just to linger and just decide, 'Oh am I gonna go as this or that?" (Lines 840-844).

Cedar also detailed the significant impact on their daily functioning at school as a result of having to use the male facilities: *"Toilets, changing rooms. Absolute hell"* (Lines 863-865); *"I barely mange that"* (Line 874).

4.3.4 Lee

Similar to Addison, Lee's experiences of navigating school as a transgender student were both positive and negative. Lee changed his name at school after he changed it by deed poll. He detailed how administrative errors in relation to his name continued; however, he appeared realistic about and understanding of this:

"And they've got like 2,000 pupils in the whole school so obviously there's going to be a few things that are gona go wrong. I don't really- I don't really--It annoys me, but I wouldn't really blame the school for that" (Lines 300-307).

Staffs' and peer's use of Lee's preferred pronouns was inconsistent (Lines 320-321); however, he internalised this as his own fault for not having had *"a proper conversation"* about it with them (Lines 360-361). Indeed, Lee appeared to have low expectations for people to use his preferred pronouns in general, at least in part due to mis-gendering by CAMHS staff as he gave a *"talk"* to them *"about just being trans"* (Lines 1830-1831). Lee reflected: *"So that's from CAMHS, even"* (Lines 1836-1837).

Lee was provided with a separate changing facility at school; however, he described it as a *"storage cupboard"* (Line 445), and appeared to find it very isolating: *"And it was very dark. I just found it very not nice and I was very excluded"* (Lines 469-470). Lee described a specific bullying incident which took place at this changing room which is discussed in section 4.4.4 below. Lee used the female toilets at school, which he presented as a personal choice as he did not feel comfortable using the male ones*: "I'm still a bit, you know, I wonder if people can see kind of that I'm not, um, physically male. So I kind of just don't take the risk…"* (Lines 508-512). As with other participants, Lee also brought up the *"negative connotations"* of using the school's disabled facilities (Line 579).

4.3.5 Luca

Luca's experiences of this theme were also mixed. His transgender name was used at college *"From, um, like very early",* as he had *"made it clear"* what he wanted to be called (Lines 356-360). However, later in Luca's account he suggested less control over his name change, when he revealed that the school would have prioritised his mother's wishes over his: *"…they was prepared to take away Luca if my mom didn't like it"* (Lines 1098-1099). This lack of self-autonomy made Luca angry and frustrated and he revealed that he expected more from college: *"… it's not fair. I feel like a child, like in secondary school again. And I can understand if they did it there"* (Lines 1116-1118).

Luca was less determined to ensure use of his preferred pronouns – like Addison, suggesting the significance of his name change to his transgender identity. Luca explained that this was because he did not want to come across as defensive and *"taint"* others' experiences of transgender people (Line 336): *"…I-I don't--Because a lot of issue I found that people have in the school with, um, gender varying people and like gay people in*

general is that they're too defensive…" (Lines 320-325). Luca's friends he was out to used his pronouns *"…even if they slip up"* (Lines 447-448) and one of his close friends had *"…taken to correcting other people and pronouns"* (Lines 450-451) on his behalf.

Luca used the disabled toilets at school as he did not feel comfortable using either the female or male ones. It also appeared that he did not want to incite repercussions from his male peers:

"…I think I'm quite hesitant to go in any, um, female toilets in public spaces because other people in my year and the younger year groups know that I--Like they knew me before I looked a little bit more male" (Lines 253-258).
"…and I don't wanna go into male toilets either because, um, some things have been overheard by other students, particularly males in the year group, and I don't think they'd like me going in there at all" (Lines 260-265).

Uniform was not an issue for Luca at college as he wore what he wanted to, but at school he wore skirts to avoid comments from others: *"…I did wear skirts quite a lot. I wasn't happy about it but it--I didn't feel like I could wear trousers and stuff without people making comments"* (Lines 395-398).

4.3.6 River

Like Ali and Cedar, River did not change their name, but they did change their pronouns and felt uncomfortable and irritated when others mis-gendered them: *"I asked people to call me they/them and would feel very uncomfortable when people used she/her"* (Lines 482-485); *"…I would find that really, really irritating and I would find that quite uncomfortable"* (Lines 497-499). However, River tried to understand and rationalise this to themself: *"…people look at me and they see long hair, wearing the girl's uniform,*

there's a girl – she/her. And that's-that's on, that's subconscious or even unconscious, you know…" (Lines 487-492). However River felt validated when others used their preferred pronouns: *"…when I had a couple of my friends use-use they/them pronouns for me, it made me-it made me feel very validated"* (Lines 505-508); *"…I just wanted to-wanted to be valid. That was-that was all I wanted. I just wanted someone to say, 'Sure I can use these pronouns for you'"* (Lines 615-618). At the time of interview, River appeared to have become more indifferent about their pronouns: *"…now I don't mind using she/her or they/them"* (Lines 513-514). This appeared to be as a result of River's continued questioning of their gender identity, and their justification for this, as opposed to accepting or tolerating being mis-gendered by others: *"…part of me wonders if it's just because I've been called she/her for so long and, um, a lot of people don't, a lot of people, you know, they don't want to change"* (Lines 522-527).

River's preference was to access the gender neutral toilets, which they described as individual male and female toilets, *"…but that all had been tippexxed over…"* (Lines 771-772). However, in Year 10 these toilets became designated staff toilets and, as a result, River had to use the female ones. They reported that this made them feel *"awkward"* and how, as a result, and similar to Addison, they avoided using the bathroom at school: *"[sighs] I feel quite awkward. I always feel quite awkward going into the toilets, um, and I normally try and don't go to the toilet during school time"* (Lines 820-823).

4.4 Bullying, transphobia and peer relations

Overarching theme 3: Bullying, transphobia and peer relations		
	Superordinate theme 3	**Subordinate themes**
Addison	Bullying and transphobia	2. Bullying, transphobia and perceptions of the aggressors
Ali		5. Distancing from wider peer group, experiences and understanding of transphobia
Cedar		7. Lack of understanding and empathy
Lee		3. Bullying, transphobia, homophobia and segregation
Luca		5. Lack of understanding as to what transgender means 7. Homo/transphobia and isolation
River		3. 'Bullying behavior' and personal and teacher responses
	Superordinate theme 4	
Addison	LGBT friends and non-LGBT peer support	5. LGBT friends and support from wider peer group
Ali		6. LGBT and non-LGBT peer support
Cedar		10. Peer relations
Lee		5. Maturity, LGBT friends and non-LGBT peer support
Luca		8. Instances of support at school and college
**River*		*Theme not explicitly present in narrative*

Table 5. Overarching theme 3: Bullying, transphobia and peer relations

4.4.1 Addison

As detailed above, bullying at secondary school prevented Addison from coming out there as they feared their non-binary identity would have made the bullying worse (Lines 117-119). Addison came out at college as their peers were *"…open to it being not a tense, awful environment like secondary is"* (Lines 998-999) and also because the college had a *"…very good zero tolerance bullying policy"* (Line 973), unlike their secondary school (Lines 1038-1039). However, Addison was still made aware of transphobia within the college by their friends:

"…I think there was one or two kids, or, uh--There's like, a couple of things I've heard from my friends, and they'd be like, 'Oh yeah'--They were like--This one kid, in class, who's like, 'There's no such thing as a different gender - there's only two binaries'" (Lines 1073-1079).

Addison held their own prejudices of those reported to them as transphobic:

"…I'm not being stereotypical with this, but in general, kids who have come from backgrounds who have either lived in other countries, or their parents have come from, I don't know, Russia or countries that are very homophobic, tend to have the mind-set" (Lines 1080-1085);
"…like foreigner people, well Indian or anyone…" (Lines 1145-1146).

Addison's friends at college were mostly LGBT (Lines 893-894); however, they felt they would be supported by their wider peer group if overt bullying or transphobia occurred: *"…they'd be like, 'You can't say that. You can't bully people for that'"* (Lines 1137-1138). Addison's self-esteem and self-worth appeared bolstered by their position in their LGBT friendship group, whereby they supported a friend to come out and encouraged others to *"experiment"* with aspects of their gender identities before committing to them or coming out to others (Lines 292; 825): *"…they* [Addison's friends] *rely on me a little bit too, so I like to be there.'* (Lines 392-393); *'…they're like, 'You're a god'"* (Lines 806-807). Addison also suggested a protective sense of 'in-group' with regard to the wider LGBT community at the college: *"There's one person now, who's in a different class to me, but I know, 'cause I saw that he had a trans badge, and I was like, 'Hey'"* (Lines 1474-1476).

4.4.2 Ali

Ali detailed how there were *"five transphobes"* in their year whom they had *"reported"* to their Head of Year for her to *"deal"* with (Lines 130-135). Ali believed that their peers' transphobia stemmed from ignorance (Lines 517-518) and as a result of not having

"…had an upbringing where they're taught about this kind of thing…" (Lines 585-586). However, on the whole, Ali's experience was one of support from their peers. They detailed how their wider friendship group supported the LGBT society's activities (Lines 363; 1160) and in particular, they made a number of references in relation to the support their transgender male peer had received on coming out (Lines 529; 1030). Ali's greatest protective factor was her relatively large group of LGBT friends, most of whom were members of the LGBT society with them: *"…my friend Pip is chair and, em, we're both non-binary which is really good"* (Lines 345-346); *"We all know each other, we're all friends…"* (Lines 1147-1148).

4.4.3 Cedar

Cedar's experiences of this theme centred on misuse of LGBT discourse, which, for them, signalled an invalidation of LGBT identities:

"…the whole concept of people going, for example, 'Oh this maths book is so gay', or, 'This homework is so gay'. And it's just like, you're-you're really just misusing that word. You're misusing people's identities and people's struggles to describe something very negatively" (Lines 207-215).

Cedar felt this misuse of LGBT discourse stemmed from a lack of understanding and empathy from others: *"Empathised is the problem, because if you don't understand how it's affecting the person it's going to be hard"* (Lines 1510-1512).

Throughout their account, Cedar frequently spoke of, or insinuated, difficulties with and bullying by peers that was independent of their gender identity: *"…the problems of not having many friends, but that's 'cause of other issues I think. In fact it's not related to my gender…"* (Lines 387-390); *"Not to do with my gender, but I've experienced general*

bullying…" (Lines 1216-1217). Possibly as a result, there was an element of surprise in Cedar's account when he recalled the validation and support he received from those he did come out to: *"In computer science, we're all taught programming project sort of thing. They even asked me like what's like a gender neutral colour to put in my programme…"* (Lines 984-988).

4.4.4 Lee

Lee's narrative suggested that he expected and accepted a certain level of transphobia on coming out:

"There's been a few obviously a few people who have been um, quite, you know, uh, not very nice towards me and so asking all the usual questions trans people get you know like, 'Have you had surgery?', or um yeah like, you know, 'You going to have surgery tomorrow?' You know, stupid crap" (Lines 24-34);
"…that's just kind of part and parcel of being trans-especially, you know, in these times" (Lines 38-41).

Lee accepted these responses from his peers as he felt they were the result of both a lack of understanding and curiosity:

"…I'm okay with that because I know it's still a new thing and I know that people are still, you know, they're gona be very curious, you know, as how we as humans are. So I think I-I kind of just accept it and just, you know, as long as it's not anything directly mean or anything, you know, anything like that" (Lines 46-54).

However, Lee did not accept *"…when it just gets really mean…",* and added *"…that's when I kinda kick off…"* (Lines 699-700). Indeed, Lee made several references to one such incident whereby a group of male peers banged on the door of his changing room

and verbally intimidated him as he changed for PE class (Lines 593-596). The negative effects of this incident on Lee were obvious:

"…it's kind of just erased in my mind…" (Line 586);
"…it upset me a bit. It-it got to me" (Lines 614-615);
"…very physically intimidating. Like not- like not actually face to face but, you know, through a door--you just think if someone's banging on a door, you know, what do they want…" (Lines 709-715).

Like Cedar, Lee also experienced homophobic language both at school and college:

"So you hear a lot of um, a lot of, you know, people obviously say the word gay, you know, 'That's so gay', in their school, you know" (Lines 1022-1024);
"…they think it's funny, and they're just kind of taking the piss…" (Lines 1158-1159).

However, on the whole, Lee felt his college peers were more tolerant of gender diversity as a result of their maturity and the demands of sixth form:

"Sixth form is a lot more mature" (Line 408);
"…you have to focus on other things" (Lines 732-733);
"…I think when they're older it gets more acceptable and people are more tolerant in general…" (Lines 1027-1030).

Lee reported that there were *"a lot of LGBT people"* at his college and that he was *"friends with a lot of them"* (Lines 951-955). He described his friendship group as a *"mix"*: *"…so-some people are bisexual and, you know, different genders, obviously"* (Lines 1089-1090). Although Lee seemed happy and secure with his friendship group, he suggested that they were somewhat segregated from the remainder of his peers: *"…we kind of just do our own thing and other people do come in, I mean, now and then we talk and stuff, but it's mostly just us…"* (Lines 1081-1085). However, later in his account Lee

added that this was not necessarily unique to his LGBT friendship group, but rather a feature of friendship groups in the college as a whole:

"It's that everyone's in their own groups. No one really communicates to other people, like, we have our classes, and we have like friends in our classes, but at lunch times and break times, we'll hang out with just that group, and I, I see that a lot, I see a lot of it just being, yeah, this groups here, this groups here, this groups here" (Lines 1114-1120).

4.4.5 Luca

Luca's account was punctuated with incidences of transphobia, for example, a comment written in the female toilets about his appearance: *"…to hurt…"* him (Line 239). On the whole, Luca felt his peers did not *"…agree with the trans thing…"* (Line 483) and as a result, LGBT specific endeavours at school, such as LGBT week, were not *"very LGBT friendly"* (Line 576): *"There was a lot of kids in the class that were making remarks about it. A lot of grumbling about why we need to learn about it"* (Lines 576-579). Luca recalled some support from peers at school; however, he suggested it was tentative and frivolous: *"I had support but that's only until I displeased those people. Yeah so it's only--my gender is only relevant until they decide otherwise"* (Lines 430-434).

Luca mentioned that he found his peers at college more supportive, but this theme was not prominent in his narrative. Luca did not have the protective factor of LGBT friends that a number other participants had and it appeared that this made him feel significantly isolated: *"There's only me there as far as I know…"* (Line 285); *"…it's just me against the entire college"* (Lines 661-662).

4.4.6 River

River experienced covert bullying in relation to her agender identity at school: *"…those people that did say, 'Oh so and so said you're not a girl'"* (Line 163); *"…a lot of people said like, 'Oh, hey, River girl. How you doing girl?' a lot of the time"* (Lines 281-1284). River referred to this as *"bullying behaviour"* throughout her narrative, possibly as a mechanism to downplay it and protect herself from it:

"It wasn't bulling. I would just say it was, um, what's the phrase I've heard before? Bullying behaviour, that's it, so not-not bullying but, you know, like little things that I just-just makes you want to slap someone" (Lines 549-555).

Like several of the other participants, River felt that this 'bullying behaviour' stemmed from a lack of understanding and the ignorance of her peers (Lines 1380-1389; 1396-1401).

4.5 Students' ambivalent experiences of staff

Overarching theme 4: Students' ambivalent experiences of staff		
	Superordinate theme 5	**Subordinate themes**
Addison	Experiences of staff	7. Perceptions and experiences of teachers
Ali		4. Perceptions of authority and expectations and experiences of staff
Cedar		2. Experiences of school staff
Lee		6. Perceptions and mixed experiences of teachers
Luca		11. Negative experiences of staff and need for teacher training
River		7. Support from individual teachers

Table 6. Overarching theme 4: Students' ambivalent experiences of staff

4.5.1 Addison

On the whole, Addison's experiences of their teachers at college were distanced: *"...I don't talk to my teachers that much, unless it's to do with school work"* (Lines 1184-1185). Addison felt that this was because they did not have opportunities for informal chat (Line 1189) and also as a result of several of their teachers being older: *"To be fair, they're all much older women…"* (Lines 1212-1213). However, Addison felt that, if needed, they could talk to their tutor or the college's *"safeguarding team"*: *"... they constantly remind us, 'The people with the orange lanyards are the safeguarding--You can go to them when you're feeling anything'"* (Line 1273-1277). Addison felt that all teachers at their college would benefit from support to understand gender diversity, for example, through training: *"...even if they didn't understand it, if they took it into account…"* (Lines 1339-1340).

4.5.2 Ali

Ali's experiences of their teachers was positive, mostly as a result of the direction of their new Head Teacher. Indeed, Ali's opinion was that management *"told"* staff what to do or not to do in relation to LGBT students:

"they're really good about that, like telling teachers to do it" (Lines 21-22);
"...the authority to say, you will have to respect this person's pronouns and respect them even if they want to be called…" (Lines 45-47);
"The-the policy says that they have to keep it confidential unless we tell them they can't" (Lines 162-165).

Ali also felt supported by management in relation to transphobia from peers, as detailed above. They did not experience transphobia from any of their teachers; however, when the school nurse *"...referred to um, in a Year 9 PSHE lesson about LGBT relationships*

as abnormal relationships" (Lines 569-571), Ali and their peers *"reported her"* to management and were assured that they were *"…taking the necessary measures"* (Lines 574-575).

As a result of management's proactive and supportive stance towards LGBT students, Ali and her LGBT peers were actively involved in several endeavours at the systemic level of the school and these are discussed in section 4.5.2 below.

4.5.3 Cedar

In general, Cedar's experience of their subject teachers was poor and they put this down to their inexperience in working with gender diverse students: *"…like the teachers in general in my school just are- just bad. That's all I'm gonna say, just bad because they just don't seem to know how to handle the situation properly"* (Lines 591-595). However, when coming out, Cedar recalled receiving support from his history teacher and the Head of the inclusion faculty:

"…I explained to her [their history teacher], *explained the whole situation. She was very understanding"* (Lines 638-639);
"She [Head of Inclusion faculty] *has told me many times that if you need something, you can come to me. Talk to me. If you need some space to do some work, if you need to like just relax and stuff, come to Inclusion faculty, you take a tape or you can do some work, you can do this, you can do that. It's all open for you. Stuff like that. So she was-- she's very understanding. Definitely"* (Lines 1020-1029).

Cedar believed they could predict and expect understanding and support from individual teachers based on the subject they taught:

"He [sociology teacher] *understood quite well, but that's 'cause he was a sociology teacher. So, it was kind of more easier for him to understand than other teachers, for example"* (Lines 39-43); *"…she* [Deputy Head of Year] *wasn't very pleasant about it, I would have to say, uhm she was, I mean, as understanding as an economics teacher can be…"* (Lines 98-100).

Cedar believed they received most understanding from a *"private psychologist"* who was bought in by the school: *"…but, it's an hour a week with a psychologist who really understands what you're going through, really understands what's going on, is very helpful"* (Lines 377-380).

4.5.4 Lee

Lee's experiences of his teachers were both positive and negative. Anecdotes throughout his account highlighted how his teachers taking an interest or showing support even in simple ways had a positive impact on him and made him feel accepted:

"…I've had, you know, my teacher commented on my badge [transgender badge] *and just asked, you know, 'Where'd you get that from?'. I was like, 'I got it from Amazon', and she was like, 'Oh, that's cool"* (Lines 752-756);
"She's kind of interested and I wouldn't say she's actually asked me personally, but I think, yeah, you can see like she- Yeah. Accepting" (Lines 759-763).

Like Addison, Lee related the understanding and support he received from certain teachers to their age: *"I guess just 'cause a lot of the teachers there are young. I mean they're obviously a few older ones, but there are obviously a lot of, um, younger teachers there"* (Lines 786-789).

Lee's account was contradictory in its detailing of teachers' responses to peer transphobia. He initially reported that, *"If the teachers see or hear something about, you know, me or whatever, they will stand up for it you know"* (Lines 859-861) and he relayed

an incident whereby his teacher challenged a group of peers when they mocked an androgynous female in a video they watched during a politics class: *"...our teacher, actually, you know, stood up and said, 'You know, that's not nice, you know, stop it'. Um, so that was, so that was good"* (Lines 1299-1302). However, contradictorily, Lee later reported that peer transphobia fell *"on deaf ears, a lot of the time"* (Lines 1236-1237) and that *"...a large majority turn their heads to it..."* (Lines 1259-1262); *"...they just turn their backs to it...."* (Lines 1271). Lee tried to make sense of and rationalise this, in his teachers' defence:

'...they're just being kids maybe, you know, that, you know, that's what probably teachers are thinking, you know, it's just a bit of silly banter. I can ask how they see it a lot at all the time and obviously, if you're shouting and shouting , shouting, you know, words can get, just get mixed up-- You might-- They might not even hear it' (Lines 1241-1247).

4.5.5 Luca

Luca felt his school's staff did not have *"...any understanding of what transgender actually means"* (Lines 92-93). As with Addison and Lee, Luca understood this as being related to the staffs' age and resultant inexperience with gender diverse students:

"See, I think the staff in general like, uh, some of them are pretty old as in--And I don't think they would have--Like considering the laws have only just changed and things have started speeding up recently, like the past few years. I think that was sort of before their time and I don't think they've ever encountered anything like that before. They've grown up in quite like closed-off tight communities, quite work based, like they've not really gone into those sort of issues before. So it's maybe not that they don't care, it's just they've never been around that or they don't know about it" (Lines 680-696).

As a result, Luca felt that if he needed to turn to a staff member, he would turn to one of the younger teachers (Line 566). While Luca believed that staff training would be helpful

to counteract this, he felt that the staff would be unwilling to engage: *"...I don't think a lot of people are willing-the staff are willing to talk about it or be taught about it"* (Lines 1091-1093). Luca became increasingly critical and intolerant of this as his narrative progressed: *"I don't think they've googled what a transgender person is even though it's been brought to their attention. Or how to deal with it"* (Lines 1122-1129).

4.5.6 River

River's narrative included anecdotes of support from specific teachers at their school, most notably their PSHE teacher and Head of Year. With regard to their PSHE teacher River said:

"...she would always back me up, she would always say--She was almost always very, very, very like, pro-choice in that way. She was always like, you get to decide-you get to decide, like, obviously you're-you're born a certain way, or if you don't find out until a certain point but you choose-you choose how-how to present yourself to people and you choose what to tell people" (Lines 062-1071).

River felt her PSHE teacher's open support had a positive *"impact"* on some of the students (Line 1119). Similarly, they reported that their Head of Year was *"...very, very good"* (Line 1131). However, on the whole, River was keen to assert that any support they received had come from *"...very, very specific teachers who took things into their own hands"* as there was *"...never a school structure in place to support LGBT students"* (Lines 1141-1144). River also expressed their *"annoyance"* at their teachers whom never intervened in the 'bullying behaviour' they experienced and as detailed above (Lines 545-548). As with several of the other participants, River felt that the lack of support they experienced was as a result of their teachers' lack of understanding and not having been *"...brought up with it* [gender diversity]*"* (Line 1337).

4.6 Experiences at the systemic level of school

Overarching theme 5: Experiences at the systemic level of school		
	Superordinate theme 6	**Subordinate themes**
Addison	Experiences at the whole school level	8. Systemic supports at school and college
Ali		1. New-head teacher and involvement at the whole school level 2. Inclusion in the PSHE curriculum 7. LGBT society, their role and its impact 8. Positive impact of LGBT role models
Cedar		6. School inaction and lack of support 8. Lack of acknowledgement and inclusion at a systemic level
Lee		7. Lack of inclusion at a systemic level
Luca		10. Ineffective and lacking support at college 13. Importance and positive impact of LGBT role models
River		2. Lack of school inclusion and support

Table 7: Overarching theme 5: Experiences at the systemic level of school

4.6.1 Addison

Addison's experiences at the systemic level of college included taking part in the LGBT youth club; acknowledgment of LGBT history month and a lack of LGBT inclusion in the curriculum.

Addison took part in the LGBT youth club set up by one of their teachers and which ran on a fortnightly basis. They described it as *"cool"* (Line 1382) and appeared grateful to have a place/forum to talk about *"LGBT things"* (Line 1446) with a number of LGBT peers.

While Addison nor any of their LGBT peers were not invited to become directly involved in LGBT history month, seeing posters of famous LGBT people throughout their college clearly excited them and their LGBT peers and made them feel represented and included:

"…as soon as he [a transgender peer] *noticed them up, he was like, 'Did you see the posters?' I was like, 'Oh yeah.' I think it made him a bit excited. It was, it's good. 'Cause it's nice to have them up. So you can recognise--and it's also fun to learn, if you know them"* (Lines1479-1486).

Addison felt the posters may also have had a positive influence on their non-LGBT peers:

'…it's still on interesting fact on the wall that they can look at. And if they don't like LGBT people, and they recognise someone on the wall who then they are told is LGBT and they're probably like, 'What?!' (Lines 1494-1498).

In contrast, Addison reflected on the lack of LGBT inclusion in the curriculum: *"…so far, hasn't come up"* (Line 1536) and felt that it would have been beneficial to have been included, *"particularly at secondary school"* (Line 1776).

4.6.2 Ali

Unlike the other participants, Ali's narrative was dominated by their positive experiences at the systemic level of school, with the majority of these endeavours appearing attributable to the proactive and supportive stance taken towards LGBT students by the new Head-teacher. Ali reported they were *"really involved"* at the whole school level (Line 8) and it appeared that this was mostly through their role in the LGBT society. Ali felt that the society was given *"…a lot of responsibility"* (Line 1322) and that it had *"…a good impact…"* (Line 1091). Ali was eager to point out that the society was for the benefit of all students:

"…we want to involve everyone not just LGBT people so we have a school-wide publicity and the senior society is everyone's. We encourage people to come and-and we send out notices where we specifically say even if you're not LGBT please come because it's all sort of relevant to you" (Line 384-390).

One of Ali's most significant experiences was that management were changing the PSHE curriculum *"…to be more gender diverse…"* and the society members had been asked to advise and help re-write it (Lines 13-16; 654). Ali felt these changes were urgently needed, as LGBT issues had not been included in the curriculum up to that point: *"…like our PSHE was here's a dildo, this is how to put a condom on it and that was it"* (Lines 606-608). Ali also felt changes were necessary to educate and support future transgender students: *"...at some point the school is going to accept a transgender girl who may be quite young and therefore she will feel a lot more supported if she's included in the curriculum"* (Lines 761-766). Ali reported that the society, *"…as people with relevant experiences…",* was also asked to *"…advise on the school's new Gender Identity Policy"* (Lines 8-10). However, later in their narrative, Ali added that as management was *"…trying to do a lot of things at the same time…"* the policy was *"…not their top priority"* (Lines 302-304). Ali later explained that these other priorities were *"drugs stuff"* (Line 855).

Ali also reflected on the positive influences of gay teachers at their school, on both them and their LGBT peers, in particular with regard to the permanency of LGBT identities:

"…because it shows us that it's not just something that happens to students because we all say, 'Yes, it's just a phase, you'll all be straight when we grow up', and it shows that that's not true. So it's good to have an adult representative as well" (Lines 460-465).

At times, Ali seemed almost surprised by the support they received and their level of involvement at the systemic level of their school, and they reflected on this experience as unique when compared to their peers in other schools:

"It's really unusual as well because other people I know, like my friend's school, are giving him loads of difficulty for going through sixth form when he's transitioning. And it's a lot better than normal" (Lines 118-124);
"It's generally like a really supportive environment and better than most of my friends' schools as I hear" (Lines 1063-1065).

For this reason Ali felt that other schools should look to her school as an example of good practice: *"…I feel like it will help people to look at the model that they've got here because I feel that my school is doing really well with this"* (Lines 1418-1422).

4.6.3 Cedar

Cedar's experiences at the systemic level were mostly negative and coincided with their perspective of a lack of understanding and support from their school in general. They frequently experienced class/group segregation on gender grounds (for example, as detailed in section 4.3.3), which increased their sense of isolation. They felt that the introduction of *"…something to protect people from homophobia, transphobia and discrimination like that" "only two years"* prior was *"just terrible"* (Lines 1096-1108). They recalled one instance of LGBT issues being included in the RSE curriculum in Year 7; however, *"Since then, there's been no discussions, nothing about it. Which is not the greatest thing"* (Lines 183-186). Cedar also recalled an incident whereby they offered to do an assembly for LGBT history month, but were told by their Deputy Head of Year that there was no *"space"* for it. To Cedar, this lack of 'space' appeared to represent exclusion of LGBT identities and his exclusion as a LGBT student in the school:

"And I even offered to do an assembly at school about it. She [Deputy Head of Year] *said, 'There's nothing--There's no space in the assembly for it. It was going to take a couple of years until we do something about that'. Which, I was just like, 'A couple of years? A couple of years*

until something is done to improve people-people's understanding of LGBT history and LGBT?" (Lines 131-140).

Cedar felt the lack of support and inaction at the systemic level of their school contributed to increased transphobia (Line 240). Cedar was particularly shocked at this as their school was a private one: *"…the best school in the area isn't doing anything…"* (Lines 247-248).

4.6.4 Lee

Like Cedar, Lee's account was one of lack of inclusion at the systemic level at college. Lee recalled how he signed up to the LGBT society, but never heard anything back from them. He compared this to his more positive experience of the debating society, which he felt was*"…a bit more of a thing…"* because it was run by a teacher (unlike the LGBT society) (Lines 999-1002). Lee also reflected on the lack of LGBT inclusion in PSHE and how in Year 11 he once *"…took over the lesson and answered everyone's questions about being trans and LGBT in general…"* (Lines 1338-1342). Lee seemed proud of himself for doing this, and stated: *"…I think I got more understanding of people…"* (Line 1353); however, he also questioned his teacher's lack of knowledge in the area: *"…but on the other hand you think, why am I teaching the class? Why is there a teacher?"* (Lines 1362-1364).

4.6.5 Luca

Similarly, Luca's experience was one of lacking or ineffective supports at the systemic level of college. He reported that his only formal support was *"… just a Christian lady",* which he found *"…quite iffy because of Christianity and like things like homosexuality"* (Lines 528-529). Luca also criticised the lack of informal support at the college, such as

a LGBT support group (Line 519). Luca detailed the ineffective or negative impacts of LGBT week and LGBT history month. As detailed above, LGBT week was not supported by Luca's peers, and he felt this was mostly because the teacher *"…wasn't too clued up on what he was talking about himself. He didn't know what to talk about"* (Lines 579-581).

Luca described a school board that included relevant posters during LGBT history month, but otherwise he felt the presence of LGBT students/people was *"empty"* in his college: *"…you see those typical, 'Some people are gay get over it', that you usually see in schools. You don't see any of that, like no LGBT sort of. Quite empty"* (Lines 616-623). Similarly, Luca felt that transgender people were invisible in the curriculum at secondary school:

'…we never ever focused on transgender things or bodies or anything like that. We did look at some LGBT issues that, you know, you shouldn't bully kids and, you know, there's various types of people, but it's nothing that could give people that like base knowledge on what transgender people actually are and what their life might be like' (Lines 753-760).

However, Luca felt that LGBT inclusion in the curriculum would help transgender students to *"… feel more equipped to deal with like possible issues they might have with their body"* (Lines 782-785). In contrast, he detailed the positive impact a transgender teacher had on his friend in another school:

"Like she saw her teacher, like, become a man and I think that from that and that learning and like witnessing that, like having someone like that around her made her a lot more sensitive to trans issues" (Lines 894-900).

4.6.6 River

River's account was also dominated by a lack of inclusion and support at school. They recalled how they learned nothing about gender diversity and as a result relied on the internet to try to figure out what they were feeling/experiencing with regard their gender identity, which they found concerning:

"…I did not know about anything non-binary and, um, I remember like so, I remember like doing some research and stuff online. And again, as I said, you can find a community online for everything online" (Lines 55-59).

River reported no formal support at school apart from a part-time school counsellor, who was not easily accessed: *"…I'd have to literally wait outside the school counsellor's office and wait until-and wait until there was a space"* (Lines 659-661). Similar to Lee, River felt that the LGBT youth club was not prioritised like other clubs were: *"…it's always been very much like, you know, straight from the bottom of the barrel with the-with a-with a group within the school that's LGBT"* (Lines 950-955).

4.7 Gene

As outlined in the methodology chapter (Section 5.1.2), one participant, Gene, did not meet the full inclusion criteria for the study as they were not out at school/college at the time of interview. As this only became clear during the interview process, it was decided to analyse their contribution separately in order to maintain homogeneity in the main analysis, while also honouring Gene's contribution.

Despite having not come out, (mostly as they felt school or college *"…wouldn't take it seriously and they wouldn't accept it…"* (Line 45)), the analysis of Gene's transcript

revealed significant similarity with the main group of participants and the superordinate themes derived from their experience correlated with three of the overarching themes of the main group: Navigating school as a transgender student; Bullying, transphobia and peer relations; and Experiences at the systemic level of school. The broader implications of this will be discussed in the next chapter; however, the findings from Gene's analysis will now be discussed by taking each overarching theme in turn.

4.7.1 Navigating school as a transgender student

As Gene had not come out, they had to *"…deal with people using the wrong pronouns"* (Lines 137-138). Gene wished for a system at their college akin to that at youth club, whereby each student said their pronouns each morning when the register was taken: *"And everyone could just say theirs as though even if it's just he and him and if just cis people and that wouldn't make you feel it's like, weird"* (Lines 913-916). Gene could use the unisex and disabled toilets at school, however, when they were not able to, they defaulted to the female ones as they did not *"…feel safe entering the male toilets"* (Line 191). Gene later emphasised the importance of having *"…at least one…"* (Line 817) gender neutral toilet at school and a choice of which uniform to wear (Line 853).

4.7.2 Bullying, transphobia and peer relations

As stated, Gene had not come out in relation to their gender identity; however, they asserted that *"…no one bullies anyone in the college"* (Line 441). Gene did not know of any other transgender students at school, but they did know of students who were LGB; however, they had not come out to them: *"…I think there's two bisexual people that, um, but we've just not had a conversation, but, yeah"* (Lines 127-129). As a result of not coming out, Gene appeared quite isolated from their LGBT peers at college.

4.7.3 Experiences at the systemic level of school

Gene felt their secondary school was not inclusive, *"…coz they didn't know anything about any other gender identities apart from like the cisgender* [non-transgender] *identities…"* (Lines 6-9). In general, Gene described a lack of LGBT focus/supports at school: *"…the only thing they had like LGBT-related was they put--I think in Year 8, they put, like, uh, some people had gay posters and stuff like that in school"* (Lines 20-23). However, later in their account, Gene added that these posters were hung without any explanation or recognition from their teachers and, as a result, they felt the posters increased their peers' use of the term *"gay"* as an insult (Lines 617-620).

Gene reflected on how the school's lack of inclusion of gender diverse identities contrasted to its inclusion of other minority groups: *"'Coz we were diverse in like culture, very much in that school and different religions and all of that"* (Lines 216-219). Gene felt the lack of inclusion they experienced was a result of their teachers not being trained on LGBT issues: *"…I think it would have been good if the teachers had training on like, um, just LGBT issues in general"* (Lines 228-230). In particular, Gene mentioned that teachers should be trained to use *"…different pronouns and stuff like that"* (Line 716). Gene also felt that *"…if the teachers know more, they can like educate the students"* (Lines 282-283). Gene had a negative experience of sex education at school whereby they detailed how LGBT people/issues were only introduced in relation to AIDS: *"So they basically made like every, like all the students think that if you're gay, basically, you're just gonna get AIDS"* (Lines 554-556). Gene juxtaposed this to the *"proper"* education they got at the LGBT youth club they attended outside of school (Line 558).

The findings shall now be synthesised and fully interpreted in the next chapter.

5 Discussion

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter will provide a detailed exploration of the study's findings and the researcher's interpretations of them. It will relate the findings to previous literature in the area, relevant psychological theory and current legislation. It will outline the limitations of the study and discuss the implications of the findings for EP practice and future research. The chapter will conclude by detailing how the research findings will be disseminated.

5.2 Commentary on findings

The aim of the current research was to explore the experiences of transgender students in post-16 education. The study's analysis generated five overarching themes as outlined in chapter four, which shall now be explored in turn.

5.2.1 Social transition at school

All of the participants, except Ali, raised the theme of coming out at school in their accounts, perhaps unsurprisingly highlighting the significance social transition had for them in their school experiences as transgender students. As detailed, Addison and Lee presented relatively positive experiences of coming out at college, which they perceived to be as a result of their colleges having had some experience of supporting transgender students. However, in contrast, Cedar's and River's disclosures were met with inexperience, a lack of support and what they perceived as inaction by those in authority

at their schools. Unsurprisingly, the responses of Cedar's and River's schools to their disclosures had a negative impact on them. Cedar, in particular, frequently expressed their frustration and anger over their schools inconsistent and inactive response, not least because it had taken them a lot of time, courage and the support of a peer to come out to staff in the first place.

The mixed responses to coming out at school experienced by the participants are in keeping with the aforementioned GEO's (2018a) national survey of LGBT and intersex people in the UK, whereby only 36% of the respondents who transitioned while at school said that their school was 'very' or 'somewhat' supportive of their specific needs. Indeed, despite the relatively more positive experiences of Addison and Lee, none of the participants experienced a planned transition whereby their schools worked with both them and their families, for example, as recommended by the APA (2015).

Luca was the only participant who did not actively disclose their gender identity at school, but rather was 'outed' by a new teacher when she questioned his presence in the class as his transgender appearance (male) did not fit his gender on the register (female). Hereafter, Luca's college was open with him about their inexperience in supporting a transgender student, and (possibly as a result) he was advised that if he wished to socially transition he first needed the permission of his mother. Fortunately, Luca's mother was aware of and supported his transgender identity; however, this need for parental permission left Luca concerned for future transgender students at the school, whose parents were not yet aware of or opposed to their transgender identity. Luca's experience, however, was in keeping with 21% of respondents to the GEO (2018a) survey, whereby a disclosure of their LGBT status was made accidentally or without their

permission. Indeed, these disclosures occurred despite that all LGBT students have the right to privacy in relation to their sexual orientation and gender identity status (when there are no immediate safeguarding concerns) (APA, 2015).

Addison, Cedar and Luca detailed how bullying at their schools prevented them from coming out at an earlier point. From Addison's perspective, coming out would have made the bullying they already experienced at secondary school even worse, and so they eagerly awaited the transition to college to come out there. Cedar detailed the fear of verbal and physical reprisal that prevented them from coming out, despite the significant negative and isolating effects hiding their gender fluidity had on them. Luca recalled how his fear of bullying based on the experiences of other LGBT students prevented him from coming out at secondary school, and the *'disinterest'* or *'straight up-hatred and disgust'* (Lines 25-30) that prevented him from coming out at college. Indeed, these feelings and experiences of the participants were not unusual or uncommon, as 59% of transgender women, 56% of transgender men and 76% of non-binary respondents to the GEO (2018a) survey avoided expressing their gender identity for fear of a negative reaction from others, and this topic shall be discussed further in section 5.2.3. However, despite the fear of and ensuing transphobia and bullying by peers that being out triggered, all of the participants also presented more positive experiences of coming out to their friends they could trust (see section 5.2.3 for further details), highlighting the protective factor of peer support for participants, even in the absence of school/staff support.

As stated, Gene had not come out at school or college and their non-disclosed status appears common for transgender students in the UK. When the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights conducted a survey of LGBTI experiences across the 24 members

states in 2019, it found that of UK based respondents aged 15 to 17, 37% hid their LGBTI identity whilst at school. While fear of transphobia and bullying caused the current participants to hide their transgender identities, Kennedy and Heller (2010) argue that non-disclosure may be due to children becoming aware from an early age that their differences are socially unacceptable and that, as a result, they have to be covert about expressing them. Whatever a transgender student's reason for non-disclosure, one cannot ignore the associations found between social transitioning and positive mental health outcomes as outlined in chapter 2.

5.2.2 Navigating school as a transgender student

For each of the participants, a theme throughout their accounts was the ease or difficulty with which they navigated school as a transgender student post their social transition. Participants reflected on their ability to change and be known as their preferred name and pronouns, as well as their experiences of wearing (or not wearing) school uniforms and using gendered and non-gendered facilities at their schools. These shall now be discussed in turn.

5.2.2.1 Preferred names and pronouns

Addison, Lee and Luca changed their birth name to their transgender name at school and each discussed their schools' responses to this. (Of note, Cedar, Ali and River did not change their names, and Gene had not as she had not yet transitioned). As detailed, Addison saw the start of college as an opportunity to come out by recording their transgender name as their preferred name on the register. As a result of this, Addison did

not have any difficulty using their preferred name at college; however, as their birth name continued to be used on official documentation, it acted as a reminder to them of the fragility and impermanency of their transgender name and identity. Lee changed his name at school after he changed it by deed poll, but detailed how administrative errors with regard to it continued to occur. Similar to Addison, Luca asserted from the beginning of college what he wanted to be called. However, he suggested less autonomy and control over this when he revealed that his school would have prioritised his mother's wishes. On the whole, Addison's, Lee's and Luca's name changes were extremely significant for them in coming out and to their transgender identities. This was possibly as their preferred names were one of the most significant representations for them of their transgender identities, and compounded the removal for them from their birth names/identities. Indeed, official and non-official use of their preferred names at school appeared for them to be a sign that others accepted and respected their transgender identities.

Similarly, preferred pronouns were referred to in each participant's account, with their experiences being mixed with regard to acceptance and use of them. Addison's, Lee's and Luca's experiences were inconsistent. Addison tried, but was unable to determine whether the mis-gendering he experienced was accidental or on purpose; however, they were eager to express their admiration for teachers who self-corrected on using the incorrect pronouns. Lee internalised any mis-gendering he experienced as his own fault for not having had *'a proper conversation'* about his preferred pronouns with others (Line 360). Luca was less determined to use his preferred pronouns, mostly because he did not want to come across as defensive and *'taint'* (Line 336) others' experiences of transgender people. Cedar's experience was negative and they appeared frustrated that their teachers did not use their preferred pronouns, especially as they had

received confirmation from management that they would. Indeed, unlike Addison, Cedar felt certain that the mis-gendering they experienced was deliberate on their teachers' behalf. Similarly, River was left frustrated by their experience; however, they also referred to the *'validation'* they felt when their peers used their preferred pronouns (Lines 487-492). In contrast, Ali was grateful that changing pronouns was not a *'massive deal'* (Line 86) for them, mostly as their school had already stopped referring to all students as girls and enacted a number of other pro-active and supportive initiatives as previously discussed. In this instance, similar to their transgender names, participants felt their preferred pronouns intrinsic to their transgender identities and perceived their use by others as acceptance, respect and 'validation' of their gender identities.

The differing experiences of participants with regard to reception and use of their preferred names and pronouns was reflected in Stonewall's (2017) national survey (detailed in chapter 1, section 1.4), whereby one third of transgender respondents were not able to be known by their preferred name at school. Similarly, in her study on transgender identity awareness and support in Rotherham, Formby (2014) highlighted the importance of correct name and/or pronoun use for transgender participants and detailed how a lack of use, or misuse, caused them stress, frustration, upset and anger. Indeed, findings around use, mis-use and negative effects have been replicated internationally (e.g., Kosciw et al., 2015). Jones et al. (2016) found that transgender students experienced increased abuse from peers and poorer academic outcomes when their teachers did not use their preferred pronouns. Thus, there is increasing evidence of the potential negative academic and social effects for transgender students of non-preferred name and pronoun use at school.

5.2.2.2 Toilets and changing facilities

Participants frequently referred to uniforms/dress-code and use of toilets/changing facilities at school in their accounts. For the majority, school uniform was not an issue as they were in Sixth From or college. However, Cedar continued to experience a number of instances of formal dress code being differentiated on gender grounds and this caused him much stress and upset. Similarly, a number of the participants reflected on how uniform was an issue for them at secondary school.

The most significant issue for participants in this area was the lack of gender neutral toilets at school and how, as a result and despite the negative connotations they felt, they had to use the disabled toilets or toilets or their natal sex. Indeed, for these reasons, Addison and River reported not using the toilets at school at all. While changing facilities were not utilised by the majority of participants, Lee discussed the physically and emotionally isolating effects the separate changing facility he used at school had on him.

Participants' experiences in this area echoed the findings of the Stonewall (2017) survey, whereby three in five respondents reported not being allowed to use the toilets they felt comfortable in at school. Similarly, Jones et al. (2016) found that over one third of participants felt their toilets and changing rooms were 'mostly inappropriate'. These findings are concerning in light of the above reported finding by Murchison et al. (2019) that restrictive bathroom and changing room facilities may be associated with an increased risk of sexual assault for transgender youth. Indeed, although schools in the UK cannot discriminate against transgender students in terms of access to provisions, there are currently no legal guidelines on what provisions schools must provide (EA, 2010; Leonard, 2019).

On the whole, the above issues raised by participants appeared to be fundamental to their basic functioning at school. Indeed, Sausa's (2015) participants included gender neutral bathrooms, self-determination over dress and the use of preferred name and pronouns amongst their key recommendations for improving their lives at school.

5.2.3 Bullying, transphobia and peer relations

All participants experienced bullying with regard to their gender identity and/or transphobia, albeit to different degrees and in different forms. While Addison, Ali, Cedar and River experienced peer transphobia, which was typically demonstrated through derogatory or hostile comments or questions, Lee and Luca experienced more overt bullying by peers. Lee's account, in particular, was dominated by a single incident of bullying and the lasting, negative impact it had on him, as detailed above. Similarly, Luca's account was punctuated with targeted incidences of victimisation. Indeed, as both these participants were transgender males, it gives rise to the question as to whether transgender male (or female) students in general experience more overt bullying than their non-binary peers. While this hypothesis has not been investigated in the literature to date, research has clearly demonstrated that transgender students experience significantly more victimisation than their non-transgender (including LGB) peers (Day et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2016; Kosciw & Pizmony-Levy, 2016; McGuire et al., 2010; Sausa, 2005 and Wyss, 2004). Indeed, the verbal victimisation experienced by participants in the current study was also in keeping with the GEO (2018a) and Stonewall (2017) surveys. However, none of the current participants reported physical or sexual harassment such as in the

GEO (2018a) survey; however, this does not ensure that such harassment had not occurred, or preclude it from happening in the future.

While the current study did not directly explore the impact bullying or transphobia had on specific outcomes for participants, (e.g., grades; expectations to finish school etc.), as the interviews were participant-led, the significance these experiences had for participants was apparent through the frequency and, at times, depth at which they discussed them in their narratives. As detailed above, Addison, Cedar and Luca reported their fear to come out as a result of bullying/transphobia, and all of the participants made clear the impact bullying/transphobia had on their sense of acceptance, belonging and safety at school. Victimisation of LGBT students by peers has been related to several negatives outcomes in the literature to date, including diminished well-being (Kosciw et al., 2015); school belonging (Hatchel et al., 2019; Kosciw & Pizmony-Levy, 2016; Poteat et al., 2011), absenteeism (Aragon et al., 2014; Kosciw & Pizmony-Levy, 2016; Stonewall, 2017); lower grades (Aragon et al., 2014; Reygan, 2009), greater expectation not to finish school (Aragon et al., 2014; Reygan, 2009) and lower expectations to attend university (Aragon et al., 2014; Stonewall, 2017). Furthermore, such victimisation has been related to increased mental health difficulties for LGBT youth, such as depression (Clark et al., 2014; Hatchel et al., 2018), substance misuse (Huebner et al., 2015), NSSI (Stonewall, 2017; Taliaferro et al., 2018) and suicidality (Clark et al., 2014; Hatchel et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2016; Stonewall, 2017). As such, any victimisation reported by transgender students, including the participants in the current study, is extremely concerning and requires action. To this end, all of the participants, except Addison, felt that the bullying and/or transphobia they experienced at school stemmed from a lack of understanding from their peers. In this regard, there currently appears to be much room

for inclusive education around gender identity at secondary school to reduce some of the victimisation experienced by transgender students, as well as to reduce their barriers to friendship. Interestingly, only Addison and Cedar made (brief) reference to anti-bullying policies in their schools, despite research highlighting that specific anti-bullying protections for LGBT students make them feel safer and less victimised (Kull et al., 2016); decrease absenteeism (Greytak et al., 2013); increase connections to school personnel (McGuire et al., 2010) and contribute to them having more positive experiences and perceptions of their school's climate (Day et al., 2019).

However, conversely, although all participants experienced bullying and/or transphobia, each also reflected on the peer support and/or positive friendships they had at school. Indeed, all participants, except Cedar, felt supported by their peers in general at school, and all reported the positive impact of having 'close' peers or a specific friendship group who were supportive and accepting of them. This was most pronounced for Addison, Ali and Lee who had a significant group of LGBT friends at school; whereas Cedar, Luca and River appeared somewhat more isolated as a result of not having LGBT friends. Indeed, Gene was the most isolated participant, and their lack of LGBT peers appeared to contribute to their decision to stay undisclosed at school.

As detailed in the literature review, research into the peer relations of transgender students has mainly focused on their victimisation by non-LGBT peers. However, a small number of studies have begun to demonstrate the protective effects peers and friends can have for transgender young people at school. Jones et al. (2016) found that the participants in their study with more supportive classmates were less likely to experience various forms of harassment and discrimination. Similarly, although research on school GSAs is

not applicable in the UK context, the finding that they decreased the isolation of transgender students by connecting them with peers cannot be ignored (St. John et al., 2014). In fact, GSAs or a school social community modelled on GSAs may hold promise for UK-based transgender students in the future.

5.2.4 Students' ambivalent experiences of staff

All participants raised experiences with teachers/school staff in their accounts. Indeed, each participant shared at least one example of a teacher/staff member supporting and accepting them, and their recall of these often very simple interactions highlighted the significance participants placed upon them. However, such discrete experiences also served to highlight that the support participants received was from individual, specific teachers as opposed to from school staff as a whole. Ali experienced the most general support from their teachers, however; this appeared to be as a result of the direction of the new Head Teacher, highlighting the positive impact management's position in relation to LGBT students can have on both staff and students alike. As with peers, several participants reflected on the lack of understanding and/or support they received from their teachers as stemming from their lack of knowledge and inexperience in working with transgender students. Addison, Luca and Gene, in particular, felt that staff training around gender identity was needed to remedy this. Interestingly, Addison, Lee and Luca related the level of understanding and support they received from their teachers to their age, and felt that they were more likely to be supported by their 'younger' teachers. Similarly, River felt the lack of support they received was as a result of their teachers not having been *'brought up with it* [transgender people/issues]*'* (Line 1337).

On the whole, the above findings are in keeping with the GEO's (2018a) survey, whereby only 13% of respondents felt that the staff at their school were 'very' or 'somewhat' understanding of the issues they faced. Similarly, participants' perceptions of the reason for their teachers' lack of support was in keeping with Stonewall (2017) survey respondents', whereby almost half felt that staff at their school were not familiar with the term 'trans' and what it means. These findings are concerning in light of the assertion in the literature that supportive staff can be a significant protective factor for transgender young people at school (Evans &Rawlings, 2019; Grossman et al., 2009). Indeed, staff support has been found to have a positive impact on transgender students' sense of connection at school (Ullman, 2017), and such a sense has been shown to increase their feelings of safety (McGuire et al., 2010) and academic achievement (Kosciw et al., 2018), as well as decrease absenteeism (Greytak et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2016) harassment and abuse (Jones et al., 2016) and substance abuse (Gower et al., 2018).

A number of participants reflected on their experiences of teachers in terms of their response to peer transphobia. While Ali felt supported by management in terms of transphobia from peers, River reported her disappointment and annoyance at their teachers who did not intervene in the 'bullying behaviour' they experienced. Similarly, Lee recalled a number of teachers ignoring peer transphobia at his school. Indeed, these experiences of River and Lee reflected Stonewall's (2017) finding that less than half of bullied LGBT pupils' teachers intervened when they were present during the bullying. Although these findings are surprising and concerning, they should be viewed in terms of wider findings in the literature that suggest that school staff currently feel ill-equipped to manage incidents relating to transgender students at school (Bowskill, 2017; McGuire et al., 2010). However, it has also been found that teachers can be supported and empowered

to intervene when they are provided with more information about LGBT issues (McGuire et al.; Jones et al., 2016) and when the value of attachment to them for transgender students is reinforced (McGuire et al., 2010). Indeed, it was clear from the current study that participants saw the potential role of staff members in protecting them from transphobia, and it has been shown that when teachers intervene, there are fewer reports of victimisation and students feel safer (McGuire et al., 2010).

Interestingly, only Ali mentioned their experience of having LGBT teachers at school, which they found positive and helpful as they served to demonstrate to them (and others) the permanency of an LGBT identity. Similarly Luca, although not aware of any LGBT teachers at his school, detailed the positive impact a transgender teacher had on normalising transition for his non-transgender friend.

On the whole, the findings within this theme highlighted a current need for educators to be more knowledgeable on how best to support transgender students, as well as challenge transphobia and related bullying. Discussion around these issues is included in the next section.

5.2.5 Experiences at the systemic level of school

All participants reflected on their experiences at the systemic level of school, and to varying degrees detailed the positive or negative aspects of their schools' LGBT clubs/societies and inclusion of LGBT people/issues in the curriculum.

Addison, and in particular Ali, had positive experiences of LGBT club/society at their schools. For both participants, LGBT club was an opportunity to meet and mix with LGBT peers and talk about LGBT student issues. For Ali, the society was also an opportunity to become involved in several LGBT endeavours at the systemic level of their school. While LGBT clubs were present in Lee's and River's schools, both participants felt they were not as effective as other clubs/societies as a result of no teacher representation. Cedar, Luca and Gene reported no LGBT club at their schools; however, each wished for one.

On the whole, the reflections of participants on school LGBT clubs/societies highlighted the value, or potential value, these clubs held for them. Whilst the majority of research in this area has focused on GSAs, and as such is not applicable to LGBT-only clubs, Evans and Rawlings (2019) found that LGBT clubs were invaluable to LGBT students, in terms of providing them with access to a safe space, opportunities to be around other students with similar experiences and opportunities to collaborate more closely with school administration. Indeed, with rather to the latter, Ali's experience demonstrated that through their involvement in the LGBT society, they gained significant opportunity to become involved in affecting positive change in their school environment. However, in contrast, Lee's and River's experiences highlighted the importance of proper management and resourcing of LGBT clubs.

All participants spoke of the lack of LGBT representation and inclusion in the curriculum, and felt that it would have been extremely beneficial, in particular at key stage three. This finding is in keeping with the GEO's (2018a) survey, whereby only 3% of respondents said they discussed sexual orientation or gender identity at school.

Similarly, Stonewall (2017) found that three out of four of its respondents had never learnt about gender identity at school. These findings are concerning in light of the negative effects of exclusion from the curriculum as detailed in the literature review (Gowen & Winges-Yanez, 2014; Linville, 2011; Saunston & Simpson, 2011; Snapp et al., 2015) and furthermore, the findings that inclusive curricula is related to transgender students feeling safer at school (McGuire et al., 2010; Snapp et al., 2015) and experiencing decreased absenteeism and lowered levels of victimisation (Greytak et al., 2013). Curricular inclusion is also important to educate non-transgender students about gender diversity, in order to promote acceptance and support for their transgender peers (Evans & Rawlings, 2019). Indeed, as all schools were recently required to fully integrate LGBT identities into their programmes of RE and RSE (DfE, 2019), this could be utilised as a catalyst for positive change for many schools going forward.

On the whole, LGBT-specific policies and practices at school have been linked with a variety of well-being and positive psycho-social outcomes for LGBT students (Jones & Hillier, 2011). LGBT clubs and inclusive curricula contributed, both positively and negatively, to the current participants' sense of belonging and of a positive school climate at their schools. Indeed, Ali's experience highlighted that with a proactive stance from senior management, a holistic programme of inclusive policies and practices for LGBT students can be achieved.

5.3 Implications for educational psychology practice

As Yavuz (2016) has established, EPs, through their work with children and young people, their families, schools and LAs, are well placed to support transgender students,

and the recent assertion of the BPS (2019) places an immediate onus on EPs to support the development of good practice in this area. Indeed, owing to the recent increase in students disclosing their transgender identities, and the updates to the RE and SRE programmes last year, it is likely that schools are already seeking the advice of EPs in relation to transgender students.

The findings from the current study suggest a number of ways EPs can contribute to supporting transgender young people in schools. While the majority of research in the area to date has highlighted that transgender youth are the victims of transphobia and bullying, the findings of the current study suggest that school support needs to focus on more than just safety factors for these students. Also, in view of the number of non-disclosed transgender students, that this support needs to be proactive.

At the school level, EPs could encourage and support schools to ensure that transgender students are part of their inclusion policies. In particular, anti-bullying policies need to include practices that actively challenge transphobia and bullying related to gender identity. Similarly, EPs could encourage and support schools to develop specific gender identity policies. These policies could determine a template of school practice with regard to student transitions, inclusion in the curriculum, management and resourcing of LGBT clubs, as well as around practical factors, such as the use and recording of students' preferred names and pronouns and their use of gendered/non-gendered facilities. As Read has pointed out, EPs could introduce schools to tools such as the recently developed *Trans Inclusive Behaviour Scale* (2019) or Stonewall's (2020) *Creating a Trans Inclusive Setting* to help them to explore their current environments and reflect on how they may be for transgender students – disclosed or undisclosed.

A dominant theme for participants in the current study was that a lack of knowledge and understanding from teachers and peers resulted in transphobia and bullying at their schools. In this regard, training for staff and education for students will be extremely important going forward. Indeed, training staff was the key recommendation of the LGBT students who contributed to Stonewall's (2020) recent guidance for schools. While such training may be most appropriately delivered by members or allies of the transgender community, there may also be a role for EPs in this area. Similarly, EPs could contribute to the development and delivery of psycho-education for parents/guardians and young people.

Although it will be important that EPs/schools do not assume that a young person needs help because they are transgender, EPs could also work directly with transgender students as needed and appropriate (Bowskill, 2017). This could include consultation with the parents of a young person and facilitation of consultation between their parents and school when determining how best to support them. Needless to say, all support for a transgender young person should be informed by their views, and EPs are well placed to elicit and listen to their voice and support their self-advocacy. Despite commonalities, the diversity and complexity of the needs and strengths of the current study's participants served to highlight the need for continued individualised and nuanced support when working with transgender students.

At the LA level, a number already offer transgender guidance to schools; however, EPs could work with policy makers to develop and/or implement guidance for schools, community settings and non-psychology colleagues in LAs that do not. Given the positive impact the community LGBT youth clubs had for participants in the current study, it will

also be important that EPs are able to signpost to such groups and agencies within their local area. Indeed, EPs may be able to contribute to developing links between such groups and the schools/LAs they work in.

However, as stated in the introduction, at present EPs may not feel prepared to address the needs of transgender students in schools (Arora et al., 2016; Bowskill, 2017; Bowers et al., 2015; McCabe & Robinson, 2008). A number of EPs may also feel concerned and/or professionally vulnerable about working in an area that is currently so visible, controversial and emotive. As such, there is an immediate need to align the professional development of practising EPs and the curriculum for trainee EPs with the aforementioned BPS practice guidelines (BPS, 2019). To contribute to this, it will be important that EPs continue to undertake high quality research in the area to inform best practice from an educational psychology perspective. It will also be imperative that EPs working in the area continue to reflect on their competencies and engage in CPD and individual and peer supervision opportunities to ensure that they are working knowledgably and sensitively with transgender students, their families and schools.

5.4 Key psychological lenses to support change work

Three key psychological lenses put forward in the literature may support EPs practice with regard to the change work outlined above. These include cisnormativity in schools, a sense of belonging and the power and impact of language.

The findings of the current study, in keeping with previous research, highlighted that transgender youth in schools face unique challenges and have distinct needs, yet they

may not be getting the support they need. A dominant explanation put forward for this in the literature is the systemic cisnormativity which pervades schooling structures and systems (McBride, 2021). Within this study and previous research, there were several examples of ways in which schools passively (and sometimes more actively) reinforced gender norms, including gender segregated facilities, the language students and teachers used when discussing gender and the lack of LGBT information within the curriculum (McGowan, Wright & Sargeant, 2022). Indeed, cisnormative culture provided challenges to the study's participants – ultimately in terms of their feelings of safety and sense of belonging at school.

As Allen-Biddell and Bond (2022) point out, cisnormativity operating in schools can be masked when staff seek to resolve transgender inclusivity through an approach of accommodation. Instead, they argue that schools should engage in institutional change by restructuring their systems. In order to do this, schools need to begin to pay close attention to the impact that their policies and practises are having upon the well-being of visible and undisclosed transgender students and pave the way for whole-school, systemic measures for gender diversity to be accepted (Allen-Biddell & Bond, 2022).

Participants' experiences also seemed to be shaped by the extent to which teachers, peers and the school environment provided a sense of belonging, namely through acceptance and validation of their transgender identities. This finding can be explained by Baumeister and Leary's (1995) belongingness hypothesis whereby the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation (McGowan, Wright & Sargeant, 2022). In the current study, participants both directly and indirectly detailed their attempts to maximise the amount of acceptance and validation they could receive, for example

through carefully timing coming out and endeavouring to pass as their identified gender. These attempts made by participants appeared to be motivated by their basic need to belong - participants favourably reflected on the ways in which they received acceptance and validation as transgender students, and negatively discussed the ways in which they were rejected and invalidated. Baumeister and Leary (1995) found that individuals who experienced deficits in belonging were more likely to suffer psychological and physical health problems. This contributes to explain participants' accounts of the ways in which they experienced rejection and invalidation and how this affected their wellbeing (McGowan, Wright & Sargeant, 2022).

The power and impact of language was highlighted within the participants' narratives and captured a range of different experiences faced by them, mostly the negative experiences within the use and misuse of names and pronouns, and the prevalence of transphobic language by peers and adults in their schools. However, whilst language was often represented as a negative and repressive aspect of participants' school experiences, there were also examples of the positive impact of language, including acceptance and validation through the use of chosen names, pronouns and gendered language as a means of affirming their transgender identities. As with previous studies, language was also found to impact the experiences of participants more broadly through the gendered language and messaging around gender roles and identities which pervades school life (McGowan, Wright & Sargeant, 2022).

5.5 Limitations of the current research

A number of limitations to the current study have been identified by the researcher. Challenges pertaining to the study's methodological approach, IPA, have been detailed in the methodology chapter (section 3.4.2.3) and so will not be repeated here.

Perhaps the greatest limitation to the current study was its participant recruitment process. In order to identify and engage target participants within the timeframes of the research, purposive sampling was utilised, whereby transgender young people from community LGBT youth groups self-selected to participate in the study. However, by engaging in these groups, participants may have accessed direct and/or indirect support in relation to school via the group leaders and/or peers and, as a result, this may have influenced their experiences as reported in this study (for example, their needs may not have been as extensive as students without access to such groups/supports). Furthermore, as young people who included themselves in such groups, participants may have been more likely to self-advocate then others, and this also may also have biased their experiences of school/college, and hence the findings of the research.

Although participants were from similar geographic and socio-economic backgrounds, bolstering the homogeneity of the sample, all participants were from London and the urban setting of their experiences may reduce the transferability of the study's findings to non- or less urban areas, in particular because London has the highest population of LGBT people and resources in the UK (Stonewall, 2020).

One of the participants failed to meet the inclusion criteria as they had not yet socially transitioned at school. Although the researcher made adjustments to maintain the homogeneity of the research sample, while honouring this participant's participation, it is

acknowledged that their non-disclosed status may have impacted on their experiences and views.

In line with the large majority of studies in the literature review, pseudonyms were given to the participants by the researcher, and they were invited to share their preferred pronouns, which were used by the researcher hereafter. However, it is worth noting that the allocation of pseudonyms to the participants by the researcher may have impacted how they were perceived by readers of the write- up of the study.

Although discussed as a challenge of IPA in general, it is important to again note the potential influences on the research of the researcher's position as a non-transgender, heterosexual female. To recognise and account for this, the researcher strove to remain as transparent and reflective as possible during the process, as demonstrated through the data trail and extracts of the researcher's reflective diary (Appendix K).

5.6 Directions for future research

As evidenced in the literature review (section 2.6), research into the lives of transgender students from an educational psychology perspective is in its infancy in the UK. As a result, it will be important that EPs continue to undertake research with these youth to further determine their specific needs and strengths, and inform best practice for when working with them. At present, examples of such research include:

- Future research could include participants from different parts of or throughout the UK to enable exploration of commonalities and differences of their experiences across contexts.
- Data has shown that young people are increasingly socially transitioning earlier in their school lives. As such, future research could explore the experiences of younger/primary age children and/or longitudinal research could examine transgender young peoples' experiences at different points in their school journeys and/or transitions.
- The current study explored the perspectives of students; as such, in order to give a more complete perspective, future research could examine the experiences of school personnel and/or EPs in working with transgender students.
- Finally, future research could consider how intersecting aspects of transgender youth's identities impact or influence their experiences. For example, given the reported high rates of the intersectionality between gender diversity and autism (Warrier et al., 2020), giving specific voice to autistic transgender young people will be important going forward.

5.7 Dissemination of findings

In carrying out this study, the researcher aimed to gain an understanding of the post-16 education experiences of transgender young people, and in doing this, contribute to giving this hitherto invisible group a voice within educational psychology research. In order to ensure the findings of the research are disseminated and have opportunity to influence future practice and research, the researcher will undertake the following steps:

- The researcher will return to the participating LGBT youth clubs to present the study's findings and implications to the participants, their peers and the clubs' leaders/stakeholders.
- The researcher will present the research to her colleagues in the LA she worked; and following a request from a senior psychologist on management, to a second LA in North London.
- Following invitation by the course director, the researcher is giving an input on the school experiences of transgender students and their implications for educational psychologists on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at University College Dublin in the current academic year.
- The researcher has already become involved in further exploration of the intersectionality between gender identity and autism through her role on the aforementioned doctorate at UCD. It is hoped that the current study will contribute to this.
- Finally, it is hoped that the current research will be disseminated to the wider professional community via presentation at appropriate conferences in the UK and Ireland, and also as a peer reviewed paper in an appropriate journal.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the post-16 education experiences of transgender students in the UK to address the paucity of research in the area and to inform the practice of EPs. Whilst acknowledging the individuality of their accounts, the researcher was able to encapsulate the participants' lived experiences through five overarching themes: Social transition at school; Navigating school as a transgender student; Bullying, transphobia and peer relations; Students' ambivalent experiences of staff; and Experiences at the systemic level of school.

On the whole, findings highlighted that transgender young people face unique challenges and have distinct needs at school, yet they may not be getting the support they need. Firstly, social transition at school held significance for the participants; however, their experiences of this were mixed, with one participant being accidentally 'outed' and a second, deterred from coming out as they felt their transgender identity would not be accepted by their school. Indeed, none of the participants experienced a planned transition whereby their schools worked with both them and their families, as identified as good practice (APA, 2015).

Related to social transition, participants reflected on the ease or difficulty with which they navigated school as transgender students. They reflected on their ability to change and be known by their preferred name, as well as their consistently inconsistent experiences of acceptance and use of their preferred pronouns. On the whole, participants felt their preferred names and pronouns intrinsic to their transgender identities, and perceived their use by others as acceptance and 'validation'. Similarly, participants shared mixed experiences of using gendered and non-gendered facilities at their schools.

In keeping with the victimisation discourse that dominates the literature in the area to date, all participants experienced transphobia or bullying with regard to their transgender identity. The significance these experiences had for them was apparent through the frequency and depth at which they discussed them in their narratives. A number of participants reported their fear to socially transition as a result of bullying/transphobia, and all of the participants made clear the impact victimisation had on their sense of acceptance, belonging and safety at school. However, conversely, each participant shared experiences of wider peer support and close friendships at school, with this being most pronounced for participants who had LGBT friends. Similarly, although participants' experiences of staff as a whole were rather negative, each shared at least one example of a teacher/staff member supporting and accepting them, and highlighted the importance of these interactions for them. Interestingly, participants were consistent in their belief that the peer victimisation and lack of support from school staff they experienced, stemmed from a lack of understanding of transgender identities.

Finally, all participants reflected on their experiences at the systemic level of their schools, predominantly by detailing the positive and negative aspects of their schools' LGBT clubs and inclusion of LGBT people/issues in the curriculum. On the whole, the experiences of participants in this area highlighted the value, or potential value, such systemic endeavours held for them. Significantly, one participant's experiences highlighted that a proactive and supportive stance from management can successfully lead to a holistic programme of inclusive policies and practices for LGBT students.

The educational psychology literature has begun to point out that EPs, through their work with children and young people, their families, schools and LAs are well

placed to support transgender young people at school. Indeed, the recent assertion of the BPS places an onus on EPs to support the development of good practice in this area. As EPs may feel unprepared or even concerned to work in an area that is currently so visible and contentious, it is vital that research and work in the area continues to inform future practice. As such, it is hoped that through the combination of shared experiences, previous literature and related theory, the current research will contribute to developing both an understanding and prioritisation of these students within our schools.

(Word count: 33, 711)

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Evans, I. & Rawlings, V. (2019). 'It was just one less thing that I had to worry about': Positive experiences for gender diverse and transgender students. *Journal of Homosexuality, 1 (20),* 1-20.

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Gato, J., Leal, D., Moleiro, C., Fernandes, T., Nunes, D., Marinho, I., Pizomy-Levy, O. & Freeman, C. (2020). 'The worst part was coming back home and feeling like crying': Experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and Trans students in Portuguese schools. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10,* 1-10.

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Government Equalities Office (2018b). *LGBT action plan: Improving the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.* UK: Government Equalities Office.

Gowen, L.K. & Winges-Yanez, N. (2014). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youths' perspectives of inclusive school-based sexuality education. *Journal of Sex Research, 51 (7),* 788-800.

Gower, A.L., Forster, M., Gloppen, K., Johnson, A.Z., Eisenberg, M.E., Connett, J.E. & Borowsky, I.W. (2018). School practices to foster LGBT-supportive climate: Associations with adolescent bullying involvement. *Prevention Science, 19,* 813-21.

Gower, A.L., Rider, G.N., Brown, C., McMorris, B.J., Coleman, E., Talisferro, L.A. & Eisenberg, M.E. (2018). Supporting transgender and gender diverse youth: Protection against emotional distress and substance use. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine, 55 (6),* 787-94.

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Greytak, E.A., Kosciw, J.G. & Boesen, M.J. (2013). Putting the 'T' in 'resource': The benefits of LGBT-related school resources for transgender youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 10 (1-2),* 45-63.

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Hatchel, T., Valido, A., Pedro, K.T., Huang, Y. & Espelage, D.L. (2019). Minority stress among transgender adolescents: The role of peer victimisation, school belonging and ethnicity. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 28,* 2467-76.

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Heck, N.C., Livingston, N.A., Flentje, A., Oost, K., Stewart, B.T. & Cochran, B.N. (2014). Reducing risk for illicit drug use and prescription drug misuse: High school gay-straight alliances and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth. *Addictive behaviours, 39,* 824-28.

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Huebner, D.M., Thoma, B.C. & Neilands, T.B. (2015). School victimisation and substance use among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender adolescents. *Prevention Science, 16,* 734-43.

Jarpe-Ratner, E. (2020). How can we make LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education programmes truly inclusive? A case study of Chicago public schools' policy and curriculum. *Sex Education, 20 (3),* 283-99.

Jones, M.T. & Hillier, L. (2012). Sexuality education school policy for Australian GLBTIQ students. *Sex Education, 12 (4),* 437-54.

Jones, T., Smith, E., Ward, R., Dixon, J., Hillier, L & Mitchell, A. (2016). School experiences of transgender and gender diverse students in Australia. *Sex Education, 16 (2),* 156-71.

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Kosciw, J.G. & Pizmony-Levy, O. (2016). International perspectives on homophobic and transphobic bullying in schools. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 13 (1-2),* 1-5.

Kull, R.M., Greytak, E.A., Kosciw, J.G. & Villenas, C. (2016). Effectiveness of school district anti-bullying policies in improving LGBT youths' school climate. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 3 (4),* 407-15.

Leonard, M. (2019). *Growing up trans: Exploring the positive school experiences of transgender children and young people.* Unpublished doctoral research. University College London, London.

Leung, E. & Flanagan, T. (2019). Let's do this together: An integration of photo-voice and mobile interviewing in empowering and listening to LGBTQ+ youth in context. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 24 (4),* 497-510.

Linville, D. (2011). More than bodies: Protecting the health and safety of LGBTQ youth. *Policy Futures in Education, 9 (3),* 416-30.

Loverno, S. & Russell, S.T. (2021). Homophobic bullying in positive and negative school climates: The moderating role of gender sexuality alliances. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 50,* 353-66.

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Marx, R.A. & Hensman Kettrey, H. (2016). Gay-straight alliances are associated with lower levels of school-based victimisation of LGBTQ+ youth: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 45,* 1269-82.

McBride, R.S. (2021). A literature review of the secondary school experiences of trans youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 18 (2),* 103-134.

McBride R.S. & Schubotz, D. (2017). Living a fairy tale: The educational expenses of transgender and gender non-conforming youth in Northern Ireland. *Child Care in Practice, 23 (3),* 292-304.

McCabe, P.C. & Robinson, F. (2008). Committing to social justice: The behavioural intention of school psychology and education trainees to advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth. *School Psychology Review, 37 (4),* 469-86.

McGowan, A., Wright, S. & Sargeant, C. (2022). Living your truth: Views and experiences of transgender young people in secondary education. *Educational and Child Psychology, 39 (1),* 27-43.

McGuire, J.K., Anderson, C.R., Toomey, R.B. & Russell, S.T. (2010). School climate for transgender youth: A mixed method investigation of student experiences and school responses. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39,* 1175-88.

Mulcahy, M., Dalton, S., Kolbert, J. & Crothers, L. (2016). Informal mentoring for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. *The Journal of Educational Research, 109 (4),* 405-12.

Murchison, G.R., Agenor, M., Reisner, S.L & Watson, R.J. (2019). School restroom and locker room restrictions and sexual assault risk among transgender youth. *Paediatrics, 143 (6),* 1-8.

Norris, A.L. & Orchowski, L.M. (2020). Peer victimisation of sexual minority and transgender youth: A cross-sectional study of high school students. *Psychology of Violence, 10 (2),* 201-11.

Olson, K.R., Durwood, L., DeMeules, M. & McLaughlin, K.A. (2016). Mental health of transgender children who are supported in their identities. *Paediatrics, 137(3),* e20153223.

Oxley, L. (2016). An examination of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). *Educational and Child Psychology, 33 (3),* 55-62.

Poteat, V.P., Mereish, E.H., DiGiovanni, C.D. & Koenig, B.W. (2011). The effects of general and homophobic victimisation on adolescents' psychosocial and educational concerns: The important of intersecting identities and parent support. *Journal of Counselling Psychology, 58 (4),* 597-609.

Poteat, V.P, O' Sinclair, K., DiGovanni, C.D., Koenig, B.W. & Russell, S.T, (2012). Gay-straight alliances are associated with student health: A multi-schools comparison of LGBTQ and heterosexual youth. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 23 (2),* 319-30.

Read, J., Sargeant, C. & Wright, S. (2020). What beliefs influence children and young people's attitudes towards the transgender population? *Educational and Child Psychology, 37 (1),* 11-34.

Reygan, F. (2009). The school-based lives of LGBT youth in the Republic of Ireland. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 6 (1),* 80-9.

Robinson, J.P. & Espelage, D.L. (2012). Bullying explains only part of LGBTQ-heterosexual risk disparities: Implications for policy and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41 (8),* 309-19.

Robinson, J.P. & Espelage, D.L. (2011). Peer victimisation and sexual risk differences between lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning and non-transgender heterosexual youth in grades 7-12. *American Journal of Public Health, 103 (10),* 1810-19.

Saunston, H. & Simpson, K. (2011). Investigating sexuality discourses in the UK secondary English curriculum. *Journal of Homosexuality, 58,* 953-73.

Sausa, L.A. (2005). Translating research into practice: Trans youth recommendations for improving school systems. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education, 3 (1),* 15-28.

Seelman, K.L., Forge, N., Walls, N.E. & Bridges, N. (2015). School engagement among LGBTQ high school students: The roles of safe adults and gay-straight alliance characteristics. *Children and Youth Services Review, 57,* 19-29.

Shaw, R. (2019). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In C. Sullivan & M.A. Forrester (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research in psychology: A practical guide* pp.185-208). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Smith, J. (1996). Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using IPA in health and psychology. *Psychology and Health, 11,* 261-71.

Smith, J. & Eatough, V. (2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In E. Lyons & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing qualitative data in psychology* (pp. 50-67). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Smith, J., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Smith, J. & Osborne, M. (2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 25-52). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Snapp, S.D., Burdge, H., Licona, A.C., Moody, R.L. & Russell, S.T. (2015). Students' perspectives on LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 48 (2),* 249-65.

Snapp, S.D., McGuire, J.K., O' Sinclair, K., Gabrion, K. & Russell, S.T. (2015). LGBTQ-inclusive curricula: Why supportive curricula matter. *Sex Education, 15 (6).* 580-96.

St. John, A., Travers, R., Munro, L., Liboro, R., Schneider, M. & Greig, C.L. (2014). The success of gay-straight alliances in Waterloo region, Ontario: A confluence of political and social factors. *Journal of LGBT youth, 11 (2),* 150-170.

Stonewall. (2017). *School report: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Britain's schools in 2017.* London: Stonewall.

Stonewall. (2020). *An introduction to supporting LGBT children and young people: A guide for schools, colleges and settings.* London: Stonewall.

Szkrybalo, J. & Ruble, D.N. (1999). God made me a girl: Sex-category constancy judgements and explanations revisited. *Developmental Psychology, 35(2),* 392-402.

Taliaferro, L.A., McMorris, B.J. & Eisenberg, M.E. (2018). Connections that moderate risk of non-suicidal self-injury among transgender and gender non-conforming youth. *Psychiatry Research, 268,* 65-7.

Tracey, P., Taylor, C. & Campbell, C. (2016). 'You can't break…when you're already broken': The importance of school climate to suicidality among LTBGQ youth. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Mental Health, 20 (3),* 195-213.

Ullman, T. (2017). Teacher positivity towards gender diversity: Exploring relationships and school outcomes for transgender and gender-diverse students. *Sex Education, 17 (3),* 276-89.

Warrier, V., Greenberg, D.M., Weir, E., Buckingham, C., Smith, P., Lai, MC., Allison, C. & Baron-Cohen, S. (2020). Elevated rates of autism, other neurodevelopmental and psychiatric diagnoses, and autistic traits in transgender and gender-diverse individuals. *Nature Communications, 11 (1),* 3959.

Wernick, L.J., Dessel, A.B., Kulick, A. & Graham, L.F. (2013). LGBTQQ youth creating change: Developing allies against bullying though performance and dialogue. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35,* 1576-86.

Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method* (2nd Ed.). England: Open University Press.

Women and Equalities Committee (2016). *Transgender equality: First report of session 2015-16.* London: The Stationery Office.

Wyss, S.E. (2004). 'This was my hell': The violence experienced by gender non-conforming youth in US high schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 17 (5),* 709-30.

Yardley, L. (2015). Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology. In J. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 257-272). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Yavuz, C. (2016). Gender variance and educational psychology: Implications for practice. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 32 (4),* 395-409.

Youth Chances (2014). *Youth chances: Summary of first findings.* UK: Youth Chances.

8 List of appendices

Appendix A: List of included articles in systematic review

Evans, I. & Rawlings, V. (2019). 'It was just one less thing that I had to worry about': Positive experiences for gender diverse and transgender students. *Journal of Homosexuality, 1 (20),* 1-20.

Jones, T., Smith, E., Ward, R., Dixon, J., Hillier, L & Mitchell, A. (2016). School experiences of transgender and gender diverse students in Australia. *Sex Education, 16 (2),* 156-71.

McBride R. & Schubotz, D. (2017). Living a fairy tale: The educational expenses of transgender and gender non-conforming youth in Northern Ireland. *Child Care in Practice, 23 (3),* 292-304.

McGuire, J.K., Anderson, C.R., Toomey, R.B. & Russell, S.T. (2010). School climate for transgender youth: A mixed method investigation of student experiences and school responses. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39,* 1175-88.

Sausa, L.A. (2005). Translating research into practice: Trans youth recommendations for improving school systems. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education, 3 (1),* 15-28.

Wyss, S.E. (2004). 'This was my hell': The violence experienced by gender non-conforming youth in US high schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 17 (5),* 709-30.

Appendix B: List of excluded articles in systematic review

Search 1 (n=7):

Article:	Reason for exclusion:
Burford, J., Lucassen, M. & Hamilton, T. (2017). Evaluating a gender diversity workshop to promote positive learning environments. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 14 (2),* 211-227	Focus is on evaluation of a gender diversity workshop, not on students' experiences of school
Eisenberg, M.E., Gower, A.L., McMorris, B.J., Rider, G.N. & Coleman, E. (2019). Emotional distress, bullying victimisation and protective factors among transgender and gender diverse adolescents in city, suburban, town and rural locations. (2019). *The Journal of Rural Health, 35 (2),* 270-281	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Gower, A.L., Rider, G.N., Brown, C., McMorris, B.J., Coleman, E., Taliaferro, L.A. & Eisenberg, M.E. (2018). Supporting transgender and gender diverse youth: Protection against emotional distress and substance use. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine, 55 (6),* 787-794	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Hemi, W. & Mortlock, A. (2017). On the periphery or at the centre?: Ideas for improving the physical and interpersonal environments for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and trans-sexual/gender students at a New Zealand secondary school. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work, 14 (2),* 99-113	Action project – focus not on school experiences
Lowry, R., Johns, M.M., Gordon, A.R., Austin, S.B., Robin, L.E. & Kann, L.K. (2018). Nonconforming gender expression and associated mental distress and substance use among high school students. *JAMA Paediatrics, 172 (11),* 1020-1028	Large scale survey – focus on stereotypes, not on student experiences

Norris, A.L. & Orchowski, L.M. (2020). Peer victimisation of sexual minority and transgender youth: A cross-sectional study of high school students. *Psychology of Violence, 10 (2),* 201-211	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Ullman, J. (2017). Teacher positivity towards gender diversity: Exploring relationships and school outcomes for transgender and gender-diverse students. *Sex Education, 17 (3),* 276-289	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences

Search 2 (n=1):

Articles:	**Reason for exclusion:**
Vantieghem, W. & Van Houtte, M. (2020). The impact of gender variance on adolescents' wellbeing: Does the school context matter? *Journal of Homosexuality, 67 (1),* 1-34	No transgender students included

Search 3 (n=3):

Articles:	**Reason for exclusion:**
Collier, K.L., Bos, H.M.W. & Sandfort, T.G.M. (2013). Homophobic name-calling among secondary school students and its implications for mental health. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 42,* 363-375	No transgender students included
Linville, D. (2011). More than bodies: Protecting the health and safety of LGBTQ youth. *Policy Futures in Education, 9 (3),* 416-430	Analysed language, behaviour and policies in school – no direct research with students
Marx, R.A., Roberts, L.M. & Nixon, C.T. (2017). When care and concern are not enough: School personnel's development as allies for trans and gender non-conforming students. *Social Sciences, 6,* 1-6	Focus on school personnel, not students

Search 4 (n=18):

Articles:	**Reason for exclusion:**
Day, J.K., Loverno, S. & Russell, S.T. (2019). Safe and supportive schools for LGBT youth: Addressing educational inequalities through inclusive policies and practices. *Journal of School Psychology, 74,* 29-43	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Coulter, R., Birkett, M., Corliss, H.L., Hatzenbuehler, M.L., Mustanski, B. & Stall, R.D. (2016). Associations between LGBTQ-affirmative school climate and adolescent drinking behaviours. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 161,* 340-347	No transgender students included
Denny, S., Lucassen, M., Stuart, J., Fleming, T., Bullen, P., Peiris-John, R., Roseen, F.V. & Utter, J. (2016). The association between supportive high school environments and depressive symptoms and suicidality among sexual minority students. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 45 (3),* 248-61	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences. Number of transgender students not stated
Gower, A.L., Forster, M., Gloppen, K., Johnson, A.Z., Eisenberg, M.E., Connett, J.E. & Borowsky, I.W. (2017). School practices to foster LGBT-supportive climate: Associations with adolescent bullying involvement. *Prevention Science, 19 (8),* 813-821	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences. Number of transgender students included not stated
Greytak, E.A., Kosciw, J.G. & Boesen, M.J. (2013). Putting the 'T' in 'resource': The benefit of LGBT-related school resources for transgender youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 10 (1-2),* 45-63	Large scale surveys – focus not on lived experiences
Hatchel, T., Valido, A., De Pedro, K.T., Huang, Y. & Espelage, D.L. (2018). Minority stress among transgender adolescents: The role of peer victimisation, school belonging and ethnicity. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 28,* 2467-2476	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Heck, N.C., Livingston, N.A., Flentje, A., Oost, K., Stewart, B.T. & Cochran, B. N. (2014). Reducing risk for illicit drug use and prescription drug misuse: High school gay-straight alliances and	Survey – focus not on lived experiences

lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth. *Addictive Behaviours, 39,* 824-828	
Jarpe-Ratner, E. (2020). How can we make LGBTQ+ inclusive sex education programmes truly inclusive? A case study of Chicago public schools' policy and curriculum. *Sex Education, 20 (3),* 283-299	No details given on inclusion of transgender students in focus groups component of study so relevancy cannot be determined
Jones, T.M. & Hillier, L. (2012). Sexuality education school policy for Australian GLBTIQ students. *Sex Education, 12 (4),* 437-454	Survey data and interview, with interviews with policy informants – focus not on experiences of transgender students
Leung, E. & Flanagan, T. (2019). Let's do this together: An integration of photo-voice and mobile interviewing in empowering and listening to LGBTQ+ youths in context. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 24 (4),* 497-510	No details on transgender participants included, if any, so relevancy cannot be determined
Loverno, S. & Russell, S.T. (2021). Homophobic bullying in positive and negative school climates: The moderating role of gender sexuality alliances. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 50,* 353-366	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Marx, R.A. & Kettrey, H.H. (2016). Gay-straight alliances are associated with lower levels of school-based victimisation of LGBTQ+ youth: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 45,* 1269-1282	Meta-analysis – focus not on lived experiences
Mooji, T. (2015). School indicators of violence experiences and feeling unsafe of Dutch LGB versus non-LGB secondary students and staff, 2006-2010. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 31 (20),* 3413-3442	No transgender students included
Murchison, G.R., Agenor, M., Reisner, S.L. & Watson, R.J. (2019). School restroom and locker room restrictions and sexual assault risk among transgender youth. *Paediatrics, 143 (6),* e20182902	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Proulx, C.N., Coulter, R., Egan, J.E., Matthews, D.D. & Mair, C. (2018). Associations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning – inclusive sex education with mental health outcomes	No transgender students included

and school-based victimisation in U.S. high school students. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 64,* 608-614	
Reygan, F.C.G. (2009). The school-based lives of LGBT youth in the Republic of Ireland. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 6 (1),* 80-89	Mixed design survey – transgender students not included in interviews
Sauntson, H. & Simpson, K. (2011). Investigating sexuality discourses in the UK secondary English curriculum. *Journal of Homosexuality, 58,* 953-973	Critical analysis of curriculum and interviews with teachers – focus not on transgender students
Snapp, S.D., McGuire, J.K., O' Sinclair, K., Gabrion, K. & Russell, S.T. (2015). LGBTQ-inclusive curricula: Why supportive curricula matter. *Sex Education, 15 (6),* 580-596	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences

Search 5 (n=37):

Articles:	**Reason for exclusion:**
Aragon, S.R., Poteat, V.P., Espelage, D.L. & Koenig, B.W. (2014). The influence of peer victimisation on educational outcomes for LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ high school students. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 11 (1),* 1-19	Survey data – focus not on lived experiences
Atteberry-Ash, B., Kattari, S.K., Speer, S.R., Guz, S. & Kattari, L. (2019). School safety experiences of high school youth across sexual orientation and gender identity. *Children and Youth Services Review, 104,* e104403	Focus on sex-gender intersectionality, not on school experiences of transgender students
Baams, L., Semon Dubas, J. & van Aken, M. (2017). Comprehensive sexuality education as a longitudinal predictor of LGBTQ name-calling and perceived willingness to intervene in school. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 46,* 931-942	No transgender students included
Barnett, A.P., Molock, S.D., Nieves-Lugo, K. & Zea, M.C. (2018). Anti-LGBT victimisation, fear of violence at school and suicide risk among adolescents. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 6 (1),* 88-95	No transgender students included

Clark, T.C., Lucassen, M., Bullen, P., Denny, S.J., Fleming, T.M., Robinson, E.M. & Rossen, F.V. (2014). The health and well-being of transgender high school students: Results from the New Zealand adolescent health survey. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 55,* 93-99	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Colvin, S., Egan, J.E. & Coulter, R.W. (2019). School climate and sexual and gender minority adolescent mental health. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 48,* 1938-1951	Survey – focus not on lived experiences. Number of transgender students not included
Crothers, L.M., Kolbert, J.B., Berbary, C., Chatlos, S., Lattanzio, L., Tiberi, A., Wells, D.S., Bundick, M.J., Lipinski, J. & Meddl, C. (2017). Teachers', LGBTQ students' and student allies perceptions of bullying of sexually-diverse youth. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma, 26 (9),* 972-988	Survey – focus not on lived experiences
Day, J.K., Perez-Brumer, A. & Russell, S.T. (2017). Safe schools? Transgender youth's school experiences and perceptions of school climate. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 47,* 1731-1742	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Demissie, Z., Rasberry, C.N., Steiner, R.J., Brener, N. & McManus, T. (2018). Trends in secondary schools' practices to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning students, 2008-2014.*AJPH Research, 108 (4),* 557-564	Based on data from surveillance system – focus not on lived experiences
Dessel, A.B., Kulick, A., Wernick, L.J. & Sullivan, D. (2017). The importance of teacher support: Differential impacts by gender and sexuality. *Journal of Adolescence, 56,* 136-144	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Espelage, D.L., Merrin, G.J. & Hatchel, T. (2018). Peer victimisation and dating violence among LGBTQ youth: The impact of school violence and crime on mental health outcomes. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 16 (2),* 156-173	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Gato, J., Leal, D., Moleiro, C., Fernandes, T., Nunes, D., Marinho, I., Pizmony-Levy, O. & Freeman, C. (2020). 'The worst part was coming back home and feeling like crying': Experiences of lesbian	Number, if any, of transgender students included in thematic analysis not included – hence relevancy cannot be determined

gay, bisexual and trans students in Portuguese schools. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10,* DOI: 10.3389	
Gowen, L.K. & Winges-Yanez, N. (2014). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youths' perspectives of inclusive school-based sexuality education. *Journal of Sex Research, 51 (7),* 788-800	Number, if any, of transgender students included in thematic analysis not included – hence relevancy cannot be determined
Hatchel, T., Espelage, D.L. & Huang, Y. (2018). Sexual harassment victimisation, school belonging, and depressive symptoms among LGBTQ adolescents: Temporal insights. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 88 (4),* 422-430	Longitudinal survey data – focus not on lived experiences
Hatchel, T., Ingram, K.M., Mintz, C., Valido, A., Espelage, D.L. & Wyman, P. (2019). Predictors of suicidal ideation and attempts among LGBTQ adolescents: The roles of help-seeking beliefs, peer victimisation, depressive symptoms and drug use. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 28,* 2443-2455	Survey data – focus not on lived experiences
Hatchel, T., Merrin, G.J. & Espelage, D. (2019). Peer victimisation and suicidality among LGBTQ youth: The roles of school belonging, self-compassion and parental support. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 16 (2),* 134-156	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Heck, N.C. (2015). The potential to promote resilience: Piloting a minority stress-informed GSA-based, mental health promotion program for LGBTQ youth. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 2 (3),* 225-231	Intervention based study – experiences not elicited
Huebner, D.M., Thoma, B.C. & Neilands, T.B. (2015). School victimisation and substance use among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender adolescents. *Prevention Science, 16,* 734-743	Large scale survey - focus not on lived experiences
Kosciw, J.G., Palmer, N.A. & Kull, R.M. (2015). Reflecting resiliency: Openness about sexual orientation and/or gender identity and its relationship to well-being and educational outcomes for	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences

LGBT students. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 55,* 167-178	
Kosciw, J.G., Palmer, N.A., Kull, R.M. & Greytak, E.A. (2013). The effect of negative school climate on academic outcomes for LGBT youth and the role of in-school supports. *Journal of School Violence, 12 (1),* 45-63	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Kull, R.M., Gretak, E.A., Kosciw, J.G. & Villenas, C. (2016). Effectiveness of school district anti-bullying policies in improving LGBT youths' school climate. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 3 (4),* 407-415	Analysis of anti-bullying policies and survey data – focus not on lived experiences
Lardier, D.T., Bermea, A.M., Pinto, S.A., Garcia-Reid, P. & Reid, R.J. (2017). The relationship between sexual minority status and suicidal ideations among urban Hispanic adolescents. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counselling, 11 (3),* 174-189	No transgender students included
McCormick, A., Schmidt, K. & Clifton, E. (2014). Impact on the academic and social experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning high school students. *Children & Schools, 37 (2),* 71-77	No transgender students included
Mulcahy, M., Dalton, S., Kolbert, J. & Crothers, L. (2016). Informal mentoring for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. *The Journal of Educational Research, 109 (4),* 405-412	Insufficient inclusion of transgender students
Orue, I. & Calvete, E. Homophobic bullying in schools: The role of homophobic attitudes and exposure to homophobic aggression. *School Psychology Review, 47 (1),* 95-105	No transgender students included
Peter, T., Taylor, C. & Campbell, C. (2016). The importance of school climate to suicidality among LGBTQ youth. 'You can't break…when you're already broken': The importance of school climate to suicidality among LGBTQ youth. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Mental Health, 20 (3),* 195-213	No details of number, if any, of transgender students involved so relevancy cannot be determined

Poteat, V.P., Mereish, E.H., DiGiovanni, C.D. & Koenig, B.W. (2011). The effects of general and homophobic victimisation on adolescents' psychosocial and educational concerns: The importance of intersecting identities and parent support. *Journal of Counselling Psychology, 58 (4),* 597-609	Large scale survey – focus on parents, not on lived, student experiences
Poteat, V.P., O'Sincalir, K., DiGiovanni, C.D, Koenig, B.W. & Russell, S.T. (2013). Gay-straight alliances are associated with student health: A multi-school comparison of LGBTQ and heterosexual youth. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 23 (2),* 319-330	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Robinson, J.P. & Espelage, D.L. (2011). Inequalities in educational and psychological outcomes between LGBTQ and straight students in middle and high school. *Educational Researcher, 40 (7),* 315-330	Survey data – focus not on lived experiences
Robinson, J.P & Espelage, D.L. (2012). Bullying explains only part of LGBTQ-heterosexual risk disparities: Implication for policy and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41 (8),* 309-319	Large scale survey – focus not on lived experiences
Robinson, J.P. & Espelage, D.L. (2012). Peer victimisation and sexual risk differences between lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning and non-transgender heterosexual youths in grades 7-12. *Research and Practice, 103 (10),* 1810-1819	Large scale youth assessment – focus not on lived experiences
Saewyc, E.M., Li, G., Gower, A.L., Watson, R.J., Erickson, D., Corliss, H.L. & Eisenberg, M.E. (2020). The link between LGBTQ – supportive communities, progressive political climate and suicidality among sexual minority adolescents in Canada. *Preventive Medicine, 139,* e106191	No transgender students included
Seelman, K.L., Forge, N., Walls, N.E. & Bridges, N. (2015). School engagement among LGBTQ high school students: The roles of safe adults and gay-straight alliance characteristics. *Children and Youth Services Review, 57,* 19-29	Survey data – focus not on lived experiences. Number of transgender students not included

Snapp, S.D., Burdge, H., Licona, A.C., Moody, R.L. & Russell, S.T (2015). *Equality and Excellence in Education, 48 (2),* 249-265	LGBT only focus
St. John, A., Travers, R., Munro, L., Liboro, R., Schneider, M. & Greig, C. L. (2014). The success of gay-straight alliances in waterloo Region, Ontario: A confluence of political and social factors. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 11 (2).*, DOI:10.1080/19361653.2014.878564	LGBT only focus
Taliferro, L.A., McMorris, B.J. & Eisenberg, M.E. (2018). Connections that moderate risk of non-suicidal self-injury among transgender and gender non-conforming youth. *Psychiatry Research, 268,* 65-67	Large scale survey - focus not on lived experiences. Number of transgender students not included
Wernick, L.J., Dessel, A.B., Kulick, A. & Graham, L.F. (2013). LGBTQQ youth creating change: Developing allies against bullying through performance and dialogue. *Children and Youth Services, 35,* 1576-1586	No details of number, if any, of transgender students involved so relevancy cannot be determined

Appendix C: Critical appraisals of included articles

Aims	Methodology	Research design	Recruitment strategy	Data collection	Consideration of relationship between researcher and participants	Ethical issues	Data analysis	Findings	Value of the research
Title: Evans & Rawlings. (2019). ***'It was just one less thing that I had to worry about': Positive experiences for gender diverse and transgender students***									
Aims of the research were clear. Study aimed to explore transgender and gender diverse students' positive experiences of schooling, in the hope of providing educators with examples of positive teaching practices	Qualitative methodology was appropriate as the research sought to explore the subjective experiences of the participants in order to address the research goal.	Research design was appropriate to address the aims of the research. It was discussed and justified in the paper.	Recruitment strategy was appropriate to the aim of the research, although not without issue. The researchers contacted a number of potential participants (that were known to them) via social media to describe the project and provide relevant information	Data was collected in a way that addressed the research question. Semi structured interviews were conducted and brief details of the interview schedule were included. It was noted that interviews were recorded,	Outside of the recruitment process, no consideration was given to the relationship between the researchers and participants. Neither authors examined their own role, potential bias and influence at any stage of the research. Outside of the school they are affiliated to,	Ethical issues were taken into consideration. There was sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants. At the completion of each interview, participants were given the	Data analysis was sufficiently rigorous. Coding and thematic analysis was used which identified 12 areas as impacting on positive experiences of schooling. Codes with connections we grouped into 3 themes – Signiant people;	Clear statement of findings, with adequate discussion intertwined. Respondent validation was utilised to bolster the credibility of findings. Findings clearly relate to the original research question/aims.	Researchers discussed the contribution of the study to existing knowledge; in relation to current practice and the relevant literature base. Authors discussed how the research can be used (as above). However, new areas of research are not identified.

that they can draw from to support these students. Importance and relevance of the research thoroughly discussed.			– this information was shared by these people to others in order to avoid direct recruitment and possible coercion. Recruitment was therefore restricted and relied on existing contacts of the researcher. Inclusion/ exclusion criteria were also not made explicit.	transcribed and anonymised. However, no justification for utilising semi-structured interviews was included or whether methods were modified during the study. Furthermore, only 3 participants were included, and as they were 17-26 their experiences covered school and university.	no further details were provided on the two authors.	opportunity to self-select pseudonyms. Transcripts were returned to each participant for member checking. Ethical approval was obtained for the affiliate university. However, no details were included on informed consent or right to withdraw.	relationship and dialogue and groups and materials. Sufficient data were presented to support the findings. Contradictory data were taken into account.		
Title: Sausa. (2005). ***Translating research into practice: Trans youth recommendations for improving school systems***									
Aims of the research	Qualitative methodology	Research design was	Recruitment strategy was	Data was collected in a	The relationship	Some ethical	It is not possible to	There is a statement of	While the author

were clear. Study aimed to listen to the voices and glean the experiences of trans youth in Philadelphia, as well as present their recommendations for improving school environments.	was appropriate. Study sought to seek and illuminate the subjective experiences of participants in order to fulfil aim/goal.	appropriate to address the aims of the research, but it was not thoroughly discussed or justified. Ontology/ epistemology were not included.	appropriate to the aims of the research. At first the researcher conducted 'key informant' interviews with three trans youth and three trans adults community leaders in order to inform development of an advertising flyer to recruit 24 trans youth (ages 14-21). However, there was no further discussion around recruitment (e.g., inclusion/	way that addressed the research issue. Data was collected via 90 minute semi-structured interviews. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Justification for semi-structured interviews was not explicitly provided, but the interview 'tool' was developed based on information from the preliminary interviews aforementioned and additional	between the researcher and participants was not adequately considered. At no point did the researcher critically examine her own role (a national trainer, educator and consultant with the California STD/HIV Prevention Centre at the University of California), or her potential bias or influence on any aspect of the research process/write up.	issues were taken into consideration. The researcher noted that the study was explained to each participant prior to their participation and that they signed a consent form. At the end of each interview, participants were given a comprehensive trans and intersex resource list and specific	determine if the data analysis was sufficiently rigorous. The researcher noted that coding and content analysis were utilised to yield 12 major themes, but there was not an in-depth description of the analysis process. The researcher does not explain how the data presented were selected from the sample; however, it	findings; however, the researcher does not detail how she progressed from 12 themes yielded through content analysis to including 3 (what appear to be overarching themes) in her results section. These included harassment and violence in the educational system; problems with gender-segregated school facilities and lack of trained educators and school staff.	discussed how to research may be used (i.e., explicitly in relation to the participants' recommendations for improving school environments), the contribution the study made to the current literature base was omitted. New areas of research were also not identified.

			exclusion criteria etc.).	feedback from local trans youth. The areas the interview tool covered were included in the details. The researcher did not discuss saturation of data, which may have been beneficial given the large volume of data 24 90 minute interviews would have generated.		referrals to local services; however, they were also given an incentive for their time, with no further details provided. Issues around confidentiality, withdrawal from the study or whether the study had approval from an ethical committee were not included in the details.	does appear that sufficient data were presented to support her findings. Contradictory data were not noted or explored.	Similarly, the researcher did not detail how the recommendations the trans youth provided were analysed/assimilated. There is no adequate discussion of the findings; however, the researcher did discuss the credibility of their findings with participants by conducting 6 semi-structured 'member check' interviews.	
Title: Wyss. (2004). *'This was my hell': The violence experienced by gender non-conforming youth in US high schools*									

Aims of the research were clear. Study aimed to explore and analyse the experiences of gender non-conforming youth in US high schools and to suggest areas for school and cultural reform that would protect these teens. Importance and relevance of research thoroughly discussed.	Qualitative methodology was appropriate. Study sought to explore and analyse the subjective experiences of participants	Research design was appropriate to address the aims of the research, but it was not thoroughly discussed or justified. Ontology/ epistemology were not included.	Recruitment strategy appeared appropriate to the aims of the research. Paper was based on a larger qualitative project that explored the experiences of 24 gender non-conforming students, which culminated in the author's masters thesis. This paper concentrated specifically on the school-based violence experiences of 7 of those participants. However, no further	Data was mostly collected in a way that addressed the research question. With regard to the initial study, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with 5 participants and emailed questionnaires to 19 – of which the data from 4 interviews and 3 questionnaires was used for the study. The interview schedule for the interviews and questionnaires was provided as an appendix. However, no justification for the methods chosen was provided, but the researcher did reflect on the advantages of face-to-face interviews over	The relationship between the researcher and participants was not adequately considered. At no point did the researcher critically examine her own role (a sociology student), or her potential bias or influence on any aspect of the research process/ write up.	Some ethical issues were taken into consideration. The author noted that participants signed a consent form, and a parent/guardian for those under 18 signed it as well. Each participant was given the opportunity to review their transcribed interview. Participants could critique the draft of the thesis before she finalised it,	It is not possible to determine if the data analysis was sufficiently rigorous as the author included no description of the analysis process. She does not explain how the data presented were selected from the sample; however, it	There is a statement of findings pertinent to the research question/aim; however, as aforementioned, the researcher does not detail how she arrived at said findings. These included details around incidents of violence (physical and sexual) and reactions to violence. The paper also lacked adequate	The author discussed the contribution the study made to the existing knowledge base; however, not in relation to relevant-based literature. New areas of research were implicitly implied.

			details were provided with regard to the initial study's recruitment process, nor signposting to a paper published on this study for further information. While the author does provide some further information, explicit inclusion/ exclusion criteria were not made clear.	the questionnaires mailed to participants.		and were sent a bound copy of the final document in order to ask for feedback. However, the author did not include details of how the research was explained to the participants prior to consenting to participate. Also, issues around confidentiality, withdrawal from the study or whether the study had approval	does appear that sufficient data was presented to support her findings.	discussion of the evidence both for an against the researcher's arguments. As aforementioned, the author discussed the credibility of her findings through respondent validation.	

						from an ethical committee were not included in the details.			

Study Evaluative Overview	Study and context (setting, sample and outcome measurement)	Ethics	Group Comparability	Qualitative data collection and analysis	Policy and Practice Implications	Other
Title: Jones et al. (2016). ***School experiences of transgender and gender diverse students in Australia.***						
Aim of paper was to explore the school experiences of Australian transgender and gender diverse students, with particular consideration for recognition of their gender identity in documentation, experiences of puberty and sexuality education, treatment by staff and students and other forms of provision.	Study utilised mixed methods design including on online survey and interviews. Study took place in Australia, whereby participants were recruited through professional networks of the study's member advisory group. Study conducted over 5 month period. Participants included 189 transgender/gender diverse students who completed the questionnaire and 16 completed the interview. Aged between 14 and 25. Apart from age, no inclusion/exclusion criteria were cited. Members of community advisory group used their professional networks to promote the study. Sample appropriate to aim of study.	Ethical Committee approval was obtained. It is not stated whether informed consent was obtained. Ethical issues addressed, but not adequately.	Group comparability was not applicable in this study	Qualitative data was collected through 14 interviews using an online instant messenger platform. Process of fieldwork was not adequately described – apart from stating that online interviews explored protective factors, engagement in activism and how participants accessed knowledge about sex, gender and gender identities, there are no further details. Similarly, apart from stating that the interviews were analysed in a 'grounded theory manner' using	Study findings are relatively generalisable, especially in the Australian context. Conclusion is justified. Authors include brief, practical recommendations.	Adequate referencing.

	Sample size appropriate. Survey data was analysed using SPSS and interview data in a grounded theory manner using CAQDAS. Findings are presented as themes, of relatively sufficient breadth and depth, but no details with regard to progressing from analysis to findings are included.			CAQDAS, no further details are given. Relatively adequate evidence is provided to support the analysis through the use of anecdotes and verbatim quotes. However, it was not possible to establish if findings presented were representative or reliable/consistent as there is no mention of validity. Findings are interpreted in the context of other studies and theory. It is difficult to determine researcher's bias, as it did not include who conducted the interviews. Similarly, researcher's own position, assumptions and possible influences are not outlined.		

McBride & Schubotz. (2017). ***Living a fairy tale: The educational experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming youth in Northern Ireland***						
Aim of paper was to investigate the educational experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming youth living in Northern Ireland.	Study utilised a mixed methods design including a postal/online/telephone survey and interviews. Survey was an annual attitude survey of 16 year olds (n=1939). 10 identified as transgender/gender non-conforming. This enabled binary analysis between transgender and gender non-conforming respondents and other respondents. Study took place in Northern Ireland – first of its kind in this region. Survey data was from 2014, but no details were provided re. time period of study. In addition to above, 5 transgender/gender non-conforming students were included in qualitative element of study. No inclusive/exclusion criteria were included. Quantitative sample was convenient and	Not stated whether Ethical Committee approval or informed consent was obtained. Ethical issues were not adequately addressed in the paper.	Group comparability was applied for the quantitative data in the study. Groups were comparable; however, confounding variables were not discussed.	Qualitative data was collected through 3 interviews – however, the process of interviewing was not described. Interview data was coded thematically and analysed for emergent themes – data analysis was not described further and certainly would not allow for reproduction. Relatively adequate evidence is provided to support the data analysis; however, because of lack of information on data analysis procedure it is difficult to comment on outcomes representation, validity etc. Findings are implicitly interpreted	Study's findings may be generalisable in the local, Northern Ireland context. Conclusion is relatively justified, but authors themselves point out that further research is needed to support their findings/claims. Authors included 6 relatively practical recommendations.	Adequate number of references used.

	qualitative sample was purposive – participants were recruited through youth groups, snowballing and referrals though adolescent service providers. Sample was relatively appropriate to aims of study. Minimal transgender/gender non-conforming participants in survey data meant sample size was sufficient, but authors note this as a limitation. Qualitative participants were aged 12 to 23. Minimal details provided re. findings.			within the context of other studies, but are considered in the context of heteronormativity theory. Researchers' exact role was not made clear, but a brief reflection on their position as cisgender, heterosexual males was included.		
McGuire et al. (2010). ***School climate for transgender youth: A mixed method investigation of student experiences and school responses.***						
Aim of paper was to consider the issues that transgender students encounter in school, in particular school harassment, school strategies implemented to	Study utilised a mixed methods design. Authors argued that transgender youth experience negative school environments and may not benefit from interventions defined to support LGB youth. Study took part in California. Quantitative	Ethical committee approval was obtained. It is not stated whether informed consent was obtained, but is stated that	Group comparability was applied for the quantitative data in this study. Confounding variables were controlled for as much as the nature of the	As aforementioned, qualitative data was collected from 36 participants across 4 focus groups. Further details were minimal; however, authors stated that each focus	Study findings were relatively generalisable, especially in the Californian context. Conclusion was justified. Authors included brief, practical recommendations.	Adequate numbers of references included.

reduce harassment, the protective role of supportive school personnel, and individual responses to harassment, including dropping out and changing schools. Key findings were that school harassment due to transgender identity was pervasive and this harassment was negatively associated with feelings of safety. When schools took action to reduce harassment, students reported greater connection to school personal. There connections were associated with	data were obtained from data from the Preventing School Harassment survey, which was available in both paper and online formats at the end of each school year 2003-2005. Qualitative data was collected with 4 community resource centres that provide services to LGBT youth in Western United States. Participants were 2560 middle and high schools students, including 68 transgender students. 36 students participated in four focus groups. Age range 12-23 and ethnically diverse. Participants that identified as FTM made up 78% of the groups; 22% reported to be MTF. No explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria were stated. Sample was purposive, convenient and also chosen to explore	parental consent was not obtained. As further information was not provided it is difficult to assess whether ethical issues were adequately addressed in this study. Incentives for youth included snacks and a cash payment of $10.	data would allow, and authors also took such factors into account in their interpretation of the findings.	group lasted 1.5-2 hours and documented the main line of questioning used. Limited details on data analysis were provided. The groups' transcripts were broken into idea segments, with each segment of discourse representing one of the themes. Within each theme, a list of meaningful subtopics were generated. The segments were coded by both raters to determine the relative prevalence of each of the primary ideas. In the case of discrepancies, consensus was reached. 2 independent coders developed and then come to a consensus on the major		

greater feelings of safety. The indirect effects of school strategies to reduce harassment on feelings of safety though connection to adults was also significant. Qualitative data further illustrated specific processes schools can engage in to benefit youth, and how the youth experience those interventions.	contrast. Sample was relatively appropriate to the aim of the study. Sample size was sufficient. Survey data were analysed statistically to reveal comparisons of transgender students and non-transgender students on a number of variables (as per the survey questions). Qualitative data coded and themed. Sufficient breadth and depth of results and comparisons.			themes of the groups. Analysis is not reproducible. Minimal evidence was provided to support the analysis. Findings were interpreted in the context of other studies and theory. Researchers' roles were not made clear, nor were their own positions, assumptions and possible biases outlined.		

Appendix D: Organisation Information Sheet

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Could your organisation help recruit participants for doctoral research?

Research title
The school experiences of transgender young people in the UK

Research description
This research is being conducted as part of a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology by a qualified and experienced educational psychologist. Its aim is to explore the school experiences of a group of approximately 6 gender transgender students aged 16 to 18 and attending secondary school/further education equivalent. Its purpose is to encourage hypothesis generation and suggest future lines of enquiry as to how best educational psychologists may support these students/their schools, as there is extremely limited research in our field at present.

To help in the recruitment process, what do I need to do?
After you agree that I may recruit participants through your organisation, I will take advice from you about the most appropriate way to make the Participant Information Sheet accessible to the young people involved in your organisation. The information sheet provides potential participants with full details of the study, as well as my contact details should they wish to find out more and/or express an interest in participating. This approach ensures that you will not have to share the personal details of any young person involved in your organisation. It is envisaged that it will also reduce the time and resources required from your organisation in helping to recruit participants.

What is involved for participants?
As part of the research I am seeking to interview approximately 6 students. These interviews will take place individually at a convenient location for each young person. They will last as long as is appropriate to each individual (typically up to 1 hour). The interviews will be led by the participants and will cover only what they want to discuss about their school experiences to date.

What are the potential risks and benefits to helping recruit participants for this study?
It is not anticipated that any risks will emerge for your organisation, as your involvement is limited to one of information dissemination only. Whilst there are no direct benefits for you, you may feel that you are further helping the young people you work with by supporting this research. Also, the research may reveal how educational psychologists may better liaise and work with external organisations that support transgender students, such as your own organisation. Upon completion, findings of the research can be shared with you in a manner preferable to your organisation.

Contact for questions/to express an interest in helping recruit:
I would be delighted to discuss anything relating to this research with you or one of your colleagues. I can be contacted on any of the details below:
Thank you,
Elayne Ruttledge
C/O Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, The Tavistock Centre, 120 Belsize Lane, London, NW3 5BA
07903897202
Elayne.Ruttledge@southwark.gov.uk

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Participant Information Sheet

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

The Researcher

Elayne Ruttledge
C/O Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, The Tavistock Centre, 120 Belsize Lane, London, NW3 5BA
07903 897202 Elayne.Ruttledge@southwark.gov.uk

Project Title

The school experiences of transgender young people in the UK.

Project Description

This research is being conducted as part of a Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. Its aim is to explore the school experiences of a group of transgender young people (aged 16-18) in the hope of revealing what factors they find help or hinder their educational experiences. Its purpose is to begin to inform educational psychologists as to how they may best support transgender students at school as there is very little research in this area at present

Do I have to take part in this study?

You are not obliged to take part in this study. If you do take part you are free to withdraw at any time up until the data has begun to be processed. Should you choose to withdraw, you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason

If I take part in this study, what is involved?

As part of this research I am seeking to interview a number of transgender students with regard to their school experiences. These interviews will take place individually and will last as long as is appropriate to each individual participant (typically up to 1 hour). The interview will be led by you and will cover only what you want to discuss

What are potential risks and benefits to taking part in this study?

It is hoped that you will find the interview process interesting and perhaps useful. You may feel that you are helping other transgender students and their schools by participating. Whilst it is not anticipated that the interview will cause you any after-effects, in the event that you do become upset or distressed, I a fully qualified and experienced educational psychologist with specific training in the area of working with transgender students. As such, I am in a position to fully debrief you and offer you further support should you find this helpful. I will also be able to suggest other people you may contact if you feel you need ongoing support. If you do become upset or distressed during the interview you or I may end it early without any pressure to continue.

Confidentiality of the Data

I will audiotape the interview and will then transcribe what you have said. I will offer you a copy of your interview. In typing the transcript, your name and others referred to during the interview will be substituted with replacement names so that they will not be identifiable to anyone but me. Transcripts will be kept on an encrypted laptop and audiotapes erased once transcription has taken place. Following the study, the data will be kept for 10 years on an encrypted memory stick and then erased in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy. In essence, any identifiable information will remain strictly confidential to me so that you can maintain anonymity.

The results of this study will be written up as a research report as part of my Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. The results will be set up as general themes and will seek to avoid including anything that might obviously identify you as an individual. The results may

also be delivered at a (related) conference and/or submitted to a psychology journal for publication. Again, in these instances, any identifying details will remain anonymous.

Location

I would like to undertake the interview in as convenient a place as possible for you - you may decide this is in your own house, or there may be another location we can find where we can be undisturbed (e.g., such as your club, my workplace).

Contacts for questions or problems

I am happy to discuss, in total confidence, anything relating to this research and can be contacted on any of the details provided above.

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate you may also contact: Paru Jeram, Trust Quality Assurance Officer, at pjeram@tavi-port.nhs.uk or on 02089382699.

This study has been approved by the Tavistock Research Ethics Committee, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, The Tavistock Centre, 120 Belsize Lane, London, NW3 5BA.

Appendix F: Interview Schedule

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Interview Schedule

Research title: The school experiences of transgender young people in the UK

Introductions:

- My thanks for interviewees time
- My background and current role
- Clear restatement of salient aspects of participant information sheet, especially the right to withdraw and re. confidentiality
- Restatement of what will happen with the information
- Ask initial background questions

Interview:

Opening statement:

'I would like to hear about your current and past school experiences as a transgender student…'

Further potential questions/areas of enquiry to guide the interview as necessary/appropriate:

1. How did your transition occur at school? (HINTS: support - plan/management; disclosure and confidentiality; management of any necessary absences from school; issues around name change/use of preferred pronoun/uniform/dress/bathroom/change-room etc.)
2. Can you tell me about a time at school when you haven't felt supported, or when support could have been better? AND/OR Can you tell me about a time at school when you have felt particularly supported? (HINTS: policies/codes of conduct; in-school allies (i.e. staff (e.g., mentor)/peers (e.g., LGBT club); discrimination; bullying; transgender issues in the curriculum (especially PSHE and sex education); staff education; language used in school etc.)
3. Has your school liaised with your parent(s)/guardian(s)/a family member with regard to your transgender identity? Can you tell me about this…
4. Can you tell me about any experiences you have had of in-school support from external agencies (HINT: educational psychologists; community agencies/clubs etc.)

Towards the end of the interview:
'Is there anything else you would like to add to what we have discussed?
'Would you like to clarify or change anything you have said?'
'Do you feel that you have given a fair reflection on your school experiences as a transgender student?'

To conclude:

- Thank the participant for taking part
- Debrief and ask the participant if they have any further questions/comments
- Ensure the participant has my contact details before closing

Appendix G: Sample of analysed transcript with emergent themes

Initial notes: (Descriptive comments = Black Linguistic comments = Green Conceptual comments = Blue)	**Original transcript (Luca):**	**Emergent themes:**
Luca realised he was transgender in secondary, but based off the experiences of other LGBT students, he didn't come out except to his close friends – despite that there would have been help. 'Found out': interesting way of putting it, like putting it outside of his control. Sense of detachment in what he says and way he said it 'Individuals': What does he mean here? – teachers? Didn't come out straight away in college as overheard unpleasant discussions/comments by peers about transgender people	**Interviewer:** So, Luca, I just want you to start by telling me about your current and any past school experiences that you may have had as a transgender young male. **Luca:** Uh, I found out that I was trans in secondary. **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. **Luca:** And I knew what other LGBT-- LGBT kids had to go through when they did come out so I didn't disclose that information to anybody but my closest friends whilst I was attending. **Interviewer:** Okay. **Luca:** Despite the fact we had individuals in the school that would have been able to help me with that. **Interviewer:** Right. **Luca:** I then started college and, again, I didn't come out straight away. **Interviewer:** Okay.	Fear of coming out in secondary school Coming out to/trust in close friends

Luca was accidentally outed by a new teacher as female was next to his name on register and she presumed him absent. This happened a few times. 'Naturally' gendered nature of schools.	**Luca:** I overheard quite a few other people, like kids in my year discussing trans issues. It's rather disinterest, um, or straight-up hatred or disgust. **Interviewer:** Okay. **Luca:** So then I was hesitant to tell the school or anyone else. But then one day I was in class and on our register we have male and female next to our names. **Interviewer:** Right. **Luca:** And I hadn't changed my gender on the register yet. So, um, yes, so it had female next to my name and a new teacher came in and, um, I almost got marked absent because she just looked, turned round, and said, "Luca? Where's Luca? Well, Luca is a girl. She is not here." **Interviewer:** Right. **Luca:** And, yeah, so I-I think this has happened quite a few times with teachers actually. **Interviewer:** With a few teachers? **Luca:** Yeah. **Interviewer:** Right.	Peer transphobia/ Coming out in college Gendered register

Luca would prefer to get marked absent than say. Peers said for him though. 'actually Luca': use of third person interesting here There is a sense of disassociation again here Recently tried to get gender changed on register. Doesn't live with his mother due to difficulties over his transgender identity Use of 'mother' here quite formal and distancing Transgender identity has impacted his relationship with his mother	**Luca:** Eh, I'd rather get marked in absent than, you know, tell the teachers that I'm actually Luca. **Interviewer:** So you never were able to say to the teachers like, "I'm Luca." **Luca:** It's often other kids that would point it out. **Interviewer:** Right, okay. **Luca:** Um, and then I recently took steps to getting my gender changed on the register. **Interviewer:** Yeah. **Luca:** Uh, that was quite difficult, um, because I do not live with my mother, um, due to difficulties surrounding this. **Interviewer:** Okay. Sorry to hear that, Luca. **Luca:** Even though with, um, we kind [unintelligible] now, it's still like quite difficult sometimes for her, and for me. **Interviewer:** Okay. **Luca:** But eh the school said, "We haven't dealt with any trans issues before." **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. **Luca:** "We're are gonna need a letter from your mom."	Disassociation from trans-self Impact of being trans on relationship with his mother Gendered register – changing genders Inexperience of school School liaisons with mother

School requested letter from his mum, which Luca got, but they still called her to confirm Uses ‘mom’ here when quoting school/switches to mom, but then back to mother again Why were the school questioning his mum signed it? Did they not trust him? Was it because of the nature of the consent? When asked, his mum told school he was transgender. School told her they didn’t have a box for that even though Luca wanted to identify as male. School didn’t understand transgender identity. Advised it was discriminatory by youth club.	**Interviewer:** Right. **Luca:** So I was like, "Okay." So I went up to my mom, um, around a week later because that's-- I usually visit her during the weekends. **Interviewer:** Yeah. **Luca:** And I got it signed. Um, so I gave it to the school and they took it and they said, "Thank you." Even despite the fact that I got it signed, um, my mother still received a phone call— **Interviewer:** Right. **Luca:** -later that day seeing if, ah, she did actually sign it. Even though I tried to make it as clear as possible that it was her that did it. **Interviewer:** Yes… **Luca:** And, um, yeah. And despite that, they asked my mother that, "What is Luca?" She said, "Transgender." They said, "We don't have a box for that on the gender system." Even though I asked to put-- to be put down as male- **Interviewer:** As male, yes. **Luca:** Yeah. They don't have any understanding of what transgender actually means. **Interviewer:** Right.	Disassociation from trans self. Gendered register Lack of school understanding as to what being transgender means

‘What is Luca?’: Unusual exchange/perception of exchange Again, disassociation, third person use. School couldn’t fit him into a ‘box’, despite identifying as male	**Luca:** And, um, someone that works in this establishment said that that's discrimination for getting me to write out a letter and then ringing my mother. **Interviewer:** Your mother, yeah. Were you 17 at this point already? **Luca:** Yeah.	Youth club support/advice

Appendix H: Subordinate theme for each participant

Addison: subordinate themes (n=9) derived from emergent themes (n=39) with related quotes

1. Coming out repeatedly		
- Coming out at secondary school	1.19	'…I was like, "Come to your papa".'
	4.116	'…if I had wanted to I couldn't have come out-'
	37.1205	'…I didn't tell anyone.'
	53.1737	'…would have hated secondary more…'
- Coming out in Sixth From	5.146	'…the fully sign-up bit-'
	8.238	'…a chance for people to come out-'
- Coming out to family	6.158	'…that was my chance to come out…'
	50.1627	'…they're a bit awkward about it-'
- Repeatedly coming out	53.1721	'…a constant coming out.'
2. Bullying, transphobia and perceptions of the aggressors		
- Mental health difficulties as a result of bullying	4.109	'…mainly 'cause of school…'
- Bullying at secondary and making sense of it	4.113	'…I was quite bullied…'
	32.1025	'…were just awful to me…'
	33.1054	'…I just knew that I hated it.'
- Comparison of bullying at Sixth Form to secondary	30.959	'…there is no need for that.'
	32.998	'…not a tense, awful environment…'
- Anti-bullying policies	31.972	'…zero tolerance…'
	33.1039	'…wasn't right.'
- Experiences of homo/transphobia at Sixth Form	34.1075	'…a couple of things I've heard from my friends…'

	35.1126	'…who are a little bit mugged out…'
- Perceptions and prejudices of homo/transphobics	34.1085	'…tend to have the mindset…'
	36.1145	'…well Indian or anyone…'
3. Navigating college post social transition		
- Name change at college	6.183	'…without telling anyone…'
	9.271	'…used the name, straight away…'
	14.409	'…there's no questions about that…'
	15.453	'…it's on the screen and big.'
- Pronouns being mis-gendered	9.259	'…hear the teachers talking about you…'
	11.323	'…they usually do.'
	38.1221	'…they need to use that.'
	52.1695	'…put pronouns next to names.'
- Uniforms and contrast to other cultures	18.553	'…it was actually extremely relaxed.'
	19.580	'…wore a bra to school.'
- Avoiding toilet use	20.617	'…disabled toilets…'
	21.647	'…I'll just wait until I'm at home.'
	24.746	'…no one's staring at me…'
4. Perceptions of and development of self		
- Finding oneself	8.244	'…the process of thinking about who you are.'
	25.785	'I need to find myself.'
	26.813	'I think they've found themselves a little bit…'
	30.963	'…knowing what we want to do…'
	48.1574	' "Yes, but I can't say anything." '
- Perceptions of self and peers as art students	14.431	'…at least a little bit queer-'
	30.957	'…we're all art kids.'
- Perception of self in LGBT friendship group	26.821	'…has helped a lot of them…'
- Experimenting with gender	27.834	'Trying on a new bra…'

- Transience of self	50.1636	'…people always change over time…'
	55.1805	'Nothing has to be labelled and solid.'
- Individual differences	56.1815	'Everyone is completely different.

5. LGBT friends and support from wider peer group

- Supporting LGBT peers	10.292	'…being friends with me I think helped him…'
	13.392	'…they rely on me a bit too…'
	26.811	'"You're amazing, you're a cool person too."'
- Non-binary friend's relationships	25.772	'…a little bit constricting.'
- Admiration from LGBT peers	26.806	'"You're a god."'
- Predominantly LGBT friendship group	28.893	'…my entire friendship group is LGBT.'
- Support from wider peer group	35.1136	'"…You can't bully people for that."'
	36.1155	'…and we all went, "No".'
- LGBT in-group	45.1476	'…and I was like, "Hey".'

6. Impact of local supports

- Normalising effect of community LGBT group	28.884	'"This is so different."'
- Loss of community LGBT group at secondary	48.1587	'…and I was sad about that.'
- Effect of local area on LGBT supports at school	49.1588	'…and there isn't anything there.'
	55.1780	'…when they stopped, they stopped…'

7. Perceptions and experiences of teachers

- Distant relationships with teachers at Sixth Form	37.1184	'…don't talk to my teachers that much'.
- Perceptions of older teachers	38.1218	'…but the older two who are over 50…'
- Teachers' understanding of gender diversity	41.1339	'even if they didn't understand it…'

8. Systemic supports at school and college

- Support of safeguarding team at Sixth From	38.1234	'…I've gone to them with my friends…'
	39.1273	'"The people with the orange lanyards…".'
- LGBT youth club in Sixth From	42.1383	'It's cool…'
	44.1446	'…mainly just LGBT things.'
- Ambiguous effects of school LGBT clubs	43.1405	'…things could go potentially wrong.'
- LGBT history month	45.1456	'…the history month thing…'
	46.1491	'…the fact they're up…'
- LGBT in the curriculum	47.1536	'It, so far, hasn't come up.'
	54.1776	'…about LGBT people…'

9. Experience of CAMHS

- Perceptions of others' response to having had CAMHS support	39.1252	'…people clamp down…'
- Experience of CAMHS	40.1314	'"We can get you a different person"…'
	49.1606	'…more to do with personal things.'

Ali: subordinate themes (n=9) derived from emergent themes (n=32) with related quotes

1. New Head-teacher and involvement at the systemic level		
- Positive change with new Head-teacher	1.6	'…she-the new one, is a lot more helpful…'
	2.56	'…everything became a lot better for him…'
	3.90	'…useful things…'
	20.656	'…have taken proactive steps…'
	28.896	'…is trying to organise it all.'
	29.943	'So now the new Head's come in…'
- Initiation of new Gender Identity Policy	1.9	'…school's new Gender Identity policy…'
	10.306	'…write the policy first.'
	28.924	'…we need to have an actual policy on this…'
- Involvement at a whole school level	1.18	'So we're really involved.'
	13.402	'…that's accepted in this school…'
	33.1063	'…a really supportive environment…'
- Formalising respect	2.54	'…they didn't officially…'
	29.937	'…they basically didn't have a policy…'
- Comparison to and example for other schools	4.119	'…other people I know like my best friend's school…'
	33.1064	'…better than most of my friend's schools…'
	43.1419	'…look at the model that they've got here…'
- School priorities	10.303	'…a lot of things at the same time…'
	26.855	'…like drugs stuff.'
	38.1267	'…they mainly talk about drugs…'
- Teacher training on LGBT issues	27.878	'…should be some level…'
- Expectations of private schools	27.883	'…school have a lot of money…'
	33.1078	'…and that's a private school so-'

2. Inclusion in the PHSE curriculum

- Change/inclusion in the PSHE curriculum	1.13	'…to be more gender diverse.'
	20.654	'…asked us to advise them…'
- Negative experiences of sex education	19.607	'…here's a dildo, this is how to put a condom on and that was it.'
	21.671	'…they didn't say anything about it.'
- Support for future cohorts	24.763	'…therefore she will feel a lot more supported…'

3. Positives and negatives of logistics of school

- Pro-active stance on preferred pronouns and names	1.19	'…good about pronouns…'
	3.86	'…it wasn't a massive deal…'
	6.195	'…then they will and they won't make a big deal…'
	31.1019	'… 'I'm going to tell all your teachers so they know'…'
- Uniforms limiting	8.259	'…kind of an unnecessary limitation…'
- Changing rooms	9.277	'…haven't felt the need to use anything…'
- Push for gender neutral toilet	9.284	'…trying to get them to make one…'

4. Perceptions of authority and expectations and experiences of staff

- Perceptions of authority	1.22	'…like telling teachers to do it.'
	2.45	'…you will have to respect this person's…'
	4.133	'…and he is dealing with it.'
	5.162	'…have to keep it confidential.'
	18.574	'…they're taking the necessary measures…'
- Trusting teachers	6.202	'…and they don't like talk to you about or be like, 'Are you sure?'…'
- Expectations of staff	18.588	'…I feel like a nurse should know…'

	20.660	'I wouldn't have expected them to do that.'
	22.696	'…and should have worked out by now…'
- Individual teacher support	22.718	'…he's actually being really helpful…'
	26.848	'…is very understanding and nice…'
- Limited role of school counsellor	37.1223	'…what she can do in her capacity…'
- Unhelpful staff assumptions	38.1261	'…if they didn't assume that everyone already knew things…'

5. Distancing from wider peer group, experiences and understanding of transphobia

- Distancing from wider peer group	3.102	'…I don't really care about what they think.'
- Experiences and understanding of transphobia	4.130	'…are like five transphobes in our year…'
	16.517	'…some people are quite ignorant…'
	18.585	'…not had an upbringing where they're taught about this kinda thing…'
- Staff homophobia	14.441	'…apart from the school nurse…'

6. LGBT and non-LGBT peer support

- Cisgender friendship and support	4.135	'…generally people are really supportive.'
	12.363	'…lots of my friends are coming.'
	17.529	'…and then her friend who's cis and not gay called her out on that'
	32.1030	'…everyone knows…'
	36.1160	'…attendance is really good.'
- Support of LGBT Peers	11.346	'…we're both non-binary which is really good…'
	19.625	'…they can come and speak with us if they can't cope…'
	35.1147	'…We all know each other, we're all friends…'

7. LGBT society, their role and its impact		
- LGBT society and their role	13.400	'…really great that it exists…'
	34.400	'-a good impact…'
	40.1321	'…they give us a lot of responsibility.'
- Boundaried inclusion of cisgender peers	12.384	'…we want to involve everyone…'
	40.1341	'…and maybe not close to us and it would change our dynamic…'
8. Positive impact of LGBT role models		
- LGBT role models	12.368	'…LGBT speakers from outside…'
	20.640	'…so you can see that other people are doing it and that they're fine.'
	35.1142	'…planning on inviting Ian McKellen…'
- Gay staff members	15.461	'…not just something that happens to students…'
	26.840	'…if we go to him and say, 'It's too straight', he'll be, 'Yes, I agree'.'
9. Parental involvement		
- Parental support and parental opposition	15.473	'…most of our parents are fine with it, but some people, like complain…'
- Home-school liaising	36.1182	'…they only do it if you ask them to…'

Cedar: subordinate themes (n=11) derived from emergent themes (n=35) with related quotes

1. Ambivalent experiences of coming out at school		
- Personal effects of not coming out	1.14	'…trying to s-some sort of sanity.'
	2.59	'…very, very stressful for me.'
- Peer support when coming out	1.37	'So, she went to Mr Simons with me...'
	14.468	'…has been understanding-'
	29.921	'…some people that I knew I could trust.'
	30.981	'…they were really interested about it…'
- Coming out at school, secrecy and fear	3.105	'…I thought you sorted it out.'
	14.456	'…and it was all a mess really…'
	15.494	'It was very badly executed-'
	30.971	'…pulled up a text document and typed it…'
	31.1001	'…I kinda told my Head of year…'
	35.1132	'…which people not to discuss these sort of things with.'
	36.1163	'I have to sort of keep it in…'
	37.1192	'It's definitely fear…'
- Support from youth club	14.447	'…just sitting here just saying…'
	21.692	'…offered to me…'
2. Experiences of school staff		
- Perceptions of subject teachers	2.39	'…that's 'cause he was a sociology teacher.'
	3.99	'…as understanding as an economics teacher can be…'
- Private psychologist	11.377	'…who really understands what you're going through…'
- Mixed experiences of teachers	18.593	'…they just don't seem to know how to handle the situation…'
	20.639	'She was very understanding.'

	32.1021	'…you can come to me.'
	44.1460	'…inclusions faculty that do really understand…'
3. Overwhelming feelings and their impact		
- Abandonment and displacement	2.47	'…the sort of situation when you feel like, um, okay.'
	3.80	'… "Okay, who do I talk to now?"'
	10.333	'…I don't exist in this teacher's eyes.'
	13.431	'…now I'm just getting kind of put aside…'
	23.735	'And I'm just there like, "What do I wear?"'
	26.842	'…and then the people in the middle are just left…'
	36. 1163	'…sort of kind of not be myself…'
- Uncomfortable/comfortable	2.63	'…really uncomfortable and I need to do something…'
	23.748	'And it was really, really uncomfortable'
	24.768	'…I don't feel comfortable…'
	25.802	'…this is the way I feel more comfortable.'
- Related mental health difficulties	9.288	'- I had a mental health crisis.'
	16.511	'…I had panic attacks on busses-'
	17.556	'…it's out of my control, it's my mental health.'
	19.627	'…causing me to have a panic attack…'
4. Being mis-gendered and other negative aspects of school functioning		
- Being mis-gendered and its impact	2.50	'…to refer to me as they/them...'
	3.104	'…it's like he/him, this, that, the other…'
	4.123	'That's just purposefully doing that.'
	10.324	'…I get mis-gendered.'
	33.1074	'…and I get mis-gendered…'
	39.1270	'…still decided to still mis-gender…'

- Absences, lates and avoidance	16.508	'Lates to school as well-'
	17.539	'…I might as well not go into school-'
	24.765	'…I just didn't go in.'
- Uniform and formal dress code	22.729	'…this is quite a big concern.'
- Toilets	27.874	'I barely manage that.'
5. Social influences		
- Culture and religion	2.69	'…being from Poland, being quite Catholic...'
	39.1273	'…because of his Christian values.'
- Influence of media	39.1263	'…recent example of that-the teacher in Oxford…'
6. School inaction and lack of impact		
- Inaction and lack of impact	3.90	'……I waited six months...'
	5.151	'…nothing came of it basically.'
	9.309	'…I was waiting for six months-'
	28.909	'Nothing has changed.'
	41.1326	'…they're literally doing nothing.'
- Lack of response to external agency	40.1320	'Liam emailed them, no response back.'
7. Lack of understanding and empathy		
- Homophobic language	6.211	'you're really just misusing that word.'
- LGBT identities	6.212	'…misusing people's identities…'
	40.1298	'…all these identities are valid.'
- Lack of understanding and empathy	46.1510	'…if you don't understand how it's affecting the person…'

8. Lack of acknowledgement and inclusion at a systemic level

- Lack of LGBT acknowledgement	4.133	'"There's no space in assembly for it".'
	5.160	'… "in Year seven until this point".'
- LGBT in the curriculum	5.176	'…that's not where you really place that sort of-'
	6.204	'-it's something that needs to be known-'
- Contrast to other schools	7.240	'…in other schools it doesn't happen as much.'
- Expectations of private school	7.247	'…the best public school in the area…'
- Segregation on gender grounds	10.328	'… "Oh boys in his group, girls in that group"-'
	23.733	'…this is what the boys have to wear. This is what the girls have to wear".'
	26.841	'…that's what you guys have to wear, that's what you girls have to wear…'
	28.886	'…are within the boys and girls…'
- Teacher training	10.345	'…took some course at the Tavistock…'
	38.1258	'Depends on the teacher…'
- School/home liaison	19.609	'…a very clever idea to call my mom.'
	20.641	'…went out of their way to contact social services…'
	21.669	'…they tried to contact my mom…'
- Anti homophobic/transphobic bullying policy	34.1104	'…only two years ago.'
- School ethos	41.1360	'…they'd rather invest in school buildings…'

9. Bad

- Everything feels bad	8.281	'…is where stuff got extremely bad basically.'
	17.565	'…sounds as bad as it is.'
	18.592	'…the teachers in general in my school just are-just bad.'
	25.823	'…something bad could have happened-'
	27.883	'It's bad. It's just bad.'
	29.928	'…would be really unnecessarily bad-'
	33.1078	'…to now a very, very bad situation.'

	34.1094	'…they're that bad…'
	41.1358	'They are very bad at what they do.'
10. Peer relations		
- Unrelated friendship difficulties	12.387	'…the problems of not having many friends…'
	37.1216	'…I've experienced general bullying…'
	38.1236	'I guess I'll just take the blame and just sit…'
- Peer inclusion	31.987	'…a gender neutral colour to put in…'
11. Support for future cohorts		
- Raising awareness of LGBT people	43.1418	'For example the month of Pride…'
	44.1454	'…put up some sort of posters…'
- Helping future cohorts	43.1425	'It's going to help people in future.'

Gene: subordinate themes (n=11) derived from emergent themes (n=36) with related quotes

1. Lack of inclusion, understanding and support at school		
- Lack of inclusion	1.7	'…weren't really exlu—inclusive at all…'
- Lack of knowledge/experience of different gender identities	1.8	'…didn't know anything about other gender identities…'
- Lack of LGBT focus/supports	1.20	'…the only thing they had…'
- Diverse school not inclusive of gender diversity	7.216	'Coz we were diverse in like culture, very much in that school…and different religions…'
2. Influences on non-disclosure of gender identity		
- Negative impacts on coming out	2.45	'…since they didn't talk about it, I thought they wouldn't take it seriously and they wouldn't accept it and stuff like that…'
- Confused feelings over coming out at college	3.94	'…I don't feel it's as needed but like, I don't know. If I could, if—the—it affects it a little bit, like obviously if they brought out like, I told them, that I would jump on it all…'
- Fear after forced disclosure	12.380	'And I was really scared…'
3. Bullying and lack of a friendship group		
- Lack of LGBT peers at school and college	2.60	'I don't know of any…'
	4.128	'…but we've just not had a conversation…'
- Peer bullying	9.284	'...the students are the ones that do the bullying…'
	12.377	'…and they were like bullying, they were really bad.'
-Lack of friends at college	14.429	'…I don't—I have, I'm not as like talkative…'
- Bullying free college	14.441	'… no one bullies anyone in the college.'
- Derogatory use of term 'gay'	19.598	'…would still use gay as an insult…'

4. Separation and segregation

- Physical separation from potential support at college	3.74	'…then there is the whole wider, um, college.'
	15.496	'I don't know how it works on my side because it's technically meant to be separated and stuff…'
- Student segregation on gender grounds at school	29.936	'…shouldn't like separate specific activities…'

5. Experiences of teachers and their lack of knowledge and understanding

- Teachers distant at college	5.154	'…the teachers are a bit, not as close.'
- Scoping teacher out on LGBT perspective	8.258	'…to see like, how, like, how knowledgeable they were.'
- Dissemination of understanding and knowledge to students	9.282	'…if the teachers know more, they can educate the students.'
- Lack of teacher knowledge/understanding on LGBT issues	10.317	'…like they don't know as much on different issues, like they aren't … as educated on it'
	14.458	'…I think on the education wise they're like the same…'

6. Negative experiences at a systemic level

- Lack of teacher training on LGBT issues	7.228	'…I think it would have been good if the teachers had training on like, um, just LGBT issues in general.'
	22.715	'so, teachers are trained how to use like, different pronouns and stuff like that.'
- Negative experience of sex education	17.554	'So they basically made like every, like all the Students think that if you're gay, basically, you're just gonna get AIDS.'
- Juxtaposition with community youth club staff	17.558	'…it was like they proper educated me and told me Exactly how it is-'

	24.762 ‘So, if they could get someone from, like an LGBT organisation, that may be better…’
	29.918 ‘here everyone…’
- Negative impact of management’s LGBT posters	19.617 ‘Because I think they put up the posters but they didn’t no no assembly, nothing to even explain why…’.
- Accessing school counsellor	21.686 ‘But I backed out.’
7. Mis-gendering and managing facilities	
- Reflections on mis-gendering	5.137 ‘I-I just have to like, um, like deal with people using wrong pronouns.’
	27.916 ‘…and that wouldn’t make you feel it’s like, weird.’
- Managing changing rooms and toilets	6.189 ‘…if there is not then I usually go to the female toilets…’
	25.817 ‘…should be like at least one…’
- Uniforms	26.853 ‘…they can choose…’
8. Peer friendship and support	
- Sharing sexuality with a peer	8.246 ‘And then, um, I told him that I was pansexual.’
- Friends’ acceptance and inclusion	10.302 ‘…by accepting me and like, being inclusive of me…’
- Music negating gender divisions	30.972 ‘…they’re like, you sing, you play base, you play piano and we just mix.’
9. Parental involvement	
- Lack of school/family liaising	20.657 ‘I don’t think so-’
- Parental concerns vs parental preferences	30.983 ‘…some parents are concerned, um, like about the fact that, other children like. Other parents are like…’

- Coming together, sharing and reassuring	35.1141'…the parents like decision…' 31.1025'…they all come together…' 32.1031'…if the parents have those conversations with them…'
10. Support for younger generations	
- Help for younger cohorts of LGBT students	22.719 '…help for younger generations…'
- Peer role models	25.797 'Maybe like an ex-student or something like that-'
- Normalising experimenting with gender identity	33.1088'…nothing's set in stone…'
11. Negative media coverage	
- Negative media presentation of gender diversity	30.980 '… 'cause I've been like, seeing stuff on the news…' 31.1016'…they don't do it in like the best light.'

Lee: subordinate themes (n=7) derived from emergent themes (n=27) with related quotes

1. Coming out and related support		
- Coming out, staff support and peer acceptance	1.9	'…I came out when I was in Year 10-'
	4.114	'They were very on it.'
	5.143	'…so they just announced that to my form.'
	27.888	'…the school already knew me quite well.'
	28.892	'…they were going to support me of that anyway.'
- Peer transitioning at the same time	3.87	'…he's also trans now like me.'
	58.1955	'…so I kind of resent that…'
	59.1962	'…because I'm a bit…'
- Perceptions of coming out in other schools	25.817	'…Even with schools like um-…'
	26.825	'…very Catholic and strict.'
2. Name change, mis-gendering and physical isolation		
- Name change and 'dead' name	1.14	'…name is on the register as Lee…'
	2.57	'I get very triggered by um hearing my dead name.'
	7.233	'…that name I don't affiliate myself with anymore.'
	8.241	'…you know, this isn't agreed.'
	9.282	'…I'm not gona obviously complain.'
	19.616	'…I really don't like.'
- Pronouns and mis-gendering	10.320	'Sometimes they mess up a bit.'
	11.357	'Some of them are a bit confused…'
	12.383	'…she apologised for mis-gendering me…'
	54.1821	'The woman mis-gendered me as I was walking in.'
	55.1833	'…can we be a bit more understanding.'
- Changing rooms and feeling excluded	14.445	'It was like a storage cupboard-…'
	15.470	'…and I was very excluded.'

	18.569	'…we call it the wreck.'
- Toilets	16.497	'…I would just go to the female…'
	17.526	'…I don't wanna go to the males…'
	18.578	'…it's a disabled and kind of negative connotations…'
3. Bullying, transphobia, homophobia and segregation		
- Transphobia, accepting and challenging it	1.33	'You know, stupid crap.'
	2.39	'…part and parcel of being trans…'
	20.660	'…being teasy…'
	21.692	'…you know, questions is fine…'
	22.697	'…it just gets really mean…'
- Bullying incident and responses	4.121	'…punished them…'
	18.586	'…it's kind of just erased in my mind…'
	19.614	'…it got to me.'
	20.641	'…it was twisted a bit…'
	21.683	'…upset at the time and I was just a bit confused…'
	22.715	'…what do they want.'
- 'Passing' in public	16.503	'…sometimes I know I don't pass…'
	17.542	'…good and bad thing…'
- Peer homophobia	30.967	'I was bullied again.'
- Homophobic language	31.1023	'…say the word gay…'
	32.1058	'…attuned my ears to it…'
	36.1158	'…they think it's funny…'
- Peer segregation	33.1085	'…but it's mostly just us…'
	34.1114	'…everyone's got their groups.'
4. Current affairs for trans people and their impact		
- Perceived effects of current political climate	12.374	'…understand the times.'

	25.801	'The school's in quite a labour place.'
	26.847	'…rubs off on the kids and the adults…'
	32.1032	'…political climate we're in at the moment.'
	55.1845	'Tories fault!'
- Impact of media and feeling vulnerable	37.1199	'…especially the killing of transwomen.'
	50.1641	'…you see things on the internet…'
	59.1996	'…there's that whole debate going on on social media.'
- Trans acceptance and inclusion in society	50.1663	'…we can't run before we've walked…'
	51.1677	'…trying to start it from within…'
	59.1991	'…let alone in the whole of society.'
- Gendered Intelligence and need for trans role models	56.1878	'…people who've been there, done that.'
- Perceived side-lining by LGB community	59.1989	'…you're not really included in the LGB community…'
	60.2002	'…LGB people are trying to conserve their identity…'
5. Maturity, LGBT friends and non-LGBT peer support		
- Incident of cis-peer support	12.397	'…it was very sweet…'
- Sixth Form maturity	13.408	'…is a lot more mature.'
	23.732	'…you have to focus on other things.'
	32.1027	'…when they're older it gets more acceptable.'
- LGBT friends	29.955	'I'm friends with a lot of them…'
	33.1089	'…so-some people are bisexual and, you know, different genders…'
	35.1135	'…I just click with those people.'
6. Perceptions and mixed experiences of teachers		
- Positive impact of support from individual teachers	23.756	'…"Oh, that's cool."…'
	24.763	'Yeah. Accepting.'
	27.881	'…they will stand up for it you know.'

	40.1300	'…stood up and said…'
- Perceived impact of age of teachers	24.786	'…just 'coz a lot of the teachers are young…'
	42.1367	'…quite old…'
- Lack of teacher response to phobia	38.1236	'…falls on deaf ears…'
	39.1271	'…they just turn their backs to it…'
- Incident of teacher homophobia	42.1383	'… "…move if you're not gay."'
	43.1412	'…she did it the next year.'
	44.1428	'I was a bit shocked.'

7. Lack of inclusion at a systemic level

- LGBT society	29.924	'They try really hard bless them.'
	31.1001	'…I never heard of once…'
- Lack of LGBT inclusion in PSHE	41.1338	'I basically took over the lesson…'
	42.1364	'Why is there a teacher?'
	45.1490	'They haven't got to LGBT, LGB, yet alone, you know, T'
	46.1513	'…there's got to be like, dental dams…'
	47.1547	'…there was one video.'

Luca: subordinate themes (n=14) derived from emergent themes (n=40) with related quotes

1. Disassociation from trans-self		
- Disassociation from trans-self	1.9	'…I found out…'
	2.47	'…I'm actually Luca.'
	3.87	'… "What is Luca?"…'
2. Negative experience of coming out at college and resultant concerns		
- Fear of coming out at secondary school	1.13	'…LGBT kids had to go through…'
	15.477	'…I didn't really come out…'
- Peer transphobia and coming out at college	1.26	'…disinterest, um, or straight up hatred or disgust.'
- Inexperience of school and liaising with home	3.67	'… "We haven't dealt with any trans issues before."'
	5.163	'I didn't like it at all.'
	29.988	'…in case she went batshit on them.'
- Concern for future cohorts coming out	4.108	'…not only would they have outed that kid at home-…'
	5.165	'…I feel like worried for other trans kids…'
	20.656	'…I want things to be better for the transgender kids…'
- Distrust of college when coming out	3.84	'…it was her that did it.'
3. Difficulties navigating school		
- Gendered register and not looking female	1.31	'…male and female next to our names.'
	2.57	'…gender changed on the resister.'
	3.88	'… "We don't have a box for that on the gender system"…'
	33.1112	'I should have that choice, but…'
- Negatives around toilets	4.123	'…they did let me use the disabled toilets…'
	7.226	'…there was an incident…'

	8.253 '…I think I'm quite hesitant to go in any…'
- Difficulties with pronouns	10.320 '…I'm scared to make a noise about it.'
	11.347 'A lot of my friends that I've come out to.'
	14.447 '…even if they slip up.'
- Assertive name change	11.356 'I, um, made it clear…'
- Difficulties with uniform at secondary school	12.397 '…without people making comments.'
4. Impact of being trans on relationship with mother	
- Impact on relationship with mother	2.60 '…due to difficulties surrounding this.'
	6.168 '…me and my mother don't talk about this issue…'
5. Lack of understanding as to what being trans means	
- Lack of understanding	3.92 'They don't have any understanding of what transgender actually means.'
	4.121 '…I don't feel like schools have enough understanding.'
	13.409 '…there wasn't a lot of understanding.'
	23.759 '…base knowledge on what transgender people actually are…'
	24.795 '…like a male dressed up as a women…'
	33.1125'…I don't think they've googled what a transgender person is…'
- Importance of true perceptions of others	17.543 '…but I don't know her true feelings.'
6. External agencies support	
- Youth club and external agencies support	3.96 '…said that that's discrimination...'
	21.715 '…it's like they've actually met trans people.'
	32.1064'Which CAMHS can do and people like Ciara can do.'

7. Homo/transphobia and isolation

- Peer transphobia	4.124 '…some of the boys in our school did not like…'
	8.236 '…then they commented on my appearance.'
	12.397 '…without people making comments.'
	15.483 'Like they don't agree with the trans thing…'
	18.577 '…making remarks about it. A lot of grumbling about why…'
- Sense of isolation	9.285 'There's only me there…'
	20.661 '…it's just me against the entire college.'
	25.848 'I haven't found them yet.'
	36.1203'…it's just scary to be that person…'
- Frivolous acceptance from peers	13.433 'My gender is only relevant until they decide otherwise.'
- Homophobia	32.1091'I think he'd get bullied even if he was out…'

8. Instances of support at school and college

- Validation and support from an LGBT peer at secondary	13.416 '…they're the whole reason I stood up for myself.'
- Peer support at college	14.445 'They are really supportive.'
	15.494 '…they still have a liking for me.'
- Staff support over transphobia	15.486 '…they would get into trouble.'

9. LGBT over-defensiveness and its impact

- Over-defensiveness of LGBT community	10.325 '…they're too defensive.'
- Overprotective friend	14.454 '…I understand he wants to help, but…'
	28.951 'Yeah like aggressively.'

10. Inability to self-determine

- 'Do us'	14.464 'It's just we wanna do us.'
- Fear of confrontation	20.651 'I don't particularly wanna piss off any of the, um, staff.'
	36.1203'…scary to be the person to trigger it.'
	35.1141'…the parents like decision…'
- Inability to self-determine	33.1098'…prepared to take away Luca…'
	32.1031'…if the parents have those conversations with them.'
- Frustration over inaction	36.1197'…Still hasn't triggered a goddamn thing.'

11. Ineffective and lacking support at college

- Lack of LGBT supports at college	16.519 '…We don't have any support groups for LGBT kids.'
	19.618 'You don't see any of that, like no LGBT sort of.'
- Negative impact of LGBT week	18.575 '…it wasn't very LGBT friendly.'
- LGBT month	19.612 'gets ripped down by the kids…'
- Academic orientated school	19.635 '…it prevents them from work and therefore it's a problem-…'
- Invisible in the curriculum	22.753 '…we never ever focused on transgender things..,'
	24.828 '…I think there's an age in which it's just right…'

12. Negative experiences of staff and need for teacher training

- Christian counsellor	16.523 '…a Christian prayer group thing…'
	31.1056'I mean we-we have an old Christian lady…'
- Impact of age of staff	17.566 '…the youngest members of staff there…'
	20.681 '…some of them are pretty old…'
- Teacher training around LGBT issues	32.1092'…the staff aren't willing to talk about it or be taught

	about it.'
	35.1172'I think education can do its job…'
- Unwillingness of staff	32.1091'…I don't think a lot of people are willing…'
	33.1122'…part of this problem is laziness…'
13. Experience of societal focus on males to females	
- Experiences of societies focus on MTF trans	24.802 '…I've noticed a lot of attention on…'
14. Importance and positive impact of LGBT role models	
- Positive impact of trans teacher on friend	26.891 '…she was sort of like raised with a teacher that was, um trans.'
	34.1144'…like my friend had someone like me brought up around…'
- Access and exposure to LGBT role models	34.1143'I think they should be more broad in their recruiting.'

River: subordinate themes (n=7) derived from emergent themes (n=24) with related quotes

1. Coming out and remaining questioning

- Realising they weren't 'cis', confusion and lack of info	1.22	'…I remember it just being very, very confusing and not having too much information about it…'
	2.55	'I did not know anything about non-binary…'
	4.97	'…nerdy community…'
- Response to peer being trans	3.92	'…I was very, very open to that…'
- Coming out, agender label and questioning	4.122	'…when I was just questioning my gender and I just Used the label agender.'
	5.148	'…and there was a lot of that for about six, seven months.'
	6.176	'The school has never really taken any steps-'
- Comparison to coming out as gay	40.1298	'…and it's more accepted.'

2. Lack of school inclusion and support

- Lack of LGBT information and peers	4.106	'…like we never really heard of that…'
- Accessing formal support at school	20.640	'…I used for a little bit. We also have a school counsellor…'
	21.660	'…and wait until there was a space.'
- Exclusions in the school's Code of Conduct	22.686	'…there's nothing there about sexism, homophobia, transphobia…'
- Failure and lack of prioritisation of LGBT clubs	29.942	'…it was this specific student that started the-the-the LGBT group…'
	30.952	'…straight from the bottom of the barrel-'
- LGBT in the curriculum	32.1027	'It's very, very confined…'

3. 'Bullying behaviour' and personal and teacher responses

- Name calling and covert bullying

6.164 '…the same sort of people who regularly call me…'
39.1260'I had people calling me Feminazi regularly.'
40.1281'…"Oh, hey, River *girl*, how are you doing *girl*?'

- 'Bully behaviour' and lack of teacher response

18.553 '…a confrontational kid messing around with, um, a stirring kid…'

- Teacher training on specific bullying

38.1224'I think that really, really benefits…'
39.1244'…that's where is stops…'

- Response to name calling/bullying

42.1363'… "I can't be bothered to educate you".'
43.1382'…I feel like I have to take it into my own hands…'
44.1405'…I give them the finger and walk off…'

4. Being a feminist and challenging sexism

- Being a feminist

7.205 '…I've been a feminist.'
39.1259'…I was very, very openly feminist…'

- Sexist uniform

7.217 '…it got even more sexist…'
8.251 '…I ranted at my –at my Head Teacher for about ten minutes about how sexist…'
10.309 '…no reason why I shouldn't try and help the other kids.'
11.340 '…a lot of it is all about, you know, um, cisgender-'
13.412 '…so personally what I'd really like…'

- Head teacher's 'privilege'

9.278 '…"Oh you know, you should check your privilege."'

- Challenging sexism

22.708 '…on like small little sexist things…'
23.734 '…but it was highly implied.'

5. Parents' perspectives

- Insight into parents' perspectives

12.374 '…just try and make sure that I didn't get too confrontational'-
13.386 '… "Just for you to make like a bit of a statement?"'

6. Navigating school and feeling validated

- Keeping birth name

14.429 '…I did actually look it up…'
15.450 '…so I want to keep it.'

- Pronouns and feeling validated

16.507 '…it made me feel very validated.'
17.513 '…now I don't mind using she/her or they/them.'
20.616 '…wanted to be valid. That was-that was all I wanted.'
35.1137'…"Oh if you ever like want me to use specific pronouns for you…"…'

- Managing changing rooms and toilets

24.750 '…it's literally getting undressed in front of your peers.'
25.813 '…and I remember thinking – hmm.'
26.822 '…and don't go toilet during school time-'
27.858 '…I was actually looking around for any…'

7. Support from individual teachers

- 'Openness' and support of PSHE teacher

33.1055'…she was very much more open than the other teachers.'
35.1119'…I think it did have an impact on some people-'

- Support from Head of Year

35.1134'…She's always very, very open…'

- Lack of knowledge and experiences of remainder of teachers

35.1141'…its very-very specific teachers…'
41.1331'…"…but we're not always going to understand it."'
42.1336'…"…because we haven't been brought up with it."'

Appendix I: Superordinate themes

Superordinate themes derived from subordinate themes

Superordinate theme 1: Coming out at school/college	
	Subordinate themes
Addison	1. Coming out repeatedly
**Ali*	*Theme not present in narrative*
Cedar	1. Ambivalent experiences of coming out at school
Lee	1. Coming out, staff support and peer acceptance
Luca	2. Negative experiences of coming out at college and resultant concerns
River	1. Coming out and remaining questioning

Superordinate theme 2: Navigating the logistics of school	
	Subordinate themes
Addison	1. Navigating college post social transition
Ali	3. Positive and negative aspects of the logistics of school
Cedar	4. Being mis-gendered and other negative aspects of school functioning
Lee	2. Name change, mis-gendering and physical isolation
Luca	3. Difficulties navigating school post social transition
River	6. Navigating school and feeling validated

Superordinate theme 3: Bullying and transphobia	
	Subordinate themes
Addison	2. Bullying, transphobia and perceptions of the aggressors
Ali	5. Distancing from wider peer group, experiences and understanding of transphobia
Cedar	7. Lack of understanding and empathy
Lee	3. Bullying, transphobia, homophobia and segregation
Luca	5. Lack of understanding as to what transgender means 7. Homo/transphobia and isolation
River	3. 'Bullying behavior' and personal and teacher responses

Superordinate theme 4: LGBT friends and non-LGBT peer support	
	Subordinate themes
Addison	5. LGBT friends and support from wider peer group
Ali	6. LGBT and non-LGBT peer support
Cedar	10. Peer relations
Lee	5. Maturity, LGBT friends and non-LGBT peer support
Luca	8. Instances of support at school and college
**River*	*Theme not explicitly present in narrative*

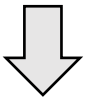
Superordinate theme 5: Experiences of staff	
	Subordinate themes
Addison	7. Perceptions and experiences of teachers
Ali	4. Perceptions of authority and expectations and experiences of staff
Cedar	2. Experiences of school staff
Lee	6. Perceptions and mixed experiences of teachers
Luca	11. Negative experiences of staff and need for teacher training
River	7. Support from individual teachers

Superordinate theme 6: Experiences at the whole school level	
	Subordinate themes
Addison	8. Systemic supports at school and college
Ali	1. New-head teacher and involvement at the whole school level 2. Inclusion in the PSHE curriculum 7. LGBT society, their role and its impact 8. Positive impact of LGBT role models
Cedar	6. School inaction and lack of support 8. Lack of acknowledgement and inclusion at a systemic level
Lee	7. Lack of inclusion at a systemic level
Luca	10. Ineffective and lacking support at college 13. Importance and positive impact of LGBT role models
River	2. Lack of school inclusion and support

Appendix J: Overarching themes

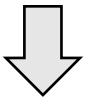
Overarching themes derived from superordinate (/emergent) themes

Superordinate theme 1: Coming out at school/college



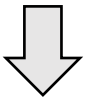
Overarching theme 1: Social transition at school

Superordinate theme 2: Navigating the logistics of school



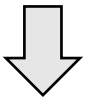
Overarching theme 2: Navigating school as a transgender student

Superordinate theme 3: Bullying and transphobia *and* superordinate theme 4: LGBT friends and non-LGBT peer support



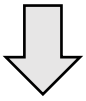
Overarching theme 3: Bullying, transphobia and peer relations

Superordinate theme 5: Experiences of staff



Overarching theme 4: Students' ambivalent experiences of staff

Superordinate theme 6: Experiences at the whole school level



Overarching theme 5: Experiences at the systemic level of school

Appendix K: Excerpts from reflective diary

Reflections following first interview:

First interview tonight. Honestly thought I would never get here! I was much more nervous than I thought I would be, and I had to keep reminding myself not to interrupt and to just let the participant talk. Gene was a little nervous themself, and so in my attempt to make them feel at ease, I filled some natural silences too quickly, or launched in when they mentioned something I hoped they would cover, when they would have got there by themselves without my prompting. I was a little over-focused on the interview schedule, which is disappointing as I didn't need to be – I think it was a bit of a crutch for this first interview. Hopefully that will reduce now that I am mindful of it, and also as I become more familiar with the interview process. Overall, reflecting on this evening, I think I just need to relax more, trust the process and my experience of speaking with young people, and just let them think, process and speak uninterrupted.

In saying this, I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Gene's account; however, I do feel they came prepared with a 'list' of more generic issues for transgender students as opposed to sharing their own experiences. Actually, it was a little tricky to pull out their own experiences at times. I am guessing Gene approached the interview like this as they did not know what to expect, or thought that this is what I expected, or maybe they just found delving into their own experiences challenging. Whatever the reason, it left me wondering (inferring?) about Gene and their experiences, and reflecting on this, it really brought the importance of bracketing alive for me.

Reflections following the development of emergent themes for first transcript:

This is a much more lengthy and difficult process than I expected and I think I might be making it worse by continually doubting whether I am doing it right! I am finding it tricky to come up with emergent themes that aptly capture the more complex thoughts and ideas in the narrative. Although I feel I have a very good understanding of IPA, I am still worrying over whether I am being interpretative enough, or whether I am over-interpreting. I keep referring back to Smith et al.'s examples, and it helps, but I will take this to supervision and our class group for feedback to make sure I am on the right track. Hopefully this will get 'easier' as I progress through the transcripts.

Appendix L: TREC approval

Quality Assurance & Enhancement

Directorate of Education & Training

Tavistock Centre

120 Belsize Lane

London

NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 8938 2699

https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/

Elayne Ruttledge

By Email

27 February 2018

Dear Ms Ruttledge,

Re: Research Ethics Application

Title: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the school experiences of gender variant young people in the UK

Thank you for submitting your updated Research Ethics documentation. I am pleased to inform you

that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.

If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

Thank you for your patience in this process. May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Best regards,

Paru Jeram

Secretary to the Trust Research Degrees Subcommittee

T: 020 938 2699

E: academicquality@tavi-Port.nhs.uk

Appendix M: Risk Assessment

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Risk Assessment

Name: Elayne Ruttledge	**Course:** Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology
School: Psychology, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust	**Supervisor:** Dr Judith Mortell
Research Title: The school experiences of transgender young people in the UK	
Fieldwork location: Young people's schools, youth clubs or homes Researcher's place of work	**Type of fieldwork:** Face to face interviews with 16-18 year old students
Proposed dates or periods of fieldwork: Spring/Summer 2018	
Potential hazards or risks *(Rate high, medium or low):*	
1. Upset/angry responses *(medium)*	**2.** Verbal aggression *(low)*
3. Physical aggression/violence *(low)*	**4.**
Potential consequences of hazards/risks: Lack of safety of researcher	
Controls in place for hazards/risks: • Contact will occur with each participant (via telephone) prior to interview to gain as much information as possible. Work contact details will be used/provided • Interviews will be held in a safe environment (e.g., preferably school, youth club, researcher's place of work) • When/if interviews are held in the interviewee's home, the researcher will adopt lone worker policies by telephoning a colleague before the interview and informing them of the location and expected leaving time. Researcher will then telephone them to confirm that she has left safely • Interviewees will be advised of the limits to confidentiality at the outset (e.g., regarding an illegal act) • Interviewees will be fully debriefed at the end of interview. The researcher is a qualified, experienced educational psychologist with further training the in the area of working with transgender youth. The researcher will also signpost interviewees to further/more ongoing support if needed • Researcher will herself debrief with research tutor and/or professional work supervisor in the case of any unexpected emotional impact of the interviews	
By signing this document you are indicating that you have consulted the University's Risk Assessment Policy and fully considered the risks	***I agree to the assessment of risk in relation to this study*** **Signature of Supervisor:**

Signature of student:  **Date:** 04.08.2017	 **Date: 8.8.17**

Appendix N: Participant Consent Form

The Tavistock and Portman NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

Consent to Participate in Research involving the use of Human Participants

Research Title: The school experiences of transgender young people in the UK

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about this research study, as provided in the participant information sheet	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and my participation	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the study. I understand that this will involve participation in an interview with the researcher lasting approximately 1 hour and that this will be audio-taped. I agree to being audio-taped	☐
4.	I understand I can withdraw participation or unprocessed data at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned as to why I have withdrawn	☐
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me, including instances when confidentiality may be broken	☐
6.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me. I consent to the use of (anonymised) quotations from my interview being used as applicable in this instances	☐
7.	I, along with the researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form	☐

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……..

Participant's Signature

……..

Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……..

Researcher's Signature

……..

Date: ……..