Growing Up Trans: Exploring the Positive School Experiences of Transgender Children and Young People

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"*No word of a lie, my teacher walks into the classroom, goes, "Ladies and gentleman". I am not— I kid you not, I was so God damn happy! ... It was probably one of the best moments of being trans*, honestly!*"
(Nightcrawler, 397–414)

Abstract

Background

While the exploration into transgender students' experiences is a growing field within psychological and educational research, much of this to date has explored the negative experiences faced by transgender children and young people, and the outcomes these have had on their physical, social and emotional well-being. The purpose of the research was to add to this field by highlighting the positive school experiences of transgender children and young people in order to promote and advocate for these for others.

Methods

An initial focus group was held to explore language around the transgender community and design questions for semi-structured interviews. Interviews were then conducted with three transgender young people. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach was adopted.

Findings

Five superordinate themes emerged from the participants' narratives. Participants raised *The Importance of Language* as a means of asserting their own identities and for others to demonstrate their respect and acceptance of this. Participants also raised the importance of *Individual Teacher Support*, *Whole-School Approaches* and *The Importance of Community*, highlighting ways others have shown support and advocated for their rights with others. A final theme reflected *My Own Best Friend*, which demonstrated the skills and resilience transgender children and young people bring themselves.

Conclusions

The research findings highlight that transgender children and young people are both able and willing to share their experiences with others to highlight positive practice and promote inclusive and supportive behaviours in schools. Findings are discussed in relation to previous literature and psychological theory, and limitations and suggestions for schools and authorities, as well as for educational psychologists, are highlighted. As a profession, educational psychologists are uniquely positioned to support children and young people at an individual, family and systemic level. It is important that educational

psychologists continue to support transgender children and young people, and highlight their voices during the transition process, as well as continue to help schools and local authorities develop their guidelines for supporting transgender students in schools.

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Lastly, I want to thank each of my participants. Throughout this thesis they are referred to as superheroes, and that is because they are exactly that. Their bravery, honesty and optimism for positive action and change, despite some of their experiences, is truly motivational and without them, this piece of research would not exist. I wish them all the best in all of their future endeavours.

> *Another definition of a hero is someone who is concerned about other people's well-being and will go out of his or her way to help them — even if there is no chance of a reward. That person who helps others simply because it should or must be done, and because it is the right thing to do, is indeed without a doubt, a real superhero.* (Stan Lee)

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List of Abbreviations

APA: American Psychological Association

BPS: British Psychological Society

DfE: Department for Education

CYP: Children and Young People

EA 2010: Equality Act 2010

EP: Educational Psychologist

EPS: Educational Psychology Service

GLBTQ: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Questioning

GRA 2004: Gender Recognition Act 2004

GSA: Gay/Straight Alliance

HRA 1998: Human Rights Act 1998

IPA: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

KS3: Key Stage 3

KS4: Key Stage 4

LA: Local Authority

LGB: Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual

LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender

LGBTGEQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender Expansive & Queer/Questioning

NHS: National Health Service

ONS: Office for National Statistics

PE: Physical Education

UNCRC 1990: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990

Introduction

This study aimed to explore the positive school experiences of transgender pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 (KS3 and KS4) in the UK. This chapter will outline the rationale behind this study, including the current context of risk factors for transgender children and young people (CYP), protective factors, and the roles of schools and educational psychologists (EP). This chapter will conclude with the unique contributions of the current research to the field.

Rationale Behind this Research

The current research aimed to explore the positive school experiences of transgender CYP. It was hoped that, by exploring this area, a greater awareness of the issues that affect transgender CYP and the encouraging actions and experiences that support them could be identified so that in the future, schools and teaching staff feel more supported in addressing gender identity within the school (Clarke, 2016; Hellen, 2009; Payne & Smith, 2014), and that transgender CYP themselves feel safer, more secure and happier throughout their education.

A Theoretical Background for Working with Transgender CYP in Schools

Transgender theory emerged and developed out of feminist and queer theory, addressing concerns in both previous theories around the binary notion of gender (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010). While queer theory allows for the socially constructed concept of gender identity, it was still felt to retain traditional, binary gender roles through feminine males and masculine females (Hausman, 2001). Transgender theory, therefore, developed to allow for all notions of gender identity, including both/neither traditional gender roles, and how individuals experience their lives on this fluid scale while still being physically limited to the biological sex binaries of the human body (Monro, 2000). As schools are traditionally mapped onto cisgender, binary norms (i.e. gender-differentiated uniforms and segregated lessons and sports) (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016), it was felt to be important to examine how this maps onto the experiences and identities of transgender CYP.

Most importantly, transgender theory rejects the notion that transgender individuals are victims of a patriarchy, or sinful or disordered (Jones et al., 2016), and instead suggests that an individual's gender identity can be a portal to empowerment, through the creation of narratives outside of the traditional gender norm, and can lead to positive experiences through diversity (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010). As such, it was felt to be important to explore the positive experiences and self-identified strengths and achievements felt by transgender school-attending CYP.

Why Positive Experiences?

As will be discussed in this chapter and in the subsequent literature review chapter of this thesis, much of the existing research into transgender CYP to date has focused on negative outcomes or experiences faced. As such, the researcher decided to adopt a positive psychological approach.

Positive psychology is "*the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions*" (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 104). It often includes an exploration of what is working for the individual, what's going well and what is improving (Sheldon & King, 2001). Linley, Joseph, Harrington and Wood (2006) argue that a focus on positive psychology and experiences does not necessarily mean ignoring negative experiences, but rather, they argue, it is meant to explore the ideas which are working or improving in order to develop them further. Indeed, positive psychology was developed in part to 'round out' psychology from a focus on negativity (Lopez & Gallagher, 2009), which Sheldon and King (2001) argue is a necessary step due to the traditional focus on negative experiences or outcomes having a limiting impact on the understanding of an individual's strengths, resilience and capabilities.

However, while early (or first-wave) positive psychology focused on this singular idea of positivity, solely highlighting the positive aspects of human and social functioning (Soria & Gumbau, 2016), criticisms were levelled at the dichotomy between a 'positive equals good' and a 'negative equals bad' relationship suggested by this focus (Lomas, 2016). It was argued that this distinct separation between positive and negative helped conceptualise anything that was positive as desirable, and therefore anything that was negative as undesirable and to be avoided, feeding a culture of "*tyranny of the positive*"

where anything and anyone not positive should be ostracised (Held, 2002, p. 965). Further, this distinction between wholly positive or negative ignores the potential benefits of some negative experiences on emotional development, and the possibility of an excess and unwavering sense of positivity as perhaps being a hindrance (Lomas, 2016; Norem, 2001; Wong, 2011).

In its place, positive psychology evolved into its second wave, or positive psychology 2.0 (Lomas, 2016; Wong, 2011). This second-wave positive psychology, instead of prioritising and blindly crowing the positive, recognises and includes an understanding of the relationship between positive and negative phenomena, and the impact both of these can have on an individual's well-being (Lomas, 2016). Lomas (2016) explains that this second-wave positive psychology is underpinned by four principles: appraisal; co-valence; complementarity; and evolution. This means that a positive experience must be understood and evaluated in terms of the context in which it is found, and may include positive and negative elements – both of which work together to create and define the experience.

This is especially relevant for the current study. Working with a transgender population, the researcher was acutely aware of the dangers of asking participants to explore only the positive experiences of transitioning whilst at school, because this would in no means represent a realistic or respectful understanding of the participants' lived experiences. It was felt that focusing solely on the positive school experiences may unwittingly present to the participants a negation or dismissal of any negative experiences, and a dismissal of the way these experiences may have guided their development. As signposted at the beginning of this section, many of the experiences transgender CYP face are, at face value, intrinsically negative. However, that does not necessarily mean that there are no positive experiences, or that there have been no perceived positives from some of negative experiences, or from any other experiences. As such, it was expected that some of the positive experiences the participants would discuss may have developed from experiences which otherwise may have been perceived as negative by others, but have been part of a greater positive development.

It was explained to the participants from the outset that this research aimed to address the balance in psychological research with transgender CYP. To this end, it was explained that the aim of this research was to understand the participants' own

perspectives of their experiences and development, and to highlight some of the positive steps schools are adopting in order to promote the use of these steps further. This, then, it was hoped, would allow the participants to discuss the support they were receiving, but also to discuss the actions of themselves and others that have helped them positively evaluate otherwise seemingly negative experiences. It was hoped that, by positioning this exploration in second-wave positive psychology, where there is an understanding of how positive and negative phenomena interact to define our self-perceived positive experiences, a broader and more considered understanding of some of the most valued support available in schools, and the individual strengths and stories that the participants themselves bring and could share, could be highlighted.

Indeed, positive psychology has the potential to provide unique insight into marginalised populations (Rao & Donaldson, 2015). Vaughan and Rodriguez (2014) argue that incorporating positive psychology into research and work with transgender individuals is important for enabling a more balanced and representative understanding of their lived experiences. Previous research has explored the positive experiences of being LGB (Riggle, Whitman, Olson, Rostosky & Strong, 2008; Rostosky, Riggle, Pascal-Hague & McCants, 2010; Strizzi, Fernández-Agis, Patrón-Carreño & Alarcón-Rodríguez, 2016), and Riggle, Rostosky, McCants and Pascal-Hague (2011) explored the positive experiences of transgender self-identification, including: congruency of self; enhanced interpersonal relationships; personal growth and resiliency; increased empathy; a unique perspective on both sexes; living beyond the sex binary; increased activism; and connection to the GLBTQ communities. The current research is believed to be the first to explore the positive school experiences of transgender CYP, and aims to highlight the individual strengths and stories this population can provide.

Defining Transgender

Whereas cisgender individuals have a gender identity that corresponds with their sex assigned at birth (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016), transgender individuals feel that their sex assigned at birth does not reflect how they would want to express their gender identity (Donatone & Rachlin, 2013). While it can be understood that "sex" refers to an individual's biological identity as dictated by their chromosomes (Yavuz, 2016), the notion of "gender" is far more complex. Prior to the latter part of the twentieth century, within the realm of psychology, "sex" and "gender" were generally viewed as

interchangeable, homogenous constructs. Unger (1979) first suggested that gender be separated from biological sex, citing the sociocultural factors that contribute to sex differences, and gender now typically refers to an individual's social and cultural identity, and the sense *they* give as to whether they are male, female, both or neither (Oakley, 2015). Most importantly, an individual's gender identity can be different to their biological sex (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Indeed, the concept of gender is often considered more multifaceted than dichotomous, and rather part of a gender continuum (Gevisser, 2015; Monro, 2005). Several cultures around the world have each understood the transience of gender through different, culturally specific identities, including the Indian Hijra, the Polynesian Fa'afafine, the Thai Kathoey, the First Nation Two-Spirit and the Māori Takatāpui (Whittle, 2010).

In the Western World, Magnus Hirschfield is credited with coining the term "transvestite" in 1910, thus providing one of the first definitions of gender variance as a distinction to homosexuality (Whittle, 2010). The term "transsexual" followed in 1949 (Whittle, 2010), and in 1965 John Oliven used the term "transgender" to refer to transsexual individuals for the first time (Oliven, 1965). The term "transgender" continued to develop at the same time as definitions of sex and gender began to be explored, and by the mid-1980s was increasingly understood to be an umbrella term for anyone who presented or identified differently to their birth-assigned sex (Rawson & Williams, 2014): a definition which continues to date. As Hudson-Sharp (2018) highlights, therefore, the term "transgender" covers a complex and fluid spectrum of gender presentation, which is unique to the individual.

The terminology used within the transgender community is diverse, and O'Neil, McWhirter and Cerezo (2008) highlight the importance of practitioners being directed in language use by the individuals they are working with. A focus group, as outlined in the methodology chapter of this research, was held prior to the data-collection process to create a glossary of terms and identify appropriate terminology for interviews and write-up. It was agreed that the term "transgender" should be used throughout the research, unless a different term (such as "gender queer" or "trans*") was specifically identified by the participants. For a full glossary of terms, as highlighted by the focus group participants, please see Appendix A.

Prevalence of Transgenderism in the UK

While there are no official records of the number of transgender individuals in the UK (Hudson-Sharp, 2018; ONS, 2009), estimations suggest that around 1% of the population is transgender (Reed, Rhodes, Schofield & Wylie, 2009). However, the number of CYP identifying as transgender is increasing, with Bowskill (2017) reporting the number of CYP approaching the Tavistock and Portman Clinic (a national centre supporting transgender CYP in the UK) for assessment increasing from 91 in 2009/10 to 697 in 2014/15. In 2017/18, this number had again increased to 2519 referrals (NHS, 2018). While this number may not reflect an increase in the transgender population, it may reflect that individuals are openly identifying as transgender at a younger age. Children become aware of gender constancy at around the age of four (Szkrybalo & Ruble, 1999), and it is around this age that many CYP first begin to feel their gender is different from their sex (Kennedy & Hellen, 2010). Indeed, Kennedy and Hellen (2010) reported that 76% of participants had questioned their gender identity by the end of primary school, and only 4% of participants first questioned their gender identity after the age of 18.

The Rights of Transgender CYP

In the UK, the inclusion and protection of transgender CYP is enshrined within the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA 1998), the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA 2004) and the Equality Act 2010 (EA 2010).

Although the HRA 1998 does not specifically mention gender identity, there are still a number of articles which support the rights of transgender CYP. Specifically, Article 1:8 highlights that "*everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life"*, and Article 1:10 states that "*everyone has the right to freedom of expression",* meaning that transgender individuals should be free to express their gender identity without fear of discrimination or segregation. Additionally, Article 2:2 states that "*no person shall be denied the right to education"*, ensuring that all transgender CYP have the right to go to school and should not be discriminated against in terms of access to education due to their gender identity.

The HRA 1998 then paved the way for the GRA 2004 (Stonewall, 2017). While not having a significant effect on the rights of transgender CYP, the GRA 2004 allows

transgender individuals to apply for a gender recognition certificate after the age of 18 (a correction to their birth certificate to amend their gender) that allows for the legal recognition of their identified gender.

The EA 2010 then clarified a number of issues in both the HRA 1998 and GRA 2004 by providing specific legal protection against discrimination for transgender individuals. The EA 2010 highlights gender as a protected characteristic, and doesn't require an individual to have started the process of gender reassignment. In regard to the education rights of transgender CYP, whereas the HRA 1998 simply states that everyone has the right to access education, Chapter 6 of the EA 2010 specifically refers to schools and education, and states that schools (6:1:85) and further/higher education centres (6:2:91) must not discriminate against [transgender] young people in terms of admission and inclusion, as well as against the provision of facilities available (6:2:93). This effectively prevents schools from denying a place to an individual because of their gender identity, and means that they have to provide sufficient and appropriate facilities for the individual based on their identified gender. This may include bathrooms, changing facilities and flexible uniform policies.

Additionally, the rights of transgender CYP are also protected under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 (UNCRC 1990). In particular, Article 8 concerns the protection and preservation of identity, Article 12 highlights respect for the views of the child, and Article 13 protects the CYP's freedom of expression. Article 3 also emphasises that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in any decisions made around them. For a transgender young person, this means that they cannot be discriminated against in terms of their gender identity and expression, and that adults should take the child's identity into consideration with respect. Similarly to the HRA 1998, Article 28 of the UNCRC 1990 also states that every child has the right to an education. Bucataru (2016) points out that Article 28(e) states that schools should take positive actions to increase attendance and reduce school drop-out rates, especially where drop-outs are caused by discrimination by staff and/or peers. As transgender CYP can face high levels of discrimination in school (e.g. Austin & Craig, 2015a; Grant et al., 2011), the UNCRC 1990 ensures that they are supported by schools to remain in education.

Risks Faced by Transgender CYP

Current research suggests there are many risks for transgender children and young people (CYP) within education. In a survey conducted by the National Center of Transgender Equality (Grant et al., 2011), 78% of respondents reported being verbally harassed, and 35% reported being the victim of a physical assault. In the UK, Youth Chances (2014) report that 75% of transgender CYP had experienced name-calling at school, with 32% admitting skipping lessons at school to avoid discrimination. More worrying, transgender CYP are regularly exposed to transphobic microaggressions, defined as "*brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward members of oppressed groups*" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). These microaggressions are not only coming from teachers (Austin & Craig, 2015a), but from academic institutions as a whole (Austin, Craig & McInroy, 2016). Indeed, Hellen (2009) argues that this negative school environment is directly linked to low self-esteem and poor academic achievement for transgender CYP.

From a very early age transgender CYP internalise that they are the problem, and often feel that they must conceal their true gender identity (Kennedy & Hellen, 2010). However, this internalisation may lead CYP to become withdrawn, anxious and unsociable around peers at school (Whittle, Turner, Al-Alami, Runtall & Thom, 2007) and transgender CYP are often reported to be at a higher risk of suicide (Giordano, 2008; McDermott, Hughes & Rawlings, 2018; Stieglitz, 2010), as well as consistently being reported to have higher levels of internalising psychopathology (Miller, Longworth & Arcelus, 2017; Yunger, Carver & Perry, 2004; Zucker, 2005). Transgender youth are also reported to be more at risk of using illegal substances than cisgender peers (Day, Fish, Perez-Brumer, Hatzenbuehler & Russell, 2017; De Pedro, Gilreath, Jackson & Esqueda, 2017) and for engaging in other self-hazardous behaviours, such as smoking and drinking (Coulter, Bersamin, Russell & Mair, 2018).

Within the UK, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) highlights that transphobic bullying can result in the individual having less success in their learning, engaging in fewer extra-curricular activities, absenting from particular lessons or school in general, and having less confidence in themselves and trust in others,

ultimately limiting their future aspirations. Though surveying individuals over the age of 18, McNeil, Bailey, Ellis, Morton and Regan (2012) highlighted that 90% of their respondents had been told being transgender was not normal, and 85% had contemplated suicide, with 35% having attempted suicide. Focusing on LGBT youth in particular, McDermott et al. (2018) reported that transgender youth were more likely to have planned or attempted suicide than LGB peers. McDermott et al. highlighted five interconnected social determinants of suicidality, including transphobia (including school-based bullying), sexual and gender norms, managing their gender identity, being unable to talk about their emotions, and other life crises.

However, following transition, there is a limited amount of research to suggest positive outcomes for transgender CYP. Olson, Durwood, DeMeules & McLaughlin (2016) reported that in socially transitioned transgender CYP, levels of depression did not differ with age-related peers, and levels of anxiety were only slightly higher. Additionally, Riggle et al. (2011), as discussed previously, explored the positive experiences of transgender self-identification, and Bowskill's (2017) participants discuss particular cases where transgender CYP who feel supported in their identity began to improve their academic achievements, access a greater number of lessons and resources, and express a more positive psychological well-being. Yavuz (2016) also discusses casework where an educational psychologist (EP) worked with schools to support transgender students by exploring what transition entails, the voice of the CYP and areas of psychological well-being and support.

Protective Factors

Understanding the risks faced by transgender CYP, Johns, Beltran, Armstrong, Jayne & Barrios (2018) conducted a literature review to explore what, if any, protective factors young people have. Based on Bronfenbrenner's socioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), Johns et al. (2018) hoped to explore the different factors available at an individual, relationship, community and societal level. However, of the articles they reviewed and included, none demonstrated a protective factor at a societal level. Indeed, globally, transgender CYP are more likely to be subject to social exclusion in terms of access to housing, healthcare and education than cisgender peers (Bradford, Reisner, Honnold & Xavier, 2013), and in many cultures transgender CYP and their families face marginalisation from their communities because of their gender identity (e.g. Drescher & Byne, 2012; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Subhrajit, 2014).

In the UK, the government has begun to take action to support transgender young people and adults, and in 2011 set forth a plan for transgender equality outlining the actions to be taken in areas such as education, employment and public services (HM Government, 2011). Following this, the government's Women and Equalities Committee (2016) produced a report on the experiences of transgender CYP which further highlighted the actions planned to support transgender CYP, including a proposed reform of the GRA 2004, which began in 2018 (HM Government, 2018), and some of the barriers and difficulties faced by transgender CYP in public sectors and in schools. The review concluded that "*more needs to be done to ensure that gender-variant young people and their families get sufficient support at school"* (p. 76), and highlighted that access to professionals – including EPs – was limited.

Johns et al. (2018) did, however, highlight a number of protective factors at the individual, relationship and community level. At the individual level, they highlighted that positive beliefs around self-esteem, body esteem, religiosity, positive sense of self, and self-efficacy all acted as protective factors against negative mental and physical health and unsafe sexual practices, and skills in problem-solving, internet use and self-advocacy also protected against negative mental health and enabled the CYP to independently identify other avenues of support. Then, at a relationship and community level, Johns et al. highlighted the protective factors of support from family, communities, peers and romantic partners, as well as the importance of community visibility, organisational resources and school policies. It is important to note that a number of these protective factors involved the school, and Hong and Garbarino (2012) also explored some of the risk and protective factors faced by sexual minority CYP (including transgender CYP) using a socioecological model, and again highlighted the importance of supportive school peers and school staff, highlighting how vital policies and support networks are in school.

The Role of Schools

As discussed above, transgender CYP face many risks at school. However, the education system can also provide a number of protective factors. In terms of the school campus itself, school policies around protecting and supporting transgender CYP have been found to be associated with lower levels of absenteeism among transgender CYP

(Greytak, Kosciw & Boesen, 2013), and the availability of LGBTQ+ inclusive groups and societies in schools has also been suggested to protect against absenteeism (Greytak et al., 2013), as well as improving self-advocacy skills (Singh, 2013) and the overall school climate (McGuire, Anderson, Toomey & Russell, 2010; Singh et al., 2013). Indeed, schools where transgender CYP are supported in accessing opportunities for on-site activism, such as creating these supportive societies and campaigning for better support, have been suggested to lead to greater knowledge around rights and identity, as well as developing greater self-advocacy skills (Jones & Hillier, 2013).

Further, having a supportive adult in school has been associated with lower rates of absenteeism and drop-outs (Greytak et al., 2013; Sausa, 2005), increased safety in school (McGuire et al., 2010), and a more positive overall academic experience (Goodrich, 2012). Further, while they did not mention school friends explicitly, having peers that supported them throughout their transition has been suggested to be a protective factor for overall mental health (Pusch, 2005), and helped improve positive sense of self (Singh, 2013).

As more CYP are disclosing their gender identity, it is imperative schools are able to support them. However, school staff often feel ill-equipped to manage incidents involving transgender CYP, or feel unsure of how they can support them (e.g. Grossman and D'Augelli, 2007; Kennedy & Hellen; 2010; Pullen Sansfaçon, Robichaud & Dumais-Michaud, 2015; Riley, Clemson, Sitharthan & Diamond, 2013). Payne and Smith (2014) interviewed teachers regarding their experiences with transgender CYP and found that most teachers felt they lacked the necessary information or training to effectively work with gender issues in the classroom, and when they did have appropriate training, they feared not being able to provide a safe or supportive environment.

Research with transgender adults, as well as parents with transgender children and educators of transgender CYP, has repeatedly called for greater education and training in schools. During Riley et al.'s (2013) interviews with transgender adults and parents with transgender children, "*education programmes and information about gender variance to be implemented in schools and in society generally*" (p. 250) was the most frequently identified need. Further, Bowskill (2017) interviewed transgender adults and

professionals working with transgender CYP to explore how best to support transgender students, and further highlighted the need for additional support and guidance many professionals feel. Bowskill also explained that the most frequent area of concern was regarding the current cisnormative focus of the curriculum. This follows the idea that much of the school curriculum and daily school life is based on cisgender norms, including uniforms, competitive sports, assumptions regarding gender-stereotyped learning and socialising, and the segregation of activities and subjects such as PE by gender (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016).

While guidance exists to support schools in addressing aspects of transphobic bullying, provision allocation and the well-being of transgender CYP (e.g. Brighton & Hove City Council, 2013; Cannon & Best, 2015; Hills & Barrie, 2016), more research into the school experiences of transgender CYP is needed in order to help establish programmes of education and support (Kennedy & Hellen, 2010). Bowskill (2017) also highlights that, within all of this, the voice of the CYP is distinctly lacking.

The Role of Educational Psychologists

EPs are in a unique position to support schools' work with transgender CYP, as they have an understanding of the education system, and can bring a psychological perspective to consultations between schools and CYP to explore the best possible outcomes for transgender CYP throughout their educational career. The voice of the child permeates all aspects of EP work, and is a key component of report writing and statutory assessments (BPS, 2015). Throughout their career development and training, EPs explore and develop different ways of listening to and eliciting CYPs' views. Harding and Atkinson (2009) discuss how, throughout their practice, EPs may use discussion-based methods, task-related procedures, therapeutic-based approaches and indirect methods to elicit CYP views, depending on the needs of the CYP. This flexibility and focus puts EPs in prime position to explore the needs and ideas of transgender CYP, due to the necessity of ensuring a safe and welcoming environment.

Previous research with school psychologists in the US and Australia has highlighted that, as a profession, psychologists are confident in addressing the needs of transgender CYP and have a good clinical and theoretical understanding of how to do so (Bowers, Lewandowski, Savage & Woitaszewski, 2015; Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2015).

In the UK, Yavuz (2016) highlights that EPs are uniquely able to support the CYP/family and school level, as well as at a societal level in the Local Authorities (LA) many EPs are positioned in. In terms of the CYP and family level, Yavuz discusses how EPs can work with families to explore the impact on the family and how they understand it, signposting to additional support where necessary. With regard to schools, a core function of the EP role is being able to bring recent research and recommendations into schools to support the development of policy and practice (Scottish Executive, 2002), and Yavuz details how this could mean discussing gender identity and theory with school staff, and discussing what impact the transition may have on a CYP's mental health. Additionally, Yavuz details how EPs can create gender-inclusive classrooms and help schools explore inclusion policies and the impact of discrimination and exclusion.

Further, at a LA level, Yavuz (2016) explores possibilities for EPs to raise awareness around provisions available for transgender CYP – including possible youth groups and the delivery of training around gender identity for staff within the LA, as well as parents and other professionals. Further, EPs can be included in the design and implementation of the guidance available to schools, e.g. the Highland Council (2014) Gender Variance Guidance for Schools and Other Professionals.

This is increasingly important as many LAs are still developing their awareness and response to gender identity needs. For instance, a recent survey of LAs in England, Scotland and Wales highlighted that, whereas 97% of LAs recommend that their schools report bullying incidents related to race/ethnicity, only 65% of LAs recommend schools record instances of bullying related to gender identity. Furthermore, whereas 75% of LAs had evidence on the prevalence of bullying incidents related to race/ethnicity, this fell to only 12% with relation to bullying incidents related to gender identity (Hudson-Sharp & Metcalf, 2016; Tippett, Houlston & Smith, 2010). While this survey was sent to all LAs in England, Scotland and Wales, only 38% of LAs in England (24% and 18% for Scotland and Wales) responded, meaning that these statistics may not be generalisable to the entire country. However, they do suggest that gender identity is an area in which LAs may not be as prepared for, and further highlight the role of the EP within them.

While still an emerging area of research, the ways in which EPs can support transgender CYP are beginning to be explored (Bowskill, 2017; Yavuz, 2016), and by adding the voices of transgender CYP, EPs, as well as schools and CYP themselves, will be in a better position to further this ongoing support.

Unique Contribution of this Research

While research exists exploring the social, psychological and educational outcomes for transgender CYP, the majority of this research explores how being transgender has negative implications and outcomes (e.g. Austin & Craig, 2015a; Austin, Craig & McInroy, 2016; Giordano, 2008; Grant et al., 2011; Hellen, 2009; Miller et al., 2017; Whittle et al., 2007; Yunger et al., 2004; Zucker, 2005).

Additionally, while some research exploring what the positive school experiences of transgender youth may be does exist, this has been completed retrospectively by transgender adults and those working in and around education (Bowskill, 2017). To the researcher's knowledge, there is no research exclusively exploring the positive school experiences of transgender CYP that works with transgender children and young people themselves, and this research will be the first to add their voice to the discussion of how best to support transgender pupils.

The literature review conducted for this research, exploring the available literature around the school experiences of transgender CYP, is included in the next chapter.

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter aims to outline the current literature available discussing the experiences of transgender pupils in education. For a full account of the literature search and parameters, see Appendix B.

The process of finding literature for this review was started through an initial search of Boolean phrase "positive school experiences transgender" on EBSCOhost with the PsychInfo and British Education Index databases. This resulted in zero responses. A second search of the same phrase was conducted using the additional online databases of ERIC, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, Education Research Complete and Academic Search Complete, in order to expand the search across other fields of psychology and education. This also delivered zero responses. This, perhaps, immediately highlights the paucity of research in this area and why the current research is so important.

A new search was conducted using the above databases with the Boolean phrase "(school OR classroom) experiences (trans OR transgender OR gender variant)", which resulted in the retrieval of 145 papers, of which 114 were peer reviewed. Removing duplicates across the databases left 36 articles for possible inclusion. To expand the possible paper retrievals, an additional search was completed using the Boolean phrase "student experiences (trans OR transgender OR gender variant)". This yielded 159 papers, of which 121 were peer reviewed. Removing duplicates left 52 articles for possible inclusion. Eleven further articles from the second search were removed as they were duplicated from the original search.

The remaining 77 articles were screened for their relevance and a further 44 articles were excluded. Additionally, as this research is focused on the experiences of secondary-aged pupils, an additional 17 articles were excluded, due to the population being focused on university students.

This resulted in 16 articles being identified from the combined literature search for inclusion in this review. Due to copyright and access restrictions, four articles could not be accessed, and were therefore excluded. A series of hand searches using common

references within these texts were then conducted to ensure a thorough review of the literature was completed. This identified a further 11 studies for inclusion. The following chapter is a summary of the remaining 23 articles which were highlighted during this systematic literature review. This will be split into three sections: research exploring the school experiences of transgender pupils as part of the LGBT community; the school experiences of transgender pupils outside of the UK; and the school experiences of transgender pupils within the UK. Within each of these sections, space will be given to explore findings from quantitative, mixed-methods and qualitative studies. Where theoretical frameworks are explicitly mentioned, these will be discussed.

While no parameters were set on date of publication, due to the developing nature of this field of research, no study published prior to 2004 was identified, and the majority were published within the last 10 years, suggesting a good level of relevancy to current affairs.

The School Experiences of Transgender Pupils as Part of the LGBT Community

What is evident from this review is that a large proportion of the research in this field includes research with transgender students as part of a bigger LGBT minority group. However, throughout the literature reviewed, the proportion of transgender pupils involved in these studies was often minimal, meaning that many of their findings may not be generalisable. That said, a growing field of research is recognising this discrepancy and bridging the gap between LG and BT participants, highlighting the specific experiences faced by participants based on both gender identity and sexual orientation, and how these may compare.

Quantitative Studies

One of the largest studies identified comes from the School Climate Survey, a US-wide online survey exploring the school experiences of LGBTQ youth (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas & Danischewski, 2016). While Kosciw et al.'s (2016) study was identified during the literature review process, it was excluded for not being peer-reviewed. Its inclusion here is a result of its frequent reference in identified studies – owing in no small part to the size and spread of its participant pool. Over 10,500 students completed the survey, of which 15.2% identified as transgender, 11.4% as

gender queer and 11.7% as another gender. While the survey questions were closed in their responses, opportunities for open-ended comments were available. Through this study, Kosciw et al. (2016) reported that over 95% of participants had experienced negative remarks about gender expression or homophobic language, with 85% hearing specific negative remarks around transgender youth. Worryingly, 50% of respondents reported hearing such remarks from teachers and other school staff. In terms of transgender students specifically, 50% had been prevented from using their preferred name in school, 60% were required to use the bathroom/changing facilities of their birth sex, and 71% reported gendered practices which excluded them in the classroom. While not limited to transgender students exclusively, 22% of respondents reported that they had been prevented from wearing clothes considered inappropriate for their legal sex. As part of their summary, Kosciw et al. noted that the transgender pupils face a more hostile school environment than their LGB cisgender peers.

The greatest strength of this study is in its sheer size. With over 10,500 participants, representing every US State, the findings represent good levels of generalisability. However, the extent to which transgender participants are reflected in general LGBTQ responses is not specified, and may have led to some bias (e.g. if the clothing discrimination questions had been asked specifically to transgender students, it is possible the result may have been different). Further, due to the size of this study, it was not possible to gather a more in-depth exploration of responses from participants, and without context or qualitative experience, it is difficult to understand the extent of some of the responses.

As the Climate Survey discussed above is completed every two years, while not originally included during the literature review due to be being published after the review was completed, the most recent survey has now been published and included here. Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark and Truong (2018) report on a survey of over 23,000 LGBT CYP, of whom 25.2% identified as transgender, 11% as non-binary and 7.9% as another gender. Similar to Kosciw et al.'s (2016) report, Kosciw et al. (2018) highlight that transgender students were more likely to have negative experiences in school, compared to any cisgender student, no matter their sexuality.

Similar studies have also been conducted across Europe (Takács, 2006) and Canada (Taylor et al., 2011). Takács (2006) reported on the experiences of 795 LGBT individuals from 37 countries across the European Union, of which 2% identified as transgender. While this also reflected participants' experiences with family, peers, religious/community life and the media, in terms of school experiences, 61% reported negative school experiences based on their LGBT identity, with 53% experiencing bullying or other violence. Further, 14% of participants reported that teachers were part of the issue, either engaging in bullying itself or not responding to violence when it occurred. Some of the specific issues faced by transgender participants were gendered lessons, such as PE, and the lack of any discussion around transgender issues in the curriculum. Similarly to Kosciw et al. (2016), the biggest limitation of Takács' review is the ability to extract the experiences specific to transgender participants from those of LGB participants. While some specific examples are given from transgender participants, these were often very limited. Additionally, as Takács (p. 38) acknowledges, "*this survey is skewed to the extent that the questionnaires were distributed mostly through LGBT organisations*", and therefore may not present an accurate reflection of the LGBTQ community.

Taylor et al. (2011) conducted a survey with 3,607 youths across Canada. Of these, 26% identified as LGB, and 3% transgender or two-spirit. This survey found that LGBTQ young people are more likely to hear negative gender-related or transphobic comments than homophobic comments from teachers and peers. Similarly, transgender students reported higher levels of verbal, physical and sexual abuse than LGB and cisgender heterosexual peers, as well as higher levels of rumours amongst peers and forms of cyberbullying. Overall, 78% of transgender students reported feeling unsafe at school, compared to 64.2% of LGB students and 15.2% of cisgender heterosexual students. Compared to Kosciw et al. (2016) and Takács (2006), a strength of Taylor et al.'s study is that the experiences of transgender students are clearly distinguished from their LGB peers, allowing for both an assessment of transgender students' experiences individually and compared to both LGB peers and cisgender heterosexual peers. While Taylor et al. include a number of quotes and comments from participants, however, the quantitative nature of this research prevents further enquiry into transgender student experiences.

Additionally, one study was found which compared experiences cross-culturally. Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw (2016) used existing data from national studies to compare the school experiences of LGBTQ students in the US and Israel in relation to exposure to homophobic remarks, victimisation and a supportive school environment, and the effect on absenteeism and school belonging. Over 50% of participants in both populations reported hearing sexuality used in a derogative manner. Of the US population, 46.4% reported verbal harassment, 26.4% reported sexual assault and 8.1% reported sexual assault. These numbers were significantly lower for the Israeli population, where 13.7% reported verbal harassment and 3% reported physical/sexual assault. US participants were, however, also more likely to have access to LGBTQ-supportive resources at school. To supplement this data, Pizmony-Levy and Kosciw then used logistic regression to demonstrate that both verbal harassment and physical/sexual assault were positively related to absenteeism in both countries.

One suggestion given by Pizmony-Levy and Kosciw (2016) for these differences is that the structure of the school day allows for more unsupervised time in US schooling (i.e. breaks, in the hallway, on the school grounds, etc.), which in turn allows for greater opportunities for such acts to occur. Indeed, in both populations, participants reported a greater incidence of harassment in places such as bathrooms, hallways and school grounds. However, no other possible explanation is given. There are also further limitations to Pizmony-Levy and Kosciw's study. As the data for this study came from two independent national surveys, it is difficult to assess how comparative they are. While both surveys may have assessed similar themes, the different wording of the questions limits the extent of their comparison, due to the possibility of introducing bias, and thus the reported results from Pizmony-Levy and Kosciw must be taken with caution. Further, as the study was comparing the experiences of LGBTQ students, the extent to which these reflect transgender students (who made up 8% of the US population and 2% of the Israeli population) may be limited.

To further explore the experiences of LGBTQ youth in school, and the demographic and ecological factors which may contribute to these, Kosciw, Greytak and Diaz (2009) conducted a survey with 5,420 LGBT youth, of which 245 identified as transgender and 217 as other gendered. While this study is limited in that it only asked a small number of specific, closed questions around experiences of facing harassment, it demonstrated

that transgender youth are significantly more likely to face harassment, both in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity, than cisgender LGB peers.

Mixed-Methods Studies

As a way of addressing the limitations of using large, quantitative data collection methods, one study used a mixed-methods approach to data collection, in order to both collect a broad, generalisable dataset and to generate a more in-depth and contextual understanding of LGBTQ students' school experiences. Jones and Hillier (2013) used an online survey with LGBTQ youths in Australia to explore the different experiences faced by same-sex-attracted youths and transgender youths in school. While the majority of data collected was quantitative, a number of questions also requested open-ended qualitative reports from participants, which were analysed thematically to develop a deeper understanding of experiences – though the method in which this was completed was not explained, limiting the replicability of the analysis. Similarly to Kosciw et al. (2009) and Kosciw et al. (2016), Jones and Hillier found that transgender pupils reported more verbal and physical harassment than LGB cisgender peers, were more likely to skip lessons or avoid school, and were more likely to experience rejection and a lack of intervention or support from both peers and school staff.

While Jones and Hillier (2013) include a chapter on the theoretical frameworks adopted by researchers in this field, they do not clearly specify their own adopted framework. In their chapter on frameworks, Jones and Hillier discuss the move from traditional understandings of gender and a medical model towards a more socially constructed understanding in queer theory (Butler, 1990). As their research is aimed at highlighting the different experiences faced by LGB and transgender youths in school and the way these gender and sexual identities are constructed and assessed by their peers, it may be assumed that the authors identified more with a queer theory perspective, and indeed, during their discussion, Jones and Hillier discuss their findings with reference to Butler (1990) and the "policing" of gender identity construction.

Qualitative Studies

A large number of studies also relied solely on qualitative data to explore the experiences of LGBTQ students in schools. While the small participant sizes limit the generalisability of the findings, the use of qualitative methods allows for a more in-depth exploration of some of the experiences faced by LGBTQ youths in schools, and

can provide more meaningful insight into the specific areas in which the data was collected. It is important to note that the following studies had a specific focus that guided the discussions, potentially introducing bias into the reports given by the participants, or leading to the exclusion of other information and experiences.

Grossman et al. (2009) conducted five focus groups with LGBT students exploring participants' experiences of school violence and their thoughts on how it could be prevented in the future. Of these five groups, one included participants who identified as transgender. The transcripts of these focus groups were analysed using grounded theory. Grossman et al. identified the core themes as being a lack of community for LGBT youth and a lack of empowerment or agency to protect and support themselves and each other. Additionally, themes around negative attention, including harassment and physical violence, were raised by each group. As part of this, participants also reported that staff (teachers, administration and security) were not preventing violence or abuse, or addressing issues when they occurred, which further enabled incidents of bullying and harassment to take place, echoing reports from participants of Jones and Hillier's (2013) study. The focus groups ended by asking participants to recommend actions for the prevention of violence against LGBT students in schools. These varied across participant groups, but included ideas such as being true to oneself, having positive role models and mentors in schools, and educating school staff, enabling them to identify issues and support students. The study concluded by suggesting that one of the most protective factors felt by these students was that of supportive staff actions – that is, when staff recognise them for their gender and sexual identity, and respect and support this. However, no specific examples were given for the transgender participants.

While Grossman et al. (2009) identified that all themes highlighted in the research were raised by each of the focus groups (i.e. including the group with transgender participants), and specific examples are given from these participants for certain themes, due to the combination of LGBT students across the study, it is unclear which of the themes, if any, is most relevant to the transgender group, and whether any additional themes were raised by this group that were not raised by others. Additionally, as the focus of the study was on violence towards LGBT students in schools, the opportunity to talk about other experiences, including any positive actions, was limited, and as such generalisations to a more holistic experience may not be made.

Also using focus groups, Snapp, Hoenig, Fields and Russell (2015) explored the experiences of school discipline for LGBTQ youths. Of the 31 youth participants, seven identified as transgender or gender queer. One strength of this study is that Snapp et al. also included data from adult advocates as a way to reinforce the participants' narratives and further explore the consequences of these school experiences. Common themes that emerged were those of verbal harassment and gendered comments from both peers and staff, being singled out for behaviours which were not identified as a problem for heterosexual, gender-conforming students (i.e. wearing make-up, or public displays of affection), and being punished for protecting themselves against peer harassment. This resulted in many participants feeling that they had been labelled as disruptive or "bad" by staff simply because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

The School Experiences of Transgender Pupils Outside of the UK

As demonstrated above, while some school experiences are shared between LGB and TQ students, there are also some significant differences, and it is suggested that transgender students often receive higher levels of harassment and victimisation than their LGB peers. The following papers focused specifically on the experiences of transgender pupils.

Quantitative Studies

Focusing on the experiences of transgender students, another large-scale quantitative study comes from Day, Perez-Brumer and Russell (2018), using an overall sample of 806,918 pupils across one US state, of which 9,281 (1.2%) identified as transgender. Unlike Kosciw et al. (2016), whose participants were all LGBT, Day et al. (2018) aimed to explore the school experiences of transgender students compared to the student population as a whole. One strength of this study is the transparency of the analytic plan used with the data, suggesting high replicability. Further, as with the large quantitative studies previously discussed, participant numbers do provide a good, representative sample of the population, suggesting high generalisability. However, the closed nature of the questions prevents any further exploration of pupil experiences. Day et al. reported that, compared to cisgender peers, transgender students are more likely to experience harassment from peers, including gender-based and sexuality-based, and general victimisation. Tying in with discussions in the introduction of this research (e.g.

Youth Chances, 2014), transgender students were also significantly more likely to be truant from school due to feeling unsafe than their cisgender peers.

Mixed-Methods Studies

With regard to mixed-methods studies, McGuire et al. (2010) conducted a survey into school-based harassment and the school's response, before conducting focus groups with transgender CYP to explore school climate in more detail, with particular focus on student safety. Similar to Grossman et al. (2009), the focus groups ended with participants being asked to make recommendations for improving the safety of transgender students in schools.

The survey explores data from 2,260 youths, of which 68 identified as transgender, queer or questioning their gender identity. Survey data suggested that, compared to cisgender peers, transgender pupils are more likely to hear negative comments based on gender from peers and staff, feel teachers are less likely to intervene in cases of harassment, and feel unsafe in the school environment. The subsequent focus groups with transgender youth (n=35) further identified that schools are places of significant harassment and victimisation for gender non-conforming youth, with reports of physical and verbal bullying common. Further, when these incidents did occur, participants felt that there was little intervention from school staff. Discussions also rose around the possibility of moving to more supportive schools, and the protective factor of having even one supportive staff member. Echoing the recommendations made by participants in Grossman et al.'s (2009) focus groups, McGuire et al. (2010) reported that their participants called for more teaching around gender issues in school – including training days for staff members – and for greater support and intervention from staff when incidents occur.

The greatest limitation of this study is its replicability, as there is no discussion of how data was analysed and themes were assessed apart from "*using qualitative data interpretation techniques*" (McGuire et al., 2010, p. 1181). Further, participant ages ranged from 12–23, suggesting a number of participants were recalling events which may have occurred several years previously. Additionally, a number of participants had

not started their transition until after leaving high school, and as such would have had fewer experiences to draw on, perhaps biasing the information received.

Another mixed-methods study comes from Jones et al. (2016), which explored the school experiences of transgender and gender-diverse students in Australia. The greatest strength of this study is that it was structured around community discussions with an advisory group of transgender, gender diverse and intersex people, thus ensuring the construct validity of the study and increasing the credibility and dependability of the research design. This was in part based on the Foucauldian and queer theoretical frameworks adapted by the researchers in order to allow participants to define and construct their identities and explore the experiences they faced. The survey was completed by 189 transgender youths, representing each Australian state and representing all Australian school types. Data from the survey was then explored further through 16 interviews with self-selecting survey takers. While Jones et al. report that qualitative information was analysed in a "*grounded manner*" (p. 161), limited information on the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data does decrease the study's replicability and confirmability.

Through the survey and interviews, Jones et al. (2016) highlighted that transgender students experienced a high level of verbal and physical abuse, with over 90% of those experiencing physical abuse reporting contemplating suicide as a result. Additionally, students reported difficulties with activities and resources which were segregated into gender, including toilets, changing facilities and lessons such as PE. Though some schools were trying to find a middle ground for students, such as the use of a disabled toilet to use and/or change in, this was felt to be inappropriate by the students. Perhaps more similar to a British education system than an American one, participants also highlighted that in many instances uniform policies were inflexible, and in these instances pupils felt either forced by staff or by peers to wear the gendered uniform based on their birth sex, leading to feelings of discomfort, humiliation and upset. As with previous studies explored in this review (i.e. Grossman et al., 2009; Jones & Hillier, 2013; McGuire et al., 2010), another common theme was that of staff intervention and support. Comparing students who reported they didn't feel supported by staff with those who did, unsupported transgender youth were more likely to leave school, perform less well academically and receive verbal, written and physical

harassment. Further, when students felt supported by the school community, this also acted as a protective factor against harassment and absenteeism, highlighting the positive impact of having supportive staff and peers.

Qualitative Studies

A number of studies also explored the experiences of transgender students using qualitative research methods. While such studies enable an in-depth exploration of the experiences of a small number of individuals, they are often limited by their size and by the specific focus of the research questions. However, their inclusion provides invaluable insight into the lived-in experiences of transgender pupils across the globe, and how students both understood these experiences and later managed them.

Wyss (2004) interviewed seven transgender US high school students about their experiences of violence in school. It is important to note that the participants either graduated or dropped out of education one to five years prior to the research commencing (or four to eight years prior to the study's publication), which may have led to some bias in recall. Wyss' participants experienced verbal, physical and sexual assaults, which they report left them afraid when walking around school, angry at their peers, and which had a detrimental impact on their self-esteem. Wyss goes on to discuss the avoidance techniques and self-defence strategies the participants used to protect themselves, and the coping mechanisms post-harassment. Regarding the latter, especially, Wyss reported that many participants felt unable to discuss their concerns with others due to either shame or a lack of response to previous disclosures. Further, and reiterating some of the outcomes for transgender youth discussed in the introduction (e.g. Coulter et al., 2018; Day et al., 2017; De Pedro et al., 2017), other participants reported responding to the violence by engaging in other unsafe practices, such as unsafe sex or substance abuse.

A limitation of this research however, is that Wyss (2004) offers no explanation of how the data was analysed. While Wyss defends the credibility of their research through the use of member checks for both the transcripts and the later write-up, and discusses limitations in the population diversity and generalisability, there is no discussion of the methods used to analyse and theme the data, limiting research confirmability.

Sausa (2005) conducted 24 interviews with transgender youth in Philadelphia, where over 95% of the participants experienced verbal harassment in school, and 83% experienced physical harassment. Ultimately, this led to 75% of Sausa's participants reporting feeling unsafe in school, with the same proportion ultimately dropping out of school before statutory school completion. Common themes for experiences among participants were difficulties with gender-segregated activities and resources, such as PE and bathroom usage, and a lack of support from school staff. A number of participants reported they did not feel comfortable approaching teachers for support as they would either not interfere, or would even blame the students for their harassment. A common theme was also identified where students felt punished when they tried to protect themselves. A rather extreme example of this came from a participant who was attacked by peers armed with baseball bats and hockey sticks, and their assailants were not suspended from school, nor was any legal action taken against them. The same student later punched a peer who verbally harassed them, and was subsequently imprisoned in Juvenile Hall for 14 months. While extreme, this example demonstrates the double standards pupils feel staff have when addressing hostile situations, and may reflect Snapp et al.'s (2015) participants' feelings of blame and judgement.

One strength of this paper is that Sausa (2005) then discusses with their participants recommendations for schools in supporting transgender students. In this regard, the participants identified: actively challenging gender norms; avoiding gendered roles and activities; creating gender-neutral physical resources, such as bathrooms and changing rooms; addressing harassment immediately; and including gender-variant resources in the curriculum. An additional strength is the internal validity and confirmability of the themes and findings. Questions for the semi-structured interviews were based on preliminary interviews with transgender youth and adults in order to explore areas of language and matters of importance. Post-interview, Sausa also held three member-check interviews to confirm themes with participants and solicit any feedback. However, no mention is made of the data analysis techniques or aims of the questions, which may have led towards a possible bias for negative outcomes.

Whereas Wyss (2004) and Sausa (2005) specifically focused on negative experiences to lead their interviews, Graham et al. (2014) used a narrative approach to interview ten

black transwomen in Detroit about their experiences of school, church and the criminal justice system, before analysing the transcripts through grounded theory. With regard to their findings around schooling, one of the key themes identified by Graham et al. (2014) was the role of school administrators in maintaining heteronormative expressions of gender and sexual identity, and the effects this had on the CYP involved. Many narratives involved the CYP being sent home from school for expressing their gender identity, being called derogative names by staff and peers alike, and having staff undermine an individual's gender identity through language and dismissal. Graham et al. argue that this made schools feel unsafe for participants, as staff are directly contradicting the presumed role of creating a safe space and their actions in school also signal to other students that such behaviours and language are okay for use, leading to physical and emotional suffering for the individuals involved. However, many narratives included some positive aspects, including themes of acceptance and even, in one case, being "cool" for being gay, though these did not always extend to post-transition. As Graham et al. explained, "*narratives on the whole depict schools as unsafe spaces for youth to transition or to express femininities beyond the bounds of a stereotyped gay male*" (p. 368), perhaps reinforcing the previous findings in this review that transgender students often face significantly more harassment than their LGB peers.

As discussed, the greatest strength of this study is the narrative approach adopted. By not focusing on specific negative experiences – although these did make up the majority of the reports – some positive experiences were also able to emerge, which may not otherwise have been explored. Further, the methodology utilised in the study is well detailed, suggesting strong confirmability of the study's findings. However, the limitation of the participants to black transwomen in Detroit may prevent any generalisation outside of this population.

Additionally to the interview techniques discussed above, one study was identified using an ethnographic approach in conjunction with a number of focus groups and interviews analysed through thematic analysis to explore transgender pupils' experiences of gendered pronouns in one New Zealand high school. With a focus on the use of pronouns, McGlashan and Fitzpatrick (2018) discuss the experiences of transgender pupils as part of the school's sexual and gender diversity group. Previous research in this review has identified difficulties transgender pupils face when using

their preferred names and pronouns in school (Kosciw et al., 2016), and McGlashan and Fitzpatrick discuss how, even in a safe space (a school-based LGBTQ support group), many transgender students experience tension around the use of pronouns. While some found it liberating to be asked their gender identity and pronoun preference, others found it uncomfortable and non-inclusive. The latter was especially relevant for individuals whose gender identities were perhaps more fluid than generic binary options. The greatest strength of McGlashan and Fitzpatrick's study is the ethnographic approach adopted. By spending three to five days a week for 41 weeks with the participants, the study demonstrates both high dependability and high credibility. Another strength is that it was one of the few studies to highlight the theoretical framework the research was based in, using Butler's (1990) gender identity theory to discuss language and categorisation from a queer, social constructionism perspective. As this paper aimed to explore how participants experienced language and how they constructed the language around them, the theoretical framework adopted helped to discuss how schools help set gender norms and to explore language and pronoun usage. However, as the focus was therefore on the use of pronouns and gendered identities, further explorations into other school experiences was not possible.

Finally, while the research reviewed in this chapter has so far focused on the negative school experiences of transgender youth, and what they would like to see in place to support them, Nichols (2013) used a narrative approach to explore how music and performing as part of a school orchestra worked as a protective factor for one gender variant student in the US. In this narrative, Nichols explored how the participant experienced a negative school environment with reports of bullying and non-intervention from staff and peers, blame from staff, and the eventual necessity of having to leave school to be home-schooled. Nichols goes on to explore the use of music and composition as a way of exploring the individual's feelings and sharing them with others. Though the findings cannot be generalised as they reflect the specific experiences of one individual, the study represents a positive outlook into some of the protective factors that may provide support to other transgender students.

Experiences in Specific Subjects

While the majority of studies focus on school experiences as a whole, a small number of articles were identified which specifically look at the school experiences of transgender youth in specific lessons or environments. This is particularly interesting, as a common theme that has arisen from this review – which transcends nationality – is the idea that many negative experiences arise from gendered activities and lessons, such as PE (i.e. Jones et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2016; Sausa, 2005).

Looking at PE in particular, Caudwell (2012) held semi-structured interviews with two transgender males from the south of England. While the size of this study makes any results difficult to generalise, it is interesting as a focused exploration of the experiences of transgender youth in specific school scenarios. Interestingly, the participants in this study reported very different experiences. One participant reported being removed from school sports teams for identifying as a different gender, even though they had yet to begin their transition, highlighting themes of injustice and punishment based solely on an individual's gender identity. They also reported difficulties using changing rooms, and concerns both they and peers had with gendered sports and the hypermasculinity of some sports. Caudwell's second participant, however, did not face such stigma. They reported no issues in school with changing facilities. It is important to note that the second participant identified as gender fluid at this time and not did not present as male when at school, which may have limited any interactions others had with them in terms of gendered segregation.

The School Experiences of Transgender Pupils in the UK

As evidence of the scarcity of research in this field in the UK, during their review of identity-based bullying across England, Scotland and Wales, Tippett et al. (2010, p. 44) acknowledge that "*there are very few UK-based studies which have explored* [bullying based on gender identity], *especially in relation to transgender young people*". Instead, Tippett et al. identified a number of UK-based studies highlighting the prevalence of bullying of students who do not conform to stereotypical gender roles, regardless of gender identity, and across primary and secondary education.

While this review is useful in its early exploration of gender identity-based bullying prevalence across the UK, as well as its later assessment of LA responses to different

forms of identity-based bullying, the review does have some limitations. For example, while some information regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria is given, the exact terms used to search for material (in this case, specifically that around gender identity-based bullying) were not included, and reasons for exclusion, except for "*relevancy to the research question*" (Tippett et al., 2010, p. 95), are not given. This makes the review difficult to replicate, and limited in its rigour and transparency. Additionally, as the search was focused on bullying, possible positive experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming pupils may have been missed or purposefully excluded.

Some research has been conducted focusing on the experiences of transgender CYP in the UK, however. In their survey of the experiences of transgender individuals for the Equalities Review, Whittle et al. (2007) report that 64% of transgender men and 44% of transgender women experience harassment or bullying at school, most commonly by being treated differently in a negative way, receiving inappropriate comments and receiving verbal abuse. Supporting findings from studies conducted in America (Kosciw et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2016) and in Australia (Jones & Hillier, 2013), the proportion of UK-based transgender school pupils experiencing bullying is reported to be higher than those of LGB peers, highlighting the necessity of implementing support for gender variant students within the UK.

While Whittle et al. (2007) were able to access a large population for their study (n=872), which increases the generalisability of their results, there are some limitations as well. As the survey was published online on trans* support forums, the population accessed may be biased in that it may have been limited to individuals who take an active role in exploring issues around their identity and those who have a greater awareness of their gender identity. Further, while the survey received 872 responses, it is unclear whether all respondents responded to each question, and a large proportion of those who did reply to the school-based questions may have been reporting experiences which occurred several years previously, possibly skewing their results. A final consideration is that, similarly to Tippett et al.'s (2010) study, the focus was primarily on negative experiences, and bullying in particular. Further, being a closed survey, there was no option for "other", in terms of responses to negative experiences in schools, which may have resulted in a bias towards certain responses, or a complete omission of other experiences – both positive and negative.

In an exploration of a more qualitative understanding of the school experiences of transgender pupils in the UK, Formby (2014) conducted online surveys for transgender youth (n=37), as well as professionals working with CYP, and held focus groups with transgender youth (n=7), professionals, and with parents of transgender youth. Of this youth sample, 47% reported that they had witnessed transphobia, with the majority reporting such incidents at school. Similarly to previous research (Jones & Hillier, 2013; Grossman et al., 2009), for those who reported witnessing transphobia, a common theme was the failure of staff members to stop, or later to respond to, such incidents.

With the group discussion data, this theme of inaction or unsupportive environments continued. Common experiences amongst participants included the sometimes accidental and sometimes deliberate misuse of pronouns, and the ineffective response from schools to this. A number of participants detailed experiences where staff had made them feel like they were making trouble for themselves and others by dint of their gender identity, i.e. "*the pastoral manager said… you're making a big deal of something [i.e. pronoun usage] that doesn't need to be made*" (Formby, 2014, p. 27), and others acknowledging that often when they raised these issues with staff, they seemed to be the ones who were being punished. Additionally, another common theme was the *expectation* of bullying, regardless of whether or not it later transpired. Participants reported experiencing feelings of dread and fear of the consequences of returning to school following transition, and in instances where no bullying occurred, instead of perhaps celebrating the positive experience of acceptance, reported a lingering fear and an almost disappointment in *not* being bullied immediately due to this expectation – i.e. "*I feel almost bad that it hasn't happened now 'coz I feel like I braced myself for it and I'm still waiting for it to happen*" (Formby, 2014, p. 26). This perhaps relates to the general prevalence of transphobia within schools, as previously reported (i.e. Kosciw et al., 2015; McGuire et al., 2010; Whittle et al., 2007), and the gender-normative culture that currently dominates education (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016). The overall experiences of these students left them reporting feeling stressed, frustrated, angry and upset, highlighting the significant impact such bullying can have on CYPs' emotional and mental health (e.g. Miller et al., 2017; Yunger et al., 2004; Zucker, 2005).

One strength of this study is that it also included the opinions of staff and parents to support the reported experiences of the youths. For example, parents were reported as feeling schools were not dealing with transphobic bullying properly, and from the survey data over 40% of professionals reported not feeling confident in responding to issues around gender identity and supporting individuals within their practice. Additionally, 70% of the professionals surveyed reported wanting more training in this area, highlighting both the prevalence of gender identity issues arising within education and a desire to go beyond the binary and support CYP, regardless of their gender identity.

Formby (2015) later published an article highlighting the limitations of focusing on a bullying viewpoint of LGBT students' experiences of school, drawing from the above study and previous research exploring some of the school experiences of LGB students. Formby summarised that while CYP in both studies did discuss their experiences around bullying and harassment, a common experience was the perceived inadequacy or inappropriateness of staff responses, which often exacerbated their experiences. As such, it is important that a focus be drawn towards the positive steps and actions taking place in school to support transgender pupils as a way to identify these and encourage their continued and extended use.

Of all the studies identified, only one was found to focus on the positive school experiences of transgender pupils. McCormack (2012) explored the positive experiences of four LGBT students at a Christian sixth-form college in the south east of England. This was building on previous research McCormack had completed exploring the decreasing levels of homophobic language and practices demonstrated by male pupils in sixth-form colleges (McCormack, 2011a; 2011b; McCormack & Anderson, 2010). McCormack observed students within the college over a period of four months, and then engaged in semi-structured interviews with four students – one who identified as lesbian, one as gay, one as bisexual and one as transgender.

McCormack's (2012) interview with the transgender participant highlighted a number of positive experiences, including acceptance when coming out to staff and peers, low to zero levels of harassment, staff recognising and using their preferred name and pronouns, and the offer of using a separate toilet. While these experiences were also

partnered with some less positive ones (Government policy on name use during exams, lack of unisex toilets and some lost friendships), the overall experience for the individual was positive and supportive.

However, there are some criticisms and limitations of McCormack's (2012) study. Firstly, the sample size prevents generalisation of these experiences beyond the individual, and potentially the college itself. As the sixth-form college where McCormack conducted the research had already been identified as a potentially LGBT-inclusive environment (McCormack, 2011a), the findings may not be generalisable to educational settings without the resources and support already in place. Additionally, while that fact that McCormack spent four months observing students within the educational setting would suggest a rich data source for understanding attitudes and behaviours, and would suggest that any analysis of behaviours and interview responses would also be strengthened by first-hand observations, their presence may have limited any transphobic or other negative interactions that may otherwise have occurred.

Summary of Research Findings

Throughout this review, it became clear that a harassment discourse dominates the field of school experiences of transgender pupils. This may be in part due to findings of large quantitative studies such as Kosciw et al. (2016) and Day et al. (2009), who use evidence from sheer numbers to highlight the discrepancy in bullying reports from transgender pupils and their cisgender peers, as well as legislation and policies from governments across the globe which aim to monitor, limit and tackle prejudice-based bullying (Formby, 2015).

In particular, a number of common themes recurred across the literature. Firstly, transgender pupils receive high levels of harassment and violence from their peers. The literature suggests that transgender students are more likely to be the recipient of harassment/violence than both cisgender, heterosexual peers and cisgender LGB peers, with all but two of the studies reviewed (McCormack, 2012, and McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018) either focusing on or discussing in detail the violence and harassment faced by their participants.

Another common theme was participant relationship with school staff. Harassment from staff was discussed in six of the reviewed studies (Graham et al., 2014; Kosciw et al., 2016; McGuire et al., 2010; Nichols, 2013; Snapp et al., 2015; Takács, 2006), and the feeling that staff blamed individuals for any victimisation that occurred was present in five (Caudwell, 2012; Formby, 2014; Graham et al., 2014; Snapp et al., 2015; Susa, 2005). The most prevalent theme regarding staff, however, was the perceived inaction when issues of harassment arose. Just under half of the studies reviewed discussed participants' feelings of being ignored by staff in terms of intervention and support.

The issue of staff non-intervention is particular prevalent in Formby (2015), where it is argued that the focus on harassment and violence instead of the influence and support of teachers/staff diverts attentions from the development of school-wide training and support. Indeed, only a small number of studies reviewed explored participant views on how to improve the experience of education for transgender pupils. Participants in Grossman et al.'s (2009) and McGuire et al.'s (2010) focus groups both highlighted a desire for staff to be better educated in LGBT issues in order that they could better identify and stop negative experiences from occurring. Even the staff identified in Formby's (2014) study highlighted that they felt ill-prepared to deal with LGBT issues and desired further training. Further, in the few studies that also explored the protective factors against peer harassment and any consequences of it, the participants of Grossman et al.'s, McGuire et al.'s and Jones et al.'s (2016) research all highlighted the importance of having at least one supportive staff member and the significant impact this can have.

While some studies reviewed did discuss protective factors, there was only one piece of research identified which focused solely on the positive experiences of transgender pupils (McCormack, 2012). However, the purpose of this piece of research was aimed at demonstrating the decreasing levels of homophobia in schools, as opposed to identifying supportive actions schools can take. As such, there was no available literature uncovered which aimed at exploring the positive school experiences of transgender pupils in order to celebrate these and highlight participant-identified good practice in schools.

Contributions of the Current Study to the Literature

As Formby (2015, p. 634) concludes, the current focus on negative experiences within the research literature "*can lead (albeit inadvertently) to an assumption that to be young and LGBT means facing adversity, thus minimising the potential for shared (public) stories of love, friendship and happiness amongst LGBT young people.*" The researcher acknowledges this gap in the literature, and has developed the following research question in response to it:

What are the positive school experiences of transgender CYP?

The current study aimed to explore the positive and supportive situations experienced by transgender pupils in secondary education in the UK. It is unique in that it will be the first study to focus on the positive experiences of a population comprising of solely transgender individuals.

The following chapter will introduce the methodology used in the current research, including the conceptual framework behind the research design, and will introduce the participants and setting for the study. It will then discuss the analysis process for the research and conclude by exploring the ethical and evaluative considerations taken into account.

Methodology

Introduction

This research aimed to explore the positive school experiences of transgender CYP within the UK, and this chapter will outline and explain the design of the research.

The conceptual frameworks guiding the research will be explored, and the rationale for the study design will be explained. This chapter will also provide details on the data collection and analysis techniques, and will highlight the ethical considerations taken into account.

Research Design

Choice of Methodology

As the preceding literature review chapter demonstrates, several different methods and designs have been utilised in other studies to explore the school experiences of transgender CYP; including large-scale quantitative questionnaires designed to demonstrate the magnitude of issues faced by sexual minority youth (e.g. Day et al., 2018; Kosciw et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2011); mixed-methods studies designed to explore larger trends with in-group representatives (e.g. Jones et al., 2016; McGuire et al., 2010); and smaller qualitative studies providing an in-depth account of the experiences of individual case studies or small, homogenous groups (e.g. Formby, 2014; Nichols, 2013).

As the literature review highlighted a paucity in both studies of the school experiences of transgender youth in the UK, and of any research exploring the positive school experiences of transgender youth, it was felt that a qualitative research design would be the most effective at highlighting the experiences and the voices of these young people, and for sharing their stories with others, in the hope that they become a springboard for discussion and social change. Indeed, qualitative research has been suggested to be the most effective methodology when working with "*persons and groups whose assumptions differ from those of the mainstream culture, and who, therefore, have a particular need to speak and be heard, 'in their own voices'*" (Reviere, Berkowitz, Carter & Graves Ferguson, 1996, p. 54).

Conceptual Framework for the Current Study

As this research was started with the aim of understanding the different experiences of transgender youth and the meaning they have taken from these experiences, it was felt that an interpretive paradigm should be adopted. Interpretivism posits that a reality cannot be separate from our knowledge of it (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006), and Roop (2014) highlights that the interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the way in which individuals make sense of their experiences and the meanings and values they assign to events or objects.

While an argument could be put forward for an emancipatory piece of research, using the positive experiences provided by transgender CYP to help identify key areas where schools and other establishments can focus on to better support this minority group, it was felt that it would not be feasible to identify a large enough participant group in the time allowed. Additionally, the purpose of this research was not to dictate what these establishments should be doing, but rather to share the experiences and provide a springboard to open discussion around the subject, with the hoped-for possibility that change may occur as a result of these discussions. As such, an interpretive standpoint was adopted, in order to be in a better position to present these experiences and what they mean to the individuals involved.

Within this interpretive paradigm, the researcher adopted the ontological position of relativism and the epistemological position of social constructionism. Relativism suggests that, as opposed to a single, fixed reality, reality can be shared between individuals, groups and cultures, and only exists within the societal and cultural context in which it is found (Baghramian & Carter, 2017; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Similarly, social constructionism states that as there is no single reality, what we do know about reality must be socially created through interactions with others. Individuals create meaning about the world through their interactions with each other and the context they reside in – be this environmental, cultural, historical, etc. (Kim, 2001).

This standpoint was thought to be especially relevant to this study as it allowed individuals to define their own reality around their experiences, both positive and

negative, and to identify what was useful and supportive. This position understands that the positive experiences of one individual may not extend to all transgender CYP, and that for each individual the reality of their situation and experiences would be very different. However, it also allowed that, while immediate claims made by the research are limited to the group studied, extension to the population can be considered through theoretical generalisability (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Considering the interpretive paradigm adopted, the methodological assumptions are hermeneutical. If it is held that individuals and groups create their reality through their interactions with others, then to understand these realities the researcher must engage in discussions with the participants to elicit these constructions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Choosing a Research Design

Considering the researcher's position in terms of their own worldview, discussed above, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the most appropriate research design. IPA is underpinned by hermeneutics, or the theory of interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). Children and young people are experts of their own experiences and are therefore in the best position to express their views to the researcher (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). IPA is a qualitative research approach "*committed to the examination of how people make sense of their life experiences*" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1), which has led Alase (2017) to suggest that IPA is the most 'participant-orientated' qualitative research approach. Carpenter (2009) explains that IPA requires the researcher to work with a participant to explore their experiences and listen to their stories and then develop interpretations to help share what it is like to be that individual in that particular context. As no research has explored the positive school experiences of transgender young people, a research study using IPA was felt to be an effective means of ensuring that schools and professionals are aware of the impact positive actions have had on young people and the meaning and learning that the young people have taken from the support that has been given to them. Indeed, Smith and Osborn (2015) suggest that IPA is especially useful in topics which are complex, ambiguous and emotionally laden.

Further, while IPA is based around the interpretation of experiences by the participants, the process also involves a double hermeneutic, where the researcher makes sense of the

participant, who is making sense of the particular experience (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This was felt to be an especially important factor by the researcher. Reflexively, as a cisgender white male, the researcher proffers that they can never truly understand the lived experiences of a transgender individual, so all interpretations must acknowledge the role of the researcher's bias and interpretation within it.

Overall, IPA was felt to be the most suitable form of analysis as it relies on a homogenous sample group, maintains an appropriate epistemological background, and, most importantly, is focused on revealing the experiences of individuals after a particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Furthermore, IPA is an inductive approach (Reid et al., 2005), meaning that it does not test hypotheses, but rather aims to identify the meanings participants place on their experiences, further maintaining the epistemological framework adopted by the researcher.

IPA in Transgender Communities

The appropriateness of IPA was also highlighted by its use within additional studies exploring the lived experiences of transgender individuals. Particular focus has gone on using IPA to explore individual experiences of the transition process and the support that was available during this time (Callan, 2014; Paralik, 2017; Wade-Hernandez, 2012), but IPA has also been used to explore a range of lived experiences, including experiences of religion (Reygan & Moane, 2014; Yarhouse & Carrs, 2012) and experiences of psychosocial support and counselling (Applegarth & Nuttall, 2016; McCullough et al., 2017; Wade-Hernandez, 2012).

Of particular interest to the current research, IPA has also been used to explore the way transgender college-aged students make sense of their college experience in relation to their identity development (Roop, 2014). Using a sample of five transgender individuals in a north-eastern US college, Roop (2014) discusses the barriers these students face, both physical and emotional, and the additional steps many transgender students have to take to access the same resources and opportunities as their cisgender peers. While Roop's research did not specifically set out to explore barriers or challenging experiences, that these were the dominant discourses raised by participants during the study, along with the research on school experiences discussed in the literature review

chapter of this research, highlights why the current research is so vital – so that positive experiences and practices are highlighted, shared and understood by educational establishments.

The Current Study

Development of the Interview Schedule

To collect these experiences and ensure that participants were able to provide as much depth in their responses as possible, a semi-structured interview format consisting of open-ended questions was used (Royse, Staton-Tindall, Badger & Webster, 2009). Smith et al. (2009) explain that the aim of developing an interview schedule is to ensure that the data collection process is comfortable for the participant and will enable them to provide a comprehensive account of their experiences. This is especially important with sexual minority participants. Adams et al. (2017) explain that language use and terminology, if used incorrectly, may impact on both the relationship between participant and researcher, and the quality of the research reported. Jones (2016) also highlights the cultural and linguistic complexities within the transgender community, which, if addressed incorrectly, could prevent participants engaging meaningfully. Jones also explains that, for many transgender individuals, participating in research can have a significant impact on the individual's safety, due to the cultural, political and societal norms and responses that exist in their environment.

In order to support this comfortable interview environment, Smith et al. (2009) suggest that interview schedules consist of open-ended questions and avoid questions which may be over-empathetic, manipulative, leading or closed. Additionally, they suggest a maximum of six to ten questions in order to allow for meaningful conversations to be had in the time available. Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) note that a common mistake in IPA research is the production of interview schedules that are too long and overly specific, which can lead to a lack of depth in participant response.

Additionally, when working with transgender participants, Jones (2016) discusses the importance of 'alliance building' and developing relationships within the transgender community in order to develop relationships and a shared understanding of both participant context and research goals. Adams et al. (2017) also suggest meaningful collaboration with community members in the process of the research project, to ensure

that the research questions asked are meaningful to the community and that the research does not have the power to create further harm or social exclusion.

With this in mind, the original interview schedule was created in collaboration with a transgender male known to the researcher before being taken to a focus group of community members to ensure its relevance and appropriateness.

Focus Group to Develop the Interview Schedule

Focus groups have been identified as an effective way of identifying culture-specific experiences and language during the planning stages of research (Hughes & DuMont, 1993), and, within research involving the transgender community, have already been used to explore subgroup specific language and terminology and question effectiveness and appropriateness for later research (Balarajan, Gray & Mitchell, 2011; Betts, 2009; Betts, Wilmott & Taylor, 2008; Burke, Alexander, Morton, Sohrakoff & Willson, 2009). By using an initial focus group within the current research, it was hoped that some terms which may not be known outside of the transgender community would be highlighted to the researcher, and could then be used in the semi-structured interviews. Additionally, the focus group enabled a discussion around the appropriateness of questions relating to the research aim with regard to the transgender community and discussed alternatives or suggestions on what may be useful to discuss.

As this focus group was designed for language clarification (Burke et al., 2009) and to discuss the relevance of the interview questions, only one focus group was conducted. Three individuals took part in this discussion, including two transgender males and one cisgender female. While it has been argued that focus groups should generally be homogenous to ensure an openness in discussions (i.e. Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1997), the cisgender female participant was the founder of a charity supporting LGBTQ+ young people, and ran the LGBTQ+ youth group in which the research took place. As such, it was felt that this relationship with potential participants, along with a knowledge of the young people and much of the terminology within the community, would be beneficial in helping the researcher understand the relevance of some of the questions and formulate supporting ideas. Additionally, both transgender participants approved of her presence in the focus groups, as it was felt that it would be useful to

have a cisgender representative to ensure all definitions and terms presented by the transgender participants were explained clearly and effectively.

As a result of the focus group, a terminology glossary, as defined by the participants, was created (Appendix A), as well as an interview schedule of nine questions (Appendix C).

Research Participants

Participants for the interviews were recruited via purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is "*a nonprobability sampling method in which the researcher selects participants based on personal judgment about which ones will be most informative*" (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 739). Purposive sampling, along with convenience sampling and snowballing, are the most common sampling methods utilised when working with transgender and LGB participants (Bettinger, 2010). Bettinger (2010) reports that often the greatest challenge for individuals engaging in research with sexual minority (including transgender) participants is identification and access to the participant population. Sullivan and Losberg (2003, p. 148) explain this in that "*in practice, sampling is fraught with dilemmas, particularly with populations that are difficult to define, hard to reach, or resistant to identification because of potential discrimination, social isolation or other reasons*." Indeed, random and representative sampling methods for research with LGBT participants has been suggested to be almost impossible due to the high costs involved, and the lack of clarity around group membership and label definitions (Bettinger, 2010; Heaphy, Donovan & Weeks, 1998; Martin & Knox, 2000; Price, 2011).

Context of the Research Sample

All participants were recruited from an LGBT youth group within the LA in which the researcher is based, and then through the process of snowballing. The youth group has been running in the borough since 2010 and acts as a safe place for LGBTQ+ young people to meet, socialise and explore ideas and learning relating to their gender identity and sexuality. Due to the difficulties identifying LGBT participants for research studies, as highlighted above, it was felt that the youth group would provide a pre-existing, self-identified population for the current research. As the youth group caters for young

people aged between 13–19, all participants in the study were between these ages. Additionally, as the study aims to explore the ways CYP feel schools are supporting them in their gender identity, only young people attending school in their transitioned gender were eligible for participation. While it is vitally important that we understand all that transgender young people experience in order to best support them (e.g. Hill & Barrie, 2016), the paucity of research on positive experiences and the need to identify what schools are currently doing meant that only young people whose schools were aware of their gender identity would be able to contribute.

As Adams et al. (2017) and Jones (2016) both highlighted the importance of building meaningful relationships with transgender community members to ensure the fluidity of the research process and encourage meaningful engagement within the research, the researcher began attending the youth group as a visitor in November 2017, shadowing an EP from the LA – a well-being advisor to the group – and getting to know many of the young people and their hopes and aspirations. This was another reason that IPA was considered to be an appropriate analysis method, as the researcher felt that by spending time with the participants beforehand and getting to know them well, it would be difficult to remove their own interpretation of the participants' voices due to the knowledge and relationships the researcher had with them. As such, an explicit double hermeneutical interpretation was thought to be the most appropriate way of analysing the experiences gathered.

After detailing a research proposal and ethical permission being granted to the research project (Appendix D), and after obtaining verbal and written consent to present their research at the youth group (Appendix E), the researcher gave an initial talk about the aims of the research to all participants and volunteers within the group. Following this, the researcher spoke to all of the self-identifying transgender young people within the youth group individually to explore the possibility of their participation within the study.

The Recruitment of Participants

While there are no set parameters on participant numbers in IPA studies, Reid et al. (2005) highlight that 'less is more' when it comes to participants, as this allows for a greater depth of analysis in the time available to the researcher. Smith et al. (2009)

continue by saying that, given the complexity of most human phenomena, IPA studies generally benefit from smaller sample sizes due to the greater emphasis on analysis and interpretation. Smith et al. recommend that three to six participants is an appropriate number for the study to remain effective at providing sufficient cases for the development of meaningful interpretation and analysis across all participants. Indeed, Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) suggest that the inclusion of too many participants de-emphasises the commitment of IPA to idiography, and can lead to a shallower, descriptive analysis without the in-depth quality that IPA provides.

As discussed above, all members of the youth group received a briefing on the research as part of the researcher's introduction into the group and reason for continuing to attend, and individuals were approached and invited to participate. Of the transgender young people approached to take part in the research, six expressed interest in participation and were provided with a further explanation of what participation would entail and a written information sheet and consent form for them and their parents/carers (Appendix F). Despite desiring to do so, one young person did not continue with the research as it was not possible for them to obtain parental consent for the study. The implications of this, and possible solutions for future research, will be discussed further in the ethics section of this chapter.

In the end, three young people participated in the research project. The protection of each participant's identity was paramount throughout the research project – something especially important when working with a transgender youth population. As highlighted in the literature review chapter of this research, transgender young people face higher levels of harassment and stigmatisation than their cisgender, and even LGB peers, so it was imperative that participants could not be identified from the research. Due to the political and social climate in which many transgender young people live, pseudonyms were provided to ensure the safety of the participants. When considering which pseudonyms to assign participants, the researcher reflected that the most famous individuals with pseudonyms are superheroes. Although in comics, superhero pseudonyms are generally referred to as 'secret identities', the researcher reflected that both superhero secret identities and the pseudonyms for the current participants actually serve a very similar purpose – a form of protection against political and social backlash for engaging in activities that the individual hopes will make a positive difference to the

world. As such, each participant was assigned a superhero pseudonym to reflect their bravery and commitment to the research, and their goals of improving school life for future transgender young people.

Informal descriptions of the participants are provided in the brief pen portraits below. As transgender young people are a minority community, and previous discussions have raised concerns that, in some instances, providing even basic information such as gender, race, age and location could be used to identify individuals in small and rural settings (Adams et al., 2017; Sevelius, Dickey & Singh, 2017), these descriptions have been purposefully kept brief to allow for some contextual information about the young people, while still keeping their identities protected.

Superman is a friendly 18-year-old man. He explained that he first had thoughts that his gender was different to his birth gender in primary school, but only found the words to explain his feelings as a teenager, when he started his transition. Superman lives in South London, and currently attends a large mixed-sex sixth form attached to his secondary school. Superman shared that he is very excited to start university next year, and described all the research he had done on the different societies he had thought about joining at university, including the LGBT society and the Korean society. When asked to describe himself, Superman summarised himself as short, quirky and with ever-changing hair colours. When I explained the notion of the superhero pseudonyms, he chose the persona of Superman because Superman is a universal hero who often thinks of others before himself, which is something Superman aspires to be himself.

Jubilee is 18 years old and describes herself as a transwoman. She explained that she first realised that her gender was different to her birth gender midway through secondary school, and began her transition the following year. Jubilee attends a small mixed-sex sixth form attached to her all-boys secondary school. Like Superman, Jubilee is very excited to start university next year, where she hopes to study Literature and Creative Writing. Jubilee enjoys reading – especially Science Fiction – and she described herself as a bit nerdy, but "*more geek than nerd*!" When I explained the notion of the superhero pseudonyms, she chose the persona of Jubilee, a member of the X-Men, as the X-Men's Jubilee is always depicted as caring and helping others, which Jubilee feels she can relate to. Further, the X-Men's Jubilee's mutant powers allow her

to create explosive energy blasts from her hands – referred to as "*fireworks*" – which Jubilee thought was cool.

Nightcrawler is a 16-year-old man who described himself as "*that weird goth boy*". He explained that he first felt his gender differed from his birth gender in primary school, and began the transition process in early secondary school. Nightcrawler attended an all-girls secondary school for the majority of his secondary education, but recently moved out of London and now attends a large mixed-sex secondary school in the Home Counties. When I explained the notion of the superhero pseudonyms, he chose the persona of Nightcrawler from the X-Men because of his "*goth-ness*" and his ability to blend into the shadows. Nightcrawler also liked the fact that, due to his religion, the X-Men's Nightcrawler can often be found in large Gothic churches at night, which he thought was "*pretty mad*."

Data Collection

Data collection took place in January 2019. All interviews were conducted by the researcher in interview rooms in the town hall where the researcher is based, or in the youth group. While all interviews were originally intended to be held at the youth group, due to difficulties finding a private and quiet space during the group's operating hours, some participants agreed to meet outside of the youth group. As it had been agreed prior to commencing the research that the group's emotional well-being advisor would be available following interviews in case any of the participants wanted someone independent to talk to following the discussions, the town hall was felt to be the most appropriate place to meet, as the well-being advisor worked there as an EP, and times for interviews were agreed so that the well-being advisor would be on site and available for their duration.

Upon meeting the participants, the researcher re-introduced themselves and explained their role in the meeting and the process of the interviews. Participants were asked to reread the information sheets provided to them, and were given an opportunity to ask any questions before commencing. The interviews followed the interview schedule agreed by the focus group, allowing opportunities for the participants to discuss what was important to them. Each interview lasted around 40–70 minutes and was audio recorded. At the end of the interview, participants were thanked for their time and

provided with a debrief sheet (Appendix G), which explained the purpose of the research and contact details should they have any further questions regarding the research or their involvement. They were also reminded that the emotional well-being advisor was available should they wish to discuss anything about the research, or any of the feelings or memories participating had unearthed, further.

Data Analysis

Transcription

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, including all instances of pauses, sighs, laughter, mistakes and corrections, and speech dynamics, where thought to be appropriate (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). As highlighted by Callan (2014), this intensive and meticulous process of transcription allows the researcher to begin becoming immersed in, and familiar with, the data prior to starting the analysis process.

Analysis

As the purpose of IPA is to explore how individuals make sense of their experiences, analysis requires that the researcher becomes totally immersed in the data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2009). By exploring how experiences are understood by participants, and documenting, as a researcher, how they are being understood, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) explain that the IPA researcher moves between the *emic* (insider) and *etic* (outsider) perspectives. By understanding and exploring both these perspectives, it is argued that IPA avoids the psychological reductionism of just presenting views, and also enables the possibility of higher-level understanding through psychological theory and practice which the participants may not otherwise have access to (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

Smith (2007) describes the process of IPA as an iterative and inductive cycle, and while there is no single method for working with data when completing IPA (Smith et al., 2009), Smith et al. (2009) identify a typical strategy of six stages of analysis, which are:

Reading (and rereading)	Immersion within the data allows the participant and their voice to become the focus of analysis
Initial noting	Examining the semantic content and language within the data. This is done in three ways: 1. Descriptive comments focusing on the content of the data 2. Linguistic comments focusing on specific language use 3. Conceptual comments focusing on identifying and questioning concepts and ideas
Emergent themes	Examining the exploratory notes made and identifying the interrelationships, patterns and similarities between them
Connections	Exploring how emergent themes relate. This can be done in numerous ways, including: 1. Abstraction – grouping similar themes under superordinate themes 2. Contextualisation – identifying themes by their contextual and narrative elements; for instance, those based around specific events 3. Numeration – analysing frequency of theme recurrence
Moving on	Repeating process on subsequent data
Patterns across cases	Identifying superordinate themes across cases and evidence of the emergent themes within these for each case

Analysis of the Current Research

To immerse themselves in the data, the researcher paired initial readings of the transcripts with listening to the original audio recordings (Smith et al., 2009). This process enabled a deeper understanding and attunement with the transcripts during later rereadings to develop. While presented as separate stages above, Smith et al. (2009) highlight that the first two stages of reading and initial note-taking are often merged, and throughout the process of reading the transcripts, the researcher made initial notes in the right-hand margin on a very exploratory level (Appendix H), commenting on ideas that appeared to be particularly important to the participants, and interpretations of the language used and context of the discussions.

Following this initial note-taking, the next stage of analysis involved the development of emergent themes. While this process typically involves greater reference to the researcher's initial notes than the transcript itself, it is important that the analysis is grounded in the participants' original words as well as the researcher's interpretation (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, Smith et al., 2009). Throughout this process, the researcher explored their initial comments to map the interrelationships, connections and patterns between them, in order to reduce the volume of detail, whilst maintaining the complexity of the data (Smith et al., 2009). This led to a number of emergent themes across the transcript which succinctly captured and reflected the meanings made and experiences of the participant. These emergent themes were then grouped into superordinate categories, though some original emergent themes were also dropped at this stage as they did not 'fit' within the emerging structure or had a weak evidence base in relation to the rest of the narrative (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

This process was then repeated for the remaining transcripts, and though the researcher was aware of previous emergent and superordinate themes, in order to keep within IPA's idiographic commitment, new and original themes were allowed to emerge in each case (Smith et al., 2009). Once all transcripts had been analysed, connections were explored between each of the participants. This involved the comparison of emergent and superordinate themes across each participant to explore how themes differed among participants, and whether any higher-order superordinate themes could explain the meaning-making present in all of the participants' narratives. The results of this process are presented in the next chapter of this report.

Evaluating the Research

Evaluating qualitative research can be problematic due to the diversity and novelty utilised in different qualitative approaches (Yardley, 2000). Additionally, many traditional methods of research evaluation are not compatible with the IPA design adopted, or qualitative research on the whole. For example, reliability and replicability – cornerstones of quantitative research evaluations – are not at all appropriate for IPA due to the idiographic and double-hermeneutical nature of the research design. While effort has gone into ensuring the methodological procedures of this research are clearly outlined, and thus could be repeatable, as discussed by Shenton (2004), this will allow others to repeat the work, but not necessarily obtain the same results. Indeed, Yardley (2000) proffers that even if two people were trained to code data in the same way, this would still only amount to one interpretation of the data. One way around this would be to create a pre-determined code sheet for different analysts to use, but Manning and Callum-Swann (1994) rightly argue that this would limit the depth of any interpretations made. IPA relies on the researcher's own interpretation of data, so while it may be possible to replicate the study, the results obtained will differ depending on the researcher's own interpretations.

To address this, Yardley (2000) proposed four broad principles of quality assessment, which have been adopted here as it was felt that they appear in tune with IPA's principles and theoretical foundations. These principles are: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; coherence and transparency; and impact and importance. The rest of this section will discuss how these relate to the current research.

Sensitivity to Context

Sensitivity to context was addressed throughout the research by identifying and addressing a gap in the literature with relation to the positive school experiences of transgender young people, and by including community members in discussions about ensuring that the research was of interest, import and appeal to the transgender community. Additionally, throughout the analysis process, the researcher remained aware of the socio-cultural context of the participants and ensured that their original voices were still heard through the use of pen portraits and vignettes.

Commitment and Rigour

Commitment and rigour were maintained throughout the research process through regular supervision meetings and check-ins with staff at the youth group at which the research originated. Additionally, considerable time and care went into the analysis of the data, and an audit was completed by an independent psychologist (Appendix I) to ensure that the final report appeared congruent with the data and analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

Coherence and Transparency

Throughout the analysis of the research, the researcher ensured that their methodological procedures were clearly outlined and explained, with reference to previous literature and practice. Further, examples of the analysis process, the decisions made and the themes noted have been included in the appendices of this research to maintain a level of transparency (Appendix H). Reflexivity is also an important aspect of this principle, and will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter.

Impact and Importance

Yardley (2000, p. 223) concludes their principles of evaluation with the impact and importance of the research, explaining that "*the decisive criterion by which any piece of research must be judged is, arguably, its impact and utility*." Further, as transgender youth are a vulnerable, minority community, Adams et al. (2017) suggest that all research involving transgender young people should be meaningful and important to them, should support current positive positions around transgender rights and support and be disseminated back to the community. While the impact and implications of this research will be considered in the discussion chapter of this research, the researcher has outlined a plan to ensure the research has the greatest positive impact on the outside community it can.

It has repeatedly been suggested that EPs, though seemingly in a position to support both schools and the CYP therein, may not be adequately prepared in this role (Bowskill, 2017; Hellen, 2009; Yavuz, 2016). As such, the researcher has made a commitment that the information collected in this research is shared not only with schools, but with the wider EP community to ensure that the voices of transgender

young people are heard and that positive experiences within school continue to occur. With the participants' permission, and following feedback with them at the youth group, it is hoped that this research will be prepared for publication within the academic community. The researcher will also present the findings to their LA to ensure the information is shared within the research location, and the researcher intends to present the findings on a wider scale at conferences aimed towards EPs and education.

Reflexivity

While reflexivity is an important factor in the evaluation of qualitative research in general, it is also vitally important when working with a group of individuals whose experiences and identity are different to one's own. When working with transgender youth in particular, Swann and Herbert (2009) recommend that practitioners, regardless of their experience within the transgender community, be acutely aware of their own biases and belief systems, and how these may impact their relationships and engagement with transgender youth.

As a cisgender gay male, the researcher has extensive experience of stigmatisation and harassment due to their sexual identity, which has had the effect of inspiring them to promote positive change for LGBT young people. Further, many of the researcher's friends and family members have also gone through the 'coming out' or transition process, both in and out of education, and have shared their experiences of these processes. Indeed, these experiences were one of the great driving forces which led to this piece of research being carried out. Prior reviews of the literature and a previous university assignment had highlighted the paucity of research both on transgender young people as compared to LGB peers, as well as on supporting positive change or practices, which led to the current focus of study.

However, as demonstrated by the literature review chapter of this research, the experiences of transgender and LGB youths are very distinct, and, while grouped together under the umbrella term 'LGBT', the inclusion of transgender young people can create tensions and barriers due to misunderstandings around the differences between gender identity and sexuality, and the different experiences of transmen/women and cismen/women (Dargie, Blair, Pukall & Coyle, 2014). As such, it

was important that the researcher's own experiences and history did not overshadow the interpretation of the participants'. While only one member check was completed, which could be argued to have a small impact on the credibility of the research findings, as Larkin and Thompson (2012) highlight, member checks within IPA research can be counterproductive due to the later amalgamation of the different narratives, as well as the double hermeneutics involved in the analysis process. Larkin and Thompson instead highlight the important of trustworthiness being established through alternative means, such as audits or credibility checking with a parallel sample. Due to the potential difficulties in recruiting a parallel sample, the researcher ensured trustworthiness within the current research through the use of an audit of their interpretations by an educational psychologist independent of the research and unknown to the participants (Appendix I), regular research supervision and the keeping of a reflexive research diary (Appendix J).

A final consideration with regard to reflexivity is the pseudonym process involved in the research. While arguments have been made that using participants' real names in research give participants a sense of power and support a sense of social justice by drawing public attention to different issues (Guenther, 2009), due to the potential threat posed to the participants by identifying them, it was felt that pseudonyms should be maintained throughout the research process.

Often, pseudonyms can be created with little thought or reflection on the part of the researcher, beyond the necessity of anonymity (van den Hoonaard, 2003). However, pseudonym choice can have a significant impact on the way the participant is perceived by the researcher, the reader and the participant themselves.

Hurst (2008) highlights concerns over the power researchers have over participants and the reader when renaming participants, highlighting that "*personal names do matter*" (p. 345). That these personal names do matter may be especially true of the transgender population, who have already had to go through the process of renaming themselves following their transition. VanderSchans (2016) highlights that for many individuals going through the transition process, it is not just finding a name that matches their gender identity, but rather finding their "*true name*" – a name which "*embodies the essence of who they are*" (p. 1). Further, Lahman et al. (2015) highlight that the renaming process also has the potential to dehumanise participants by referring to them

as a set of initials or numbers, or to enforce undesirable characteristics onto them, such as disloyalty (e.g. 'Informant 1').

The researcher, therefore, was conscious that renaming participants, while done with the best intentions, may also inadvertently undermine their identity. As such, participants were made aware of the reasons for using pseudonyms, and were involved in the process of choosing pseudonyms that they felt reflected their characters.

However, while participants chose their own pseudonyms, it is important to reflect on the fact that they were still led by the researcher's theme of superheroes. The researcher chose this theme as they felt it was a positive and affirming way to support the participants in sharing their stories and experiences, and highlighted some of the barriers, but also the rewards, that transgender CYP face. The power this had over the participants, however, is unknown. Adopting a superhero persona has been suggested to support children in their executive functioning (White & Carlson, 2016) and task perseverance (White et al., 2017), and this Batman Effect has been suggested to have potential in supporting children in healthcare settings (Rollins, 2018). Kross et al. (2014) highlight that, in adults, third-person self-talk is associated with better self-perceived coping and control over upsetting or stressful situations, and it may be that adopting the superhero personas allowed the current participants to feel more confident in talking about their experiences and the positive actions of themselves and others.

A final consideration around the choice of pseudonyms is in the potential impact it has on the reader. Participants selected superheroes they felt reflected themselves in terms of personality, and it was hoped that individuals reading the stories and narratives would imagine the participants as superheroes, simply in so far as they were acting to support and help others. However, while this may be the case for laymen, for those with an interest in and knowledge of superheroes, it may be hard to disengage preconceptions of the superheroes from the participants in the research.

While not using superhero personas, Lahman et al. (2015) recount how a research supervisor asked a researcher to change one of their participant pseudonyms as they had had a negative experience with someone with that name and could not shake the vision of them. While it is hoped that no readers would have had bad experiences with superheroes, it is likely that those familiar with the characters will have their own

preconceived notions and preferences of superheroes, and this may affect how they interpret the participants' narratives. However, as Lahman et al. highlight that this can have an effect with any pseudonym chosen, it is hoped that the positive ideology of the superhero persona can outweigh any preconceptions around the characters.

Ethical Issues

Transgender youth face a number of additional challenges compared with cisgender youth, as highlighted in this research's literature review, and Martin and Meezan (2003, p. 197) highlight that, on the whole, LGBT research may require "*additional measures in order to ensure the safety of the participants and the relevance and usefulness of the study's findings*." As a vulnerable population, a number of ethical concerns were highlighted and addressed during the research process. Ethical approval for this research was granted by the University of East London Ethics Committee (Appendix D). All actions undertaken within the research conformed to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2010), and the researcher was cognisant of guidelines issued for psychologists working with transgender and gender-minority individuals set forth by both the BPS (2012; 2017) and the APA (2015).

Additionally, in line with Hann, Ivester and Denton (2017), the researcher ensured that they were also following the four principles of health care ethics, originally proposed by Beauchamp and Childress (Beauchamp, 2007). The idea of autonomy was respected through informed consent prior to participation, and through providing opportunities for participants to speak freely. Further, the researcher met the right of participants to self-identify their gender and preferred name throughout the process (Hann et al., 2017). Regarding non-maleficence, the initial focus study was conducted to ensure the researcher was aware of language and terminology within the transgender population, to prevent any unintentional disrespect or offence. The researcher was also aware that, for some participants, the topic of school experiences may not be easy, so support resources were highlighted and signposted to participants if required. Finally, the concepts of beneficence and social justice were met through the primary aims of the study – to identify and promote the positive actions that are supporting transgender CYP within schools, with the aim of opening discussions for the later support of all transgender pupils, as well as by providing a warm and accepting environment throughout.

The rest of this section will provide further details on how ethical standards were maintained throughout the study, with particular reference to consent, safeguarding and confidentiality.

Consent

Consent is a particular barrier for working with a transgender youth population. While many transgender youth are able to live safely and openly among their friends and family, for some young people, this is not an option. Taylor (2008) highlights the counterproductive effects which may be introduced through seeking parental consent in research with transgender youth, and suggests a framework which may provide exemptions from parental consent to avoid excluding transgender youth from research. Additionally, BPS (2017) practice guidelines, and guidance for institutional ethics review boards considering research with transgender youth (Adams et al., 2017), acknowledge that young people deemed 'Gillick competent' may provide consent without parental permission – or even knowledge. Due to university research guidelines requiring parental consent from all young people under the age of 16, this was the method adopted by the researcher. This resulted in one participant not being able to contribute to the study, and the implications of this are discussed in the discussion section of this research.

Throughout the study, participants were reminded that during the interview and focus group process they were free to withdraw their consent at any time. It was explained that this freedom to withdraw consent would continue until the point of data analysis, due to complexities separating data after analysis starts.

Safeguarding

Jones (2016) highlighted that the primary concern for research involving transgender young people is that of prioritising their safety, citing risks to employment, social acceptance, familial acceptance, and even, in some parts of the world, their lives. For this reason, immense care was given throughout the research process to protect the identities of those participating in the research. While all of the young people were attending school post-transition, so there were no concerns around 'outing' them at school, the researcher remained vigilant as societal and cultural norms still placed these

young people in a sexual minority and, therefore, at risk of stigmatisation. All participants were given pseudonyms, and identifiable information was kept to an absolute minimum. Further details around participant confidentiality will be discussed in the next section.

In addition to physical safety, the researcher was aware that discussing sensitive topics may also cause emotional distress to a participant. To protect their emotional well-being, the researcher explored the research topic with the youth group leaders to explore its appropriateness, and ensured that community members were involved in the design process throughout (Adams et al., 2017; Jones, 2016). Further, after participation in both the focus group and interviews, participants were provided with debriefing forms detailing avenues for support if required, and during the semi-structured interviews, a fellow EP and the youth group's well-being advisor remained on hand to provide emotional support should the participant require it.

Confidentiality

Participants were reminded that their identity would be kept anonymous throughout the process, with each participant given a superhero pseudonym. During the write-up of the data, participants were acknowledged only by these pseudonyms. The audio recordings of the interviews were conducted using a voice recorder, and following the interview these were immediately moved onto a password-protected hard drive and deleted from the recording device. Throughout the process all audio recordings and transcripts were kept on this password-protected hard drive and permanently deleted following successful completion of the Doctorate.

Summary

Chan and Farmer (2017, p. 287) highlight a number of key issues when conducting research on the lived experiences of LGBTGEQ+ individuals, including overarching focuses on:

- *humanistic researcher interactions with LGBTGEQ+ participants*
- *current language and terminology culturally responsive to participants' contexts and histories*
- *accentuating unique experiences and identities within LGBTGEQ+ communities*
- *critical analysis in reflexivity*

- *considerations to prevent the subjugation of marginalisation, oppression and disenfranchisement*

The researcher has demonstrated how each of these have been addressed throughout this chapter. The current study used an IPA methodology to highlight the voices of transgender young people and explore their interpretations of their positive experiences within schools. These voices, and the researcher's interpretation of them, are presented in the next chapter.

Findings

Introduction

This chapter will outline a phenomenological and interpretative narrative of the research findings. As the research question sought to explore the positive school experiences of transgender CYP, this chapter will reflect only on the researcher's interpretation of these positive narratives. As discussed in the introduction chapter of this research, this positive focus was not meant to deny negative experiences, but rather to explore the ideas which are working in schools and for transgender CYP in order to develop them further (Linley et al., 2006). The impact of this, and some reflections on this, will be discussed in the subsequent discussion.

Five superordinate themes emerged from the analysis: *The Importance of Language*, *Individual Teacher Support*, *Whole-School Approaches*, *The Importance of Community* and *My Own Best Friend*. Within these superordinate themes were a number of related subordinate themes, and these are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Superordinate Themes and Related Subordinate Themes

Superordinate Theme	**Subordinate Theme**
The Importance of Language	What's in a name? Pronouns and gendered language
Individual Teacher Support	Relationships with individual teachers Staff going against the school LGBT staff
Whole-School Approaches	School clubs Gendered activities and provisions Whole-school training
The Importance of Community	The wider trans* community Supportive friends Supportive family
My Own Best Friend	Humour as a support strategy Self-advocacy Wanting to support others

The rest of this chapter will explore each of these superordinate and subordinate themes in turn. While each of the superordinate themes was present across all participants, tables have been included in order to visually represent the presence of subordinate themes across participants. As highlighted by Goodall (2014), it is important to reflect that even though these themes have been separated during the analysis process, many of them were highly related and intertwined across the participants' narratives, so it is important to consider each theme in relation to the holistic experience and the hermeneutic circle.

To support the analysis and interpretation of these themes, extracts from each of the participants' transcripts where the theme has been present have been included (Smith et al., 2009). Text has been underlined where words have been replaced to maintain anonymity, and where possible, these have been replaced with characters from within the superhero backstory the participants selected for themselves in order to maintain this narrative.

The Importance of Language

The theme of language appeared to be central to each of the participants, and was raised across their discussions in a number of scenarios. While many of the examples regarding language could be used to highlight additional positive experiences, such as with regard to teachers or the wider community, the volume of responses relating to the use of participants' names and gendered language, and the significance the participants placed on this, led to the importance of language being raised as one of the primary subordinate themes across the analysis. Table 2 displays how the subordinate themes were spread across the participants.

Table 2: Subordinate Themes Relating to Superordinate Theme "The Importance of Language"

The Importance of Language			
Subordinate Theme	**Superman**	**Jubilee**	**Nightcrawler**
What's in a name?	✓	✓	✓
Pronouns and gendered language		✓	✓

What's in a Name?

For each of the participants, a theme throughout their narratives, both positive and negative, was the use of their chosen name by friends, family, school and even, at times, themselves. Their name was felt to be key to their identity as people and with regard to their gender, and for them, the use of their chosen name was highlighted as being the most visible sign that others respected and accepted their gender identity:

> *...she was really accepting and started calling me Nightcrawler ... yeah, that was a positive experience.* (Nightcrawler, 147–149)

> *...just using my name, Jubilee, just calling me that – that's respect. Immediately.* (Jubilee, 510–511)

Nightcrawler was also able to expand on this, and whilst talking about one of his supportive teachers who immediately started using his chosen name, shared:

> *...if there is one person that... believes that you should be referred to as who you are, it makes an impact, even if it's small.* (Nightcrawler, 258–261)

While discussing the impact using her chosen name had had on her, it was also reflected on by Jubilee that this is possibly the easiest action others could take to demonstrate their respect:

> *It doesn't take much, does it, to call someone by the name they ask you to call them? I mean, I'm not asking you to call me erm, Lord Vader [laughs] or whatever. Y'know? It's just a normal name.* (Jubilee, 511–515)

The importance of being referred to by their chosen name is also reflected in the heavily negative connotations around the language within the transgender community regarding the use of one's birth name. Both Jubilee and Superman refer to the use of their chosen name by friends and family instead of their "*deadname*", suggesting the extremely powerful impact a name can have:

> *...my ID card is you know, in Superman and ... there hasn't been a ... utterance of my, you know, my dead name, since ... I came out really, from the teachers so, in that sense, the teachers are definitely on board.* (Superman, 240–245)

> *...some teachers took it on instantly – my name, not my deadname. Some people immediately called me Jubilee, as soon as I asked.* (Jubilee, 255–257)

In Superman's narrative, there is also the hesitance, and almost caution, around the possibility of mentioning his deadname: "*there hasn't been a ... utterance of my, you know, my deadname"* (Superman, 241–242), highlighting the removal from the birth identity which is so important for many transgender young people. This caution and hesitance of using his birth name was also apparent in Nightcrawler's narrative: "*and I got called... my birth name too many times"* (Nightcrawler, 90–91), further highlighting the importance of referring to them by their chosen names.

Pronouns and Gendered Language

Pronouns and gendered language were referred to less explicitly in the participants' narratives – highlighting perhaps the greater importance placed on their names – but were still felt to be intrinsic to the positive confirmation of their identity and the support received from school. This was especially relevant for Nightcrawler, who, similarly to the use of his name, viewed the use of appropriate gendered pronouns and labels as positive affirmation of his identity in school:

> *No word of a lie, my teacher walks into the classroom, goes, "Ladies and gentleman". I am not— I kid you not, I was* so *God damn happy! I was like [makes squee noise] and I don't— there was no male teachers in the room either, like, she was— I kid you not she went, "Ladies and gentleman" and some people in the class were like, "What do you mean gentleman?" and, and, she just went "Nightcrawler. There's not just girls in this class." I was like, "Oh my God", I was* so *happy. That's the time when I felt truly accepted at that school.* (Nightcrawler, 397–406)

Nightcrawler's repetition, disbelief and stress on the importance of this exchange in school highlights his feelings of inclusion and acceptance that come from his teachers because they not only respected his name and identity, but also corrected others. He repeats this idea later:

> *...some of the people around me were accepting ... and referred to me as "he" and a boy, and unapologetically referred to me as a boy. And by that I mean people always said to them, "No, that's a girl", and they said, "No, that's Nightcrawler."* (Nightcrawler, 599–606)

Jubilee also mentions the use of pronouns – although much less explicitly than Nightcrawler, and preceding a frustration about not being allowed to use the appropriate-gendered bathroom:

> *I was already called Jubilee. I was already called she/her, so why should I have to ask for permission unless… they don't really respect me, but just sort of pretend like they respect me.* (Jubilee, 592–595)

While Jubilee acknowledges the importance to her of using her name and gendered language, she highlighted that this needed to be part of a holistic change in attitudes in order to demonstrate sincerity and respect towards transgender CYP.

Additionally, Nightcrawler, while praising the school's use of his name and gender, also highlighted the importance of working with the individual to ensure their safety:

> *They also asked my permission – I was so happy! They asked my permission to be like, "Are you sure we're allowed to refer to you as like, Nightcrawler, as a boy?" and I think that's so, so key, and so, so good to have done that. I'm so happy they didn't just go "your son" … 'cause, y'know you wouldn't want to be outed because your parents may not be as accepting?* (Nightcrawler, 694-–703)

He suggests that, while it is key for schools to support and acknowledge a transgender CYP's name and gender identity, this should be done with care and consideration of their other circumstances, and ideally in discussion with themselves.

Individual Teacher Support

The superordinate theme of individual teacher support was dominant across each of the participants' narratives. Often tying in with the theme of language, discussed above, each of the participants were able to share examples of individual staff members supporting them and respecting their gender identity. Additionally, for each of the participants, this was often viewed as support from specific teachers and not support coming from the school as a whole. As such, there was often a not insignificant amount of appreciation and importance attached to these relationships by the participants, highlighting why, perhaps, these reflections were so dominant in their narratives. Table 3 displays how the subordinate themes were spread across the participants.

Table 3: Subordinate Themes Relating to Superordinate Theme "Individual Teacher Support"

Individual Teacher Support			
Subordinate Theme	**Superman**	**Jubilee**	**Nightcrawler**
Relationships with individual teachers	✓	✓	✓
Staff going against the school	✓	✓	✓
LGBT staff		✓	✓

Relationships with Individual Teachers

Each of the participants was able to reflect on specific teachers or specific groups of staff members that they felt individually supported them, and were keen to distinguish this from generic whole-school support, highlighting the importance placed on these individual support relationships and the value the participants took from having a staff member who they felt was actively looking out for them. This is most evident in Jubilee's discussion around the members of staff she found to be most supportive:

> *I think the school did the right thing – and by the school I mean the other teachers like Ms Grey and Mr Summers – I think they did the right thing by just giving me their respect…* (Jubilee, 562–565)

As highlighted in the exploration of the importance of language above, many of the references to individual teachers came from examples of those who used the appropriate names and pronouns for the participants, highlighting again the importance of language to transgender CYP, and the impact it can have on relationships between students and staff:

> *…there are people you can go to, such as Ms Grey, in my case … and I wasn't really in her class until after I came out, and even Mr Corsi, even though I was in his class already, he took it* ["Jubilee"] *on immediately.* (Jubilee, 280–287)

> *…one of the teachers… just constantly, constantly called me "he" and it was like, oh gosh, and every time I heard it I was just like, "Yes miss!"… and just calling me Nightcrawler and stuff, and … I think I was like, reading to the class … someone started talking over me, and she went, "No, he's talking now" and I was like, [inhales] "Yes! Yes! He is!" [laughs], but she*

> *was a great teacher, her name was Miss Pryde, she was fantastic…* (Nightcrawler, 194–204)

This was also evident for staff who were felt to have taken time to do their own research and learn about transgender issues in order to relate with the participants or identify ways to support them:

> *…she'd obviously educated herself, because she'd come out with terms … like with T-side terms, and I'd be like, "Oh! I didn't even know what that meant!" [laughs]* (Nightcrawler, 298–301)

> *Mr McCoy … I suppose the first support I ever got was from him. He… did some research, without me knowing, and mind you he was still deadnaming me at this point … But he did some research and he… was the first person to expose me to the Tavistock and Portman.* (Jubilee, 198–211)

Since the teachers had taken the time to learn and do their own research around the language, needs and support available for transgender CYP, the participants reflected that they felt that this demonstrated that these staff members were on their side and that they were actively engaged in wanting to support them and to demonstrate their empathy and their desire to facilitate positive change. However, as highlighted in Jubilee's narrative, and as in the importance of language section above, this support needs to be part of a holistic approach to support the young person to be taken sincerely.

Further support from individual staff members was identified as being provided in the form of a safe space when the participants were feeling overwhelmed:

> *I was able to miss a lesson – not on the school's word, by the way, this was purely… teachers being nice … I would stay in their rooms and that really helped me mentally.* (Jubilee, 906–909)

Perhaps most importantly to the participants however, was the perceived availability of the staff members. As mentioned previously, for many of the participants, the sense that staff members appeared to be available, interested and willing to support them was key to the relationship the developed:

> *I'm not entirely sure why… I think Ms Grey just accepted that I glued myself to her [laughs] and Mr Summers was always approachable*. (Jubilee, 729–731)

> *Mr Summers was always there. I never really went to him, but he was always there.* (Jubilee, 677–678)
>
> *…but there was Mr Summers– and I keep going back to Mr Summers and Ms Grey… they were both* always *there.* (Jubilee, 1060–1062)
>
> *…every time someone was wrong, I went to her, 'cause she was the only teacher I really trusted, and… yeah. She was … a cool person.* (Nightcrawler, 278–280)

It was clear that both Jubilee and Nightcrawler took pride in naming the teachers who supported them, as demonstrated by the repetition and significance placed on the names, as well as a repetition of their actions. This level of repetition may also suggest that this is something they wanted other teachers to learn from, in order to be more supportive in future. In the examples above, both Nightcrawler and Jubilee reference the lasting relationship they built with teachers, and an unconditional, un-timed element, where it was clear to them that this support was continuous and permanent – "*they were both* always *there*" (Jubilee, 1062). This highlights to them the reliability of the staff members. In their narratives, each of the participants highlighted doubts from others, or challenges from staff or others, so the importance of having a member of staff who is always available and present with you may be a cornerstone that many of the young people depend on to safely transition within their school.

Superman was the only participant who didn't name a specific teacher, but instead referenced a group of staff that he already had a positive relationship with and who understood him as his way of highlighting the importance of relationships with staff members:

> *I was involved with the … support staff at school … so I already knew them quite well … because I was kind of... I guess, well known, in that kind of area in the school, it was easier to … have that kind of conversation.* (Superman, 126–139)

While he does not name any individual members of staff, it is clear that he felt the relationship he had previously built, and the understanding and respect this relationship had fostered, was key to speeding up the process of his transition in school.

Staff Going Against the School

Each of the participants was also able to highlight moments where they felt a member of staff had supported them in challenging a greater issue in school. For both Nightcrawler and Superman, this support came from members of staff who they had already highlighted as supportive. For Nightcrawler, the main area of support from Ms Pryde using her authority in school to challenge teachers when they misgendered him or used the incorrect name or pronouns:

> *...she did say to teachers, "Listen" [laughs], y'know, "that is not, that's not a girl. This— that young man is a boy."* (Nightcrawler, 267–269)

Nightcrawler's laughter and joy whilst imitating Ms Pryde and sharing this story further highlights the importance of language to him, and the respect and appreciation he gave to Ms Pryde for this support.

For Superman, this support came in the form of helping him to lobby for younger students to attend the LGBT society which he ran within the school:

> *...the only problem I feel like, is that you are not allowed to have ... younger years kids in LGBT societies, so... [inhales] what I've essentially done is ignore that [laughs] ... and gone, "You can all come in!" Umm... "Just don't tell anyone that you're here!" [laughs] And ... you have to have a teacher supervising and the teacher completely agrees with me and says, "You know, it's bad that kids can't have access to this kind of club because... you know it* is *what you need."* (Superman, 304–316)

This may reflect again the idea of members of staff being a cornerstone of support the transgender CYP can rely on, as well as being an authoritative voice when the participants fear they may not have one. Indeed, this idea is explicitly mentioned by Nightcrawler with reference to Ms Pryde, where he suggests her ability to support may be due the fact that "*she had, erm, a reasonable amount of authority in that school*" (Nightcrawler, 257–258).

For Jubilee, however, the importance of staff challenging the school as a whole was actually framed through the redemption of a teacher who had previously been seen as "*abrasive*" (303) and acting "*holier than thou*" (188). She explains how two staff members had supported her when she was challenged for using the female toilets:

> *…and this is where I think Ms Hunter really redeemed herself … 'cause she respected me enough to support me in allowing me to use the women's toilets, along with Mr Summers … what they did is Googled, and they Googled "Is it illegal to do— for me to use the female toilets," and the government website says it isn't, and they sort of printed it off and gave it to Ms Frost, and there wasn't really a debate there beyond that … But, erm, no, I got the respect back in that and I was able to use it eventually*. (Jubilee, 629–662)

While Mr Summers had previously been highlighted as supportive, Jubilee focuses on Ms Hunter, with language such as "*redeemed*" and "*respected*" to demonstrate the shift in her relationship with Ms Hunter and the impact it had on their relationship. As Jubilee summarised in the interview:

> *Interviewer: I suppose we started that conversation in any areas of support, and, erm, through a disrespect we kind of got round to a, respect in sixth form?*
>
> *Jubilee: Yes, and, um, from the unlikeliest of places as well!* (Jubilee, 664–668)

LGBT Staff

Throughout their narratives, each of the participants highlighted difficulties with their transition, both in terms of their own understanding of their identity, and the response of others. Jubilee and Nightcrawler discuss the impact of having a member of staff openly identify as LGBT, and how this provided a shared perspective and joint desire to facilitate change:

> *I think because… he's gay, and because… he grew up in Alaska, way back when… I think that… he felt that he had to be there? Erm, sort of to avoid a parallel? … 'cause he was always a person for social justice. He was always someone who wanted the right thing – the best thing for everyone … and h-he always told me about his past in… Alaska, being a gay man. A-and his stories always came off as him being on his own? I think he was isolated, there were very few, erm, very little support, and I think… he didn't want other people to go through that … I think that's why he… was always there.* (Jubilee, 681–699)
>
> *I think because she was LGBT herself – she was a lesbian – and erm, so she understood that – just a little bit more from that perspective.* (Nightcrawler, 291–294)

Because of teachers being open about their own experiences and past, Nightcrawler and Jubilee say they were able to develop a shared understanding of experiences and an altruistic motivation for support. This sense of shared LGBT community among staff was viewed as an additional layer of trust and empathy, and was highlighted by each of the participants as something that was important – having a teacher to relate to and vice versa. Jubilee summarises this in:

> *Mr Summers, obviously gay – us LGBT stick together … and Ms Grey… is also, erm, LGBT as well. So I think, it all comes down to teachers… prioritising the students they see themselves in.* (Jubilee, 760–768)

While he did not mention any LGBT staff within his own school, Superman also shared this thought process and reflected on his knowledge of other schools and other transgender CYP school experiences:

> *I've heard stories of them … being very very very LGBT inclusive and trans* inclusive and stuff, and teachers coming out and stuff.* (Superman, 755–757)

That "*teachers coming out*" is highlighted within the same idealisation of more inclusive school, and indeed is the only specific example given, highlights how important it is for transgender CYP to have staff members they can relate to and who may understand what they are going through in order to provide both physical and emotional support where necessary.

Whole-School Approaches

The superordinate theme of whole-school approaches highlighted the support or positive experiences that participants perceived were coming from the school itself, as opposed to from individual teachers. This was the only superordinate theme to have subordinate themes which related to only one participant; however, it was felt that the importance and emphasis placed on these actions by the individual participants warranted their being highlighted as individual subordinate themes and not grouped together under a larger heading. Table 4 displays how the subordinate themes were spread across the participants.

Table 4: Subordinate Themes Relating to Superordinate Theme "Whole-School Approaches"

Whole-School Approaches			
Subordinate Theme	**Superman**	**Jubilee**	**Nightcrawler**
School clubs	✓	✓	✓
Gendered activities and provisions		✓	✓
Whole-school training	✓		✓

School Clubs

Each of the participants referenced school clubs within their narratives, highlighting the perceived potential value these clubs and arenas of debate can have, but also noting that they were of varying efficacy.

The participants reported that the most important facet of their clubs was their ability to advocate for rights and give a platform to students who may not have the power or authority to voice concern themselves:

> *…there was actually… a rainbow power type thing at my school! Erm, it was called Equalities Club, and erm, I used to go and it was for everybody, it wasn't just for LGBT people, and they were so… erm, not what-do-you-call-it, they were so… they took it seriously. They took it so seriously, like. They really did… put out every single right there was and it was like, yes! This is— this is the case, y'know! People need to be more outspoken about this, and you're giving a voice to the people who were too scared to have one.* (Nightcrawler, 606–617)

> *…in school there was an equalities group … I was a part of it sometimes … I think their intentions were good. It was run by Mr Summers and Ms Hunter, and they'd go to Pride every year and other teachers would join and other students would join.* (Jubilee, 778–785)

However, not only were the clubs seen as a source of information and advocacy for the individual members, they were also seen as having a role to play in the education of others within the school. As highlighted in Nightcrawler's narrative above, the club was able to "*put out every single right there was*" (Nightcrawler, 613–614), and Jubilee stresses this point in her own narrative:

> *…the equalities group at one point did… try and educate the school. A part of the equalities group wasn't just… helping students, it was teaching teachers.* (Jubilee, 1134–1136)

Superman also discusses the club at his school, but reflects more upon his role within it and – similarly to Jubilee – the impact that the club could have. As will be discussed later, Superman's role within the club was a token of pride for him, and his narrative reflects this by discussing his role in the growth of the society, and his role in overcoming any barriers the society faced. However, despite their difficulties, these clubs were viewed by each of the participants as being centrally important in being a platform for raising their voices and concerns, and for providing a safe space for other transgender CYP who may be considering starting their transition process in school. As highlighted by Superman:

> *…if I'd been allowed to go to a society like that... I would've known I wasn't alone and that all these other people were, you know... in some way feeling the same as me.* (Superman, 608–611)

Gendered Activities and Provisions

Nightcrawler was the only participant to have a mostly positive experience of access to gendered provisions and facilities, discussing the support he received in PE and that he was able to use appropriate bathrooms. Regarding PE, Nightcrawler highlighted the support he received in terms of uniform:

> *Things like with PE … every single time, they gave me a pair of tracksuit bottoms. Erm, for … the fact that I'm not going to wear a skirt or skort type thing! I mean, no! Not happening. [laughs] Ever. So, that was – that was good. They allowed me to do that.* (Nightcrawler, 501–510)

With regard to bathrooms, he highlighted that he wasn't expected to use inappropriate gendered facilities:

> *…when I was at Xavier's School just … saying to me, "You don't have to go the girls' bathrooms". … Oh God! Another thing! All right, I'll give you another example – changing rooms! Didn't have to go to the girls' changing rooms.* (Nightcrawler, 487–492)

The jubilation and appreciation Nightcrawler attaches to this, and the respect he feels from it, is evident from his exclamations and excited speech, cutting in to share the positive actions he perceived his school had taken to support him. This was especially relevant when he was making repeated reference to the personal support he felt he received with his "*own bathroom*":

> *I had my own – not my own bathroom, but yeah, I had a bathroom I could go to.* (Nightcrawler, 498–499)

Much of Nightcrawler's reflections centred on the fact that he attended a single-sex provision:

> *Interviewer: Where did you… get changed?*
>
> *Nightcrawler: Where did I get changed? In the staff bathrooms. Yet again, it was an all-girls school, so there wasn't like a boys' bathrooms … or like, a boys' changing room. And it was more than I could dream about, honestly.* (Nightcrawler, 513–522)
>
> *…'Cause I went to an all-girls school – and the best they could give me was accessible, and I was very, very grateful for that.* (Nightcrawler, 108–110)

And Nightcrawler's positive response may be indicative of this and his perceived lack of possible alternatives. Both Superman and Jubilee attend mixed-sex schools (though Jubilee attended a single-sex secondary school within the same building as her current mixed-sex sixth form), and had quite negative reflections on the availability of gendered provisions, and the differences between their reflections and Nightcrawler's reflections may be reflective of the perceived potential access to gender appropriate bathrooms vs. the idea of having no alternative.

However, while Jubilee's experience wasn't as positive or automatic as Nightcrawler's, she also discusses the respect she felt from teachers who supported her in accessing appropriate gendered provisions in her mixed-sex sixth form:

> *...she respected me enough to support me in allowing me to use the women's toilets, along with Mr Summers.* (Jubilee, 634–636)

This again highlights the importance of a holistic approach to support. While gendered language and respect for names is incredibly important for transgender young people, it was felt by the participants that this needed to be paired with positive and affirmative action to avoid what may be perceived as a lip-service level of support.

Whole-School Training

A final area of whole-school support that was reflected on by the participants was a perceived attempt to engage in school-wide education with regard to transgender, or LGBT on the whole, training:

> *Also what was cool – I think there were, erm, there were a couple of times when the school people were educated about LGBT, which was fantastic, erm, that was cool…* (Nightcrawler, 269–272)

> *…you know, there have been attempts to you know, to try and, you know, educate teachers on LGBT kind of training, and things like gender-neutral bathrooms.* (Superman, 269–272)

While this training was viewed as having mixed results and efficacy by the participants, it still demonstrated that the school was motivated to develop their own awareness and ability to support, and demonstrated that, even if things weren't ideal at present, there was at least a desire from members of staff and the school as an institute to provide and facilitate ongoing support.

The Importance of Community

The superordinate theme of the importance of community highlights the support or positive experiences that participants raised from life outside school. While the research question aimed to explore positive school experiences, CYP are not independent of their environments and ecosystemic thinking necessitates the understanding that the school and its actions are nestled in a wider community. Taking an interactionist perspective, it is important to highlight the strengths and positive experiences transgender CYP raised regarding the wider community support available to them, and how this may impact on their perceptions of school. Table 5 displays how the subordinate themes were spread across the participants.

Table 5: Subordinate Themes Relating to Superordinate Theme "The Importance of Community"

The Importance of Community			
Subordinate Theme	**Superman**	**Jubilee**	**Nightcrawler**
The wider trans* community	✓	✓	✓
Supportive friends	✓	✓	✓
Supportive family	✓		✓

The Wider Trans* Community

Each of the participants spoke about learning from the wider trans* community as a way to not only develop their understanding of themselves, but also to explore peer-comparisons and their rights and their experiences.

The most common theme arising from the wider trans* community was the exploration of the self within this. By having role models and others with whom to explore their gender identity with, each of the participants felt better able to understand themselves:

> *I actually didn't realise what transgender was until I was about thirteen... when I met someone in real life, um, who was trans* and … they were kind of the first person who made me think about like... transgender and stuff like that.* (Superman, 18–22)

> *…it's not like I did research, it's just… it's just the kind of thing you learn about through, erm… society, through watching television, through watching the internet and reading books … and that was my first exposure to, erm… non-conforming gender identities.* (Jubilee, 77–86)

> *I tried explaining to them that it's— 'cause all the make-up influencers I had in my life were male, so I— I've always thought to myself, "Oh, make-up's for everyone."* (Nightcrawler, 97–100)

> *...people like Natalie Wynn, umm, ContraPoints, or… umm… Ash Hardell, or… erm, Miles McKenna … all of them are American, but… nonetheless they're still… people who… they exposed me to, uh, trans* life.* (Jubilee, 139–146)

For each of the participants, it may be hypothesised that having this role model supported them in their not feeling different or isolated. This was especially relevant for

Jubilee, who described feeling "*uncomfortable*" (91) before her exposure to transgender others allowed her to "*sort of come to terms with it*" (91–92).

Supportive Friends

Friendships were also raised by the participants, who thought it important to have supportive figure in their transitions and in school. Friends were seen as being allies and supportive of the participants' identities, correcting others when they misgendered or deadnamed them:

> *...she was really accepting about it, like, she um, she started calling me "he" and even tho— even at the kind of school I went to ... she'd still refer to me as "he" in the classroom, even when people turned around and went, "No, it's a girl," which I really liked*. (Nightcrawler, 142–147)

Friends were also seen as supporting gender identities by conforming to gender stereotypes and treating participants with regard to their transitioned genders:

> *...oh, it was great – when they used to talk about like, girls' stuff ... and... I think one of my friends turned round once and went, "Sorry you have to hear this, Nightcrawler" like, as in, like, 'cause usually a cis boy wouldn't want to hear any of it. So they treated me as such. That was cool. That was nice.* (Nightcrawler, 645–652)

> *I did ask, erm, some of my female friends if they would feel uncomfortable, and they all said they wouldn't feel uncomfortable, they'd be fine with it...* (Jubilee, 602–605, discussing access to gendered bathrooms)

However, the most important attribute of friendship mentioned by any of the participants was the sense of acceptance. Both Superman and Nightcrawler talked about their friends accepting them however they presented, and not questioning their gender or not questioning their clothes, and not being impacted by their transition:

> *99% of the time they're just so supportive of me as a person, and I can tell they just don't, they don't care about me being trans*, it's just about... me, and who I am as a person – and even people who knew me before you know, before I transitioned, you know, it's just been... they've been completely fine with it.* (Superman, 383–389)

> *...'Cause my friends here, I could come here dressed like this, and my friends wouldn't be like, "So are you a girl now?"*(Nightcrawler, 185–187)

> *I feel so comfortable within... who are my friendship group and I don't feel like... [exhales] Yeah, I don't feel like any of them feels strange towards me, even though some of them had known me before.* (Superman, 509–513)

Superman in particular discusses the fact his friends "*knew me before*", and it comes up in both of his extracts above around the supportiveness of his friendship group, highlighting perhaps the concern that he, and potentially the others, felt as they went through their transition about their friends not accepting their transition or taking it seriously.

Supportive Family

Both Superman and Nightcrawler also discussed the impact family support had both on them individually and on their transition. All participants highlighted concerns around announcing their transition at home, so when family members were supportive and accepting, it had a huge impact on them, and they felt a weight lifted off their shoulders:

> *...my mum's come around. My Granny ... has come around as well, um... my dad, my dad was probably the most supportive initially when I came out, which I thought was completely... a massive surprise.* (Superman, 705–709)

> *...and then I came out. I was like, "Well, Dad, I don't feel like Kate any more, and being called a… girl doesn't feel right," and he started to change his mentality – it was lovely.* (Nightcrawler, 43–46)

This was supported by the fact that families were viewed as doing their own research and identifying ways they could support the participants on their own:

> *...my foster family have been very supportive and very... and they've, I think they've had training themselves on issues like, being trans* and stuff.* (Superman, 680–682)

The importance of having a supportive family with regard to school was also raised by participants. For Nightcrawler, especially, this was incredibly important. He felt his father was there to support him if any barriers were raised in school –:

> *I didn't have to get parental permission – don't get me wrong, my dad would have been, "Yeah, just call him Nightcrawler…" [laughs] "just leave him alone…"* (Nightcrawler 245–248)

– and acted as an authority figure with regard to accepting his gender identity within school:

> *They, erm, they just kind of understood that my dad accepted it and on the phone they referred to me as a boy.* (Nightcrawler, 692–694)

This suggests that having a supportive family acted as a protective factor for the participants, and the perceived or actual authority parents have with regard to CYP in school can be a supportive factor in the transition process within school as well as out.

My Own Best Friend

The superordinate theme of my own best friend highlights the personal strengths and avenues of support that the participants brought with them. Similarly to discussions around the importance of community, it needs to be highlighted that CYP are not isolated agents, but rather working within their environments, and these strategies and strengths in many instances were facilitated by the context the CYP found themselves in. Table 6 displays how the subordinate themes were spread across the participants.

Table 6: Subordinate Themes Relating to Superordinate Theme "My Own Best Friend"

My Own Best Friend			
Subordinate Theme	**Superman**	**Jubilee**	**Nightcrawler**
Humour as a support strategy	✓	✓	✓
Self-advocacy	✓		✓
Wanting to support others	✓		✓

Humour as a Support Strategy

Unlike the rest of the subordinate themes across the analysis, humour was not something that any of the individual participants raised explicitly. Instead, it was evident that, across their narratives, each of the participants were relying on humour as either a form of managing and downplaying negative experiences they faced, or making light of perceived barriers from themselves or others.

More often than not, humour was used as a coping mechanism to make light of difficult or challenging situations. This could have been in perceived barriers to accessing support and services –:

> *…the only people who would go with me are my parents, and I'd rather they didn't! [laughs]* (Jubilee, 37–38)

> *…the only problem I feel, like, is that you are not allowed to have, erm, younger years kids in LGBT societies, so... [inhales] what I've essentially done is ignore that! [laughs]* (Superman, 304–307)

– or downplaying the severity of the situations and circumstances they faced:

> *These aren't gender-neutral toilets – these are clearly designed for someone in a wheelchair. Someone in a very small wheelchair, 'cause it was a very small room! [laughs]* (Jubilee, 623–626)

> *I remember I had to change in a, erm, in a cleaning cupboard, in erm, in PE class, which was a bit of a strange experience because it was really messy and... there were spiders everywhere! [laughs]* (Superman, 223–227)

Humour was also used self-depreciatively to downplay the severity of the situations faced by many of the young people. Jubilee jokes about the need for her to continually seek support from staff members who she felt were supportive –:

> *I'd visit them way too often, I think. [laughs]* (Jubilee, 710)

– and Nightcrawler discusses the difficulties he was having in his new school regarding accessing appropriate provisions:

> *Nightcrawler: I am— I am— I am a safeguarding issue! Little me, a safeguarding issue! 'Cause of my organs—*
>
> *Interviewer: Lovely title: "Nightcrawler* – safeguarding issue*"—*
>
> *Nightcrawler: [laughs] Yes! Yes! That should be my name!—*
>
> *Interviewer: —Business cards everywhere—*
>
> *Nightcrawler: —[laughs, then sighs]* (Nightcrawler, 559–568)

Together, they appear to highlight the way in which the participants were managing their concerns and disappointments, by either making light of the situation or laughing about themselves and their own responses to them. For Nightcrawler, his sigh following the anecdote of his "*safeguarding issue*" title may reflect his resignation to the difficulties and disappointment that he is still facing them. This was especially poignant as, for many of the participants, they didn't perceive the changes needed for them to feel supported to be insurmountable by any stretch of the word, and Jubilee and Superman both reference this with humour, laughing at the difficulties they are currently facing, and how easy it should be to make the requisite changes for them to feel respected and supported by others:

> *It doesn't take much, does it, to call someone by the name they ask you to call them? I mean, I'm not asking you to call me erm, Lord Vader! [laughs]* (Jubilee, 511–514)

> *…none of them refer to me by my deadname... sometimes, you know, my mum and my granny will misgender me, but... you know – can't get everything, can you? [laughs]* (Superman, 719–721)

While much of the humour was used as a coping mechanism to manage negative experiences, humour was also used by two of the participants as a way to demonstrate pride either in themselves and their development and actions, or in the actions of others. Nightcrawler reflected on his transition journey a number of times, and his use of humour could be seen as demonstrating his pride in his achievements and the distance he's travelled on his journey:

> *I have— I feel like I've educated them a lot. [laughs]* (Nightcrawler, 59–60)

> *Well, I always had short hair… "I've got shorter hair now! Like an actual boy's haircut that my dad didn't do!" Y'know? [laughs]* (Nightcrawler, 370–372)

Superman also uses humour to demonstrate pride in his achievements:

> *I need to do this on behalf of everyone else as well as me, so that makes me go "HEY! stop it" [laughs] … 'cause it's like— I'm holding the whole trans* community on my shoulders [laughs] … I feel powerful!* (Superman, 544–559)

As humour was mostly used in the discussions as a method of coping or managing difficult situations, this humour with regard to pride may also represent a sense of disbelief in their actually managing these achievements and reflecting on how far they'd come.

This was also demonstrated by both Superman and Nightcrawler in their use of humour to demonstrate their disbelief and their pride in the positive journeys and acceptance from others. For Nightcrawler, this reflected his views on how far his father had come on in terms of his understanding, from having "*very mixed feelings about trans* people anyway*" (Nightcrawler, 40–41) to advocating for Nightcrawler and referencing his support for him with others –:

> *...hearing my dad, on the phone, talking about me was great, 'cause it was always, "Yeah, my son, Nightcrawler ... who's a boy, by the way!" [laughs]* (Nightcrawler, 705–711)

– and for Superman, it was in his pride for his father and the support he received from him throughout his transition:

> *...my dad was probably the most supportive initially when I came out, which I thought was completely... a massive surprise. He came to all the Tavistock sessions with me, um... the biggest turnaround of the 21st century, that was! [laughs]* (Superman, 706–711)

Self-Advocacy

While discussing the support they received from school, two of the participants also spoke about being their own advocates for their rights and for accessing appropriate support. Superman discusses the actions he took to promote LGBT rights, and about the LGBT club he organised, and highlights his pride in his achievements and the independent nature of these:

> *I can guarantee it! No one else would have set up that Instagram page or... printed out those posters and... put them around school – no one else would have done it but me.* (Superman, 660–663)

However, while self-advocacy was seen as an empowering tool for the participants, it was often born out of a sense of necessity, and at times presented with feelings of

frustration and futility. Superman's account demonstrates his pride in his achievement, but also his feelings of isolation in his repetition of "*no one else*", which suggests the necessity of his self-advocation due to the perceived lack of support from others. This sense of futility was also relevant for Nightcrawler:

> *I went to an all-girls school, as I've mentioned many times already! [laughs] Erm… so, I thought to myself, "Right, I'm going— I'm going to correct someone on my pronouns, just one person and it will spread throughout the whole school!" [laughs nervously and loudly] So, it was easy as that! So someone said "she" about me, and I was like, "He". [hits palm of hand]* (Nightcrawler, 156–163)

While Nightcrawler is taking on the responsibility of advocating his own gender pronouns, his use of humour acknowledges his feelings of the naïvety and futility of him attempting this without support, highlighting that while transgender CYP may be willing and even eager to advocate their own rights, it is often felt to be something that they cannot accomplish without support.

Wanting to Support Others

Along with being advocates for themselves, a common narrative for the participants was the desire to facilitate positive change for other transgender and LGB young people. This in some ways mirrors the participants' reflections on the appreciation of having supportive and open LGBT staff in school, in that those with a shared understanding of the experiences they face are in the best position to advocate for change and identify potential support needed to facilitate that change.

For Nightcrawler, much of this related to his sense of identity and the role of gender within that. Nightcrawler often referred to himself as "*androgynous*", and explained his own difficulties in his transition with understanding himself and how he fit within the transgender label, so it follows that his desire to support others also reflected his own experiences of language and gender, and led to him supporting others to help them understand their own gender identity:

> *I tried to explain to people, "It's about your mentality, but you're not mentally unwell if you're transgender." [laughs] But you know, it really is about how you feel. I always say to people that wear clothes like I do, or*

> *wear make-up, "Right … when you stand there and say the words, 'I am a boy', does that feel normal to you? Yes? Then you're a boy." Y'know? … Or … "Do the words, 'I'm a girl' not feel right to you? 'No, not at all, I really don't feel like a girl.' Then you're probably not, man!"* (Nightcrawler, 573–584)

For Superman, however, his desire to facilitate change and to support others appeared to be born out of his experiences of previous barriers and lack of support in the past. He acknowledges –:

> *…if I'd been allowed to go to a society like that... I would've known I wasn't alone and that all these other people were, you know... in some way feeling the same as me.* (Superman, 608–611)

– and his discussion around the actions he has taken reflect this desire to stand up for others and create a safe and educative space for young people who may be experiencing the same level of barriers or lack of support as him:

> *I'm pretty good at kind of standing up for myself now and saying, "Hey, that's not right" – maybe because I'm now my own advocate for the trans* community?* (Superman, 536–539)

> *I will challenge my head of sixth form if she says, "I can't allow younger years kids to be in the society" because... they need it and... that young trans* person in year 9 needs it, you know? He does, because I was... I was that person struggling with their identity.* (Superman, 599–604)

> *…every time I put a poster up or... do something, like post on Instagram, I just feel so... empowered, 'cause I know I'm making a change.* (Superman, 612–614)

Summary of Findings

The Importance of Language was apparent throughout the participants' experiences, and permeated through each of the subsequent superordinate themes. Much of the participants' experiences of support – both in school and out – centred around others respecting and accepting the appropriate gendered language with regard to them, and also others being comfortable enough to correct others when this is not the case. The importance of language was also centred around the fact that, for many of the participants, it was one of the easiest and simplest ways to demonstrate respect for their

gender identity. The idea of *Individual Teacher Support* was also apparent throughout their experiences and narratives. The participants emphasised that, more often than not, to them it felt that support from school was coming from individual teachers who respected and accepted them, as opposed to the school as an institution. They discussed the importance of these relationships in terms of making them feel safe, and having an ally to support them against perceived injustices and barriers. The participants also stressed the importance of *Whole-School Approaches* in making the school more accessible and supportive as an institution, and *The Importance of Community* in identifying allies in and out of school, and role models for their own development and understanding. Finally, the participants all demonstrated that they were also their *Own Best Friend*, and highlighted the many strategies, thoughts and actions that enabled them to advocate for their own rights and manage any barriers as and when they faced them.

This chapter has presented the researcher's interpretive analysis of the participants' experiences. In the subsequent discussion chapter, the impact of these findings and their relation to previous literature and psychological theory will be discussed.

Discussion

Introduction

This research aimed to explore the positive school experiences of transgender CYP within the UK. Research within this area is sparse, and where present, has generally highlighted the challenges and difficulties faced. This research adopted a positive psychology approach to identify and then promote the positive and supportive experiences that transgender CYP are experiencing in schools, in order to provide a springboard for future discussion and action.

Three young people were interviewed about their positive experiences post-transition in school, and these interviews explored their own understanding and transition process, and the perceptions of support from the school and those around it. An IPA approach was adopted as it relies on a homogenous sample group, maintains an appropriate epistemological background, and, most importantly, is focused on revealing the experiences of individuals after a particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009).

This chapter will begin by identifying the challenges faced and limitations highlighted during the research process, so that the importance and impact of these on the research can be acknowledged before the findings are discussed further.

The chapter will then explore the findings with relation to current literature, legislation and psychological theory. Five superordinate themes emerged from the analysis of the data: *The Importance of Language*; *Individual Teacher Support*; *Whole-School Approaches*; *The Importance of Community*; and *My Own Best Friend*. Each of these will be presented and discussed in turn. Finally, the chapter will conclude by addressing the implications of the findings and how they may translate into recommendations and actions, both for the work of EPs and the work of schools and communities.

Challenges Faced During the Research

The greatest challenge in approaching this research was identifying and accessing the target population. As highlighted in the methodology section of this research, often the greatest challenge for anyone engaging in research with transgender participants is this identification and access process (Bettinger, 2010). Before the research process was

even started, therefore, it was important that an open and willing participant pool could be identified. Due to the potential difficulties around perceived safety when talking within the school environment and the possibility of introducing bias into the discussions, it was also felt to be important that participants were not recruited from and interviewed in their schools, adding another barrier to the research.

As such, the researcher was introduced to the LGBT youth group prior to commencing the research, in the capacity of a visitor and volunteer, in order to begin developing relationships and explore interest in the research question. While it was acknowledged that it was important to build meaningful relationships with the youth group members prior to embarking on the research journey (Adams et al., 2017; Jones, 2016), it is important to acknowledge the unconscious impact this would have had on the interpretation of the participants' narratives due to the relationship and knowledge that had developed during this process. This was also another reason why IPA was felt to be an appropriate methodological approach, as it allows – and is even based around – an acknowledgement of the researcher's own interpretation of the participants' experiences.

It must also be acknowledged that, being a minority group that was accessible and present within the community, it is possible that CYP who participated in the research, or those who chose not to, had previously been involved in different research projects and discussions with interested third parties (such as the LA and different charities), which may have influenced their decisions on whether to participate in the current research.

Working with a vulnerable population, it was also important to ensure that participants were safe during the interviews and had access to appropriate support should they need it. It was for this reason that all interviews took place when the youth group's emotional well-being advisor was available; however, this did limit the potential times for interviews to twice a month, when they were at the youth group, or a negotiated time outside of this.

This also leads on to the final challenge to the research, which was the timeframes involved within it. This was set not only by the boundaries of the research deadlines,

but also by the meeting hours of the youth group, the availability of the emotional well-being advisor and lack of guarantee that the CYP would be present at the youth group on the same dates and times the researcher was. It was for this reason that a separate interview time and location was arranged for two of the participants, but it also meant that some CYP who may have been interested in participating in the research were not able to.

Limitations of the Research

Some limitations of the research have already been discussed in the methodology chapter of this thesis, and in the above paragraphs on the challenges faced.

An initial limitation of the current research is the small sample size potentially reducing the generalisability of the findings. Due to the time constraints and difficulties accessing the research population highlighted above, the completed research involved three participants. Further, each of these participants were from a similar geographical and socio-economic background which, while improving the homogeneity of the sample, also potentially limits the generalisability of the research findings. While IPA is grounded in idiography and aims to understand the particular experiences of the individual participants (Smith et al., 2009), information has been provided throughout the write-up of the research to allow for a developed understanding of the local context and of the participants themselves in order to allow for the possible theoretical generalisability to the greater transgender community.

Another limitation of the current research is the participant recruitment process adopted. As highlighted above, identifying and engaging the target population within the timeframes of the research meant that purposive sampling and snowballing were the most efficient and appropriate sampling methods to use. However, this did mean that two of the three participants recruited for the research were recruited from this environment. As one of the aims of the youth group is to provide knowledge around rights and personal identity, it is possible that the participants recruited were more likely to be aware of and to actively engage in self-advocacy and the advocacy of others within their environments, which might have biased the findings of the research. This is something that must be recognised when considering the results of this research, and the further generalisability of the findings.

A final limitation of the research is the impact of the researcher within the interpretive process and the double hermeneutics involved. As previously discussed in the methodology chapter, part of the value of adopting a double-hermeneutical approach is the acknowledgement that the same phenomena can be viewed differently by both the participant and the researcher (Wagstaff et al., 2014). However, it must also be acknowledged that the researcher's own personal values and beliefs may have influenced the interpretation of the research, moving it away from the meaning originally implied by the participants. To recognise and address this, care has been taken by the researcher to be both transparent and reflexive during the interpretation and analysis process through the inclusion of illustrative extracts during the analysis process. Further evidence of the reflexive process was highlighted in the methodology section of this research.

With consideration to the above limitations and challenges, the findings from this research will now be discussed in relation to current literature, legislation and psychological theory.

The Importance of Language

It is perhaps not surprising that language was highlighted as one of the major themes to emerge from the participants' narratives. For each of the participants, their exploration and confirmation of their gender identity was through the use of language and pronouns, even when this was done accidentally by others. Superman, for instance, discussed how:

> *I didn't really find the words [laughs] until I was about thirteen and then, um, a year or two later and I just... came out and used the right words.* (Superman, 26–28)

This reflects additional research within the literature (e.g. Gagné, Tewksbury & McGaughey, 1997; Schimmel-Bristow et al., 2018) and theories around the stages of gender identity development (e.g. Devor, 2004; Lev, 2004; Pollock & Eyre, 2012), in that language appears to be a pre-requisite for self-identity and the initial coming-out process. Both Devor (2004) and Pollock and Eyre (2012) specifically mention communication and connections within the transgender community as a way of exploring language and self-identify, and while Lev (200) does not mention this

explicitly, they highlight the role of knowledge and language, and the later self-identification and articulation of identity. The work of Gagné et al. (1997), in particular, highlights the importance of this, with transgender and cross-dressing adults retrospectively emphasising the role of learning specific language and understanding that others have similar experiences as them during the process of coming to terms with their identity.

Having access to a language that disrupts gender categories and allows for the presentation of non-fluid and non-binary gender identities is also important (Elliot, 2009), and has been viewed as a source of power and a source of resistance for both transgender and gender-fluid young people in school (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018). Most importantly, and relating back to queer theory and social constructivism, having and using language to describe gender identity – and having this recognised and used by others – is vital in constructing a reality where gender identity can differ from the normative gender binary, and can act to legitimise non-cisgender gender identities (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010).

Appropriate language and pronoun use is often highlighted as an intrinsic step towards supporting transgender CYP, both in terms of advice and toolkits available to schools (e.g. Brighton & Hove City Council, 2013; Cannon & Best, 2015; Hills & Barrie, 2016) and in terms of advice given to other professionals, such as healthcare settings, psychologists and social workers (e.g. Burnes et al., 2010; BPS, 2012; GIRES, 2008; O'Connell & Fricke, 2018). Its importance to the current participants is a reflection of previous research, where being able to use their preferred name and having that name and their transitioned gender recorded officially in school was highlighted as one of the top ten recommendations made by transgender CYP to colleges and healthcare providers (Turban, Ferraiolo, Martin & Olezeski, 2017).

However, as highlighted in the literature review, this may not always be happening in schools. In America, over half of the transgender CYP surveyed by Kosciw et al. (2016) and Kosciw et al. (2018) reported that they were unable to use their transitioned name or pronouns in school, and in the UK Formby (2014) highlights that many of the young people in their study had their pronouns misused, either accidentally or on purpose, and that schools did nothing to address this. Each of the participants in the current research

highlighted instances where peers, family members or school staff persisted in using inappropriate pronouns or their "deadnames". While there was a level of acceptance for honest mistakes across each of the participants, this was also felt in some cases to deliberately deny their identities.

However, each of the participants was also able to highlight members of staff who did recognise their transition names and pronouns and used these persistently in school, and also supported the CYP in correcting others when they were deadnamed or misgendered. Similar findings were reported by McCormack (2012), whose transgender participant highlighted the positive response from school in using their transitioned name and pronouns, and their appreciation of this. For the participants in the current study and McCormack's participant, this enabled them to feel secure in their identities, and secure in expressing these in school.

Going through the social transition process associated with gender transition (i.e. changing names, pronouns and appearance) has been associated with better mental health in transgender CYP (Steensma, McGuire, Kreukels, Beekman & Cohen-Kettenis, 2013). This is perhaps due to the self-affirming effect it can have and the knowledge of community and normality that comes with the development of these identities, as highlighted by Gagné et al. (1997) and Schimmel-Bristow et al. (2018). Further, Russell, Pollitt, Li & Grossman, (2018) explored the effect of having one's chosen name accepted and adopted in different settings, and found that having this used by parents, school peers, teachers or the school each predicted a decrease in depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviour in transgender CYP. Levels of these thoughts and behaviours were then at their lowest if this usage was adopted by all four environments, highlighting the positive impact appropriate language adoption can have on a CYP's well-being.

The current study adds to this knowledge by further identifying the positive and affirmative impact that adopting gender-appropriate language, including names and pronouns, can have for a transgender CYP, but also highlighting the necessity of this being included as part of a whole-school approach.

Individual Teacher Support

Relationships with Individual Teachers

One of largest themes that emerged from the current research was the emphasis placed on the support provided by specific teachers in school. Each of the participants took pride in naming and highlighting their relationships with individual teachers and the support that they had given them. Indeed, just the presence of a trusted adult in school, as well as the ability to talk to them about gender and sexuality, have been associated with positive self-esteem for both LGB and transgender students (Dessel, Kulick, Wernick & Sullivan, 2017).

Further, positive relationships with school staff has been suggested to act as a protective factor for LGBT CYP (Saewyc et al., 2009). In particular, having a supportive adult in school has been associated with lower rates of absenteeism and drop-outs (Greytak et al., 2013; Kosciw et al., 2018; Sausa, 2005), increased feelings of safety in school (Kosciw et al., 2018; McGuire et al., 2010), greater academic achievement (Kosciw et al., 2018) and a more positive overall academic experience (Goodrich, 2012).

Focusing on transgender students, Ullman (2017) explored the impact of teacher positivity – measured on a three-point scale exploring a teacher's likelihood of positively affirming gender and sexuality identities and for intervening when these were challenged in school – on a pupil's perceived sense of school connection. This suggests that feelings of teacher positivity significantly predicted feelings of school connectiveness; however, it was also highlighted that transgender pupils were twice as likely to report lower levels of teacher positivity than high levels. This suggests that, while these relationships are considered vital by pupils, many transgender students still feel let down by staff.

Indeed, while able to reflect on positive experiences with staff, each of the participants in the current study also highlighted teachers who actively dismissed their gender identity, or, for what the participants portrayed as uncertainty, did not intervene when their gender identities were being oppressed. This reflects findings in the literature where school staff feel ill-equipped to manage incidents involving transgender CYP, or feel unsure of how they can support them in school (e.g. Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007;

Kennedy & Hellen; 2010; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2015; Riley et al., 2013). Interviewing teachers about their experiences working with transgender CYP, Payne and Smith (2014) found that not only did teachers feel they lacked the necessary information or training to effectively support transgender students in school, when they did have this information, they feared not being able to create a safe or supportive environment.

Teachers are able to have a huge impact on the school experiences of transgender students, be it positive or negative. The current research highlights the need for teachers to feel supported in challenging transphobic and homophobic bullying and discrimination, as well as the need for further education and training on how to best support transgender students in school.

Staff Going Against the School

Each of the participants in the current study highlighted times where they felt individual staff members had supported them in challenging greater issues in school, when these arose from other staff members or the school as a whole. This is especially important to note, as previous research has highlighted staff members failing to stop verbal, physical and/or emotional attacks when they occurred, and also at times engaging in it (e.g. Kosciw et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2018; Takács, 2006; Taylor et al., 2011).

No research was identified that specifically explored CYPs' views of teachers challenging other staff members regarding their gender identity, and very little regarding teachers' views on their feelings of comfort or safety doing this. Meyer (2008) interviewed six teachers about their responses to gendered harassment (including harassment of transgender pupils), of whom four reported having heard negative remarks from other teachers, but feeling a lack of support from the school to raise this and manage it effectively.

Further, in the current research, Jubilee spoke of her school not taking harassment around gender identity as seriously as harassment around issues such as religion and ethnicity. Meyer (2008) highlights a similar theme in the opinions of teachers, and feelings of frustration around this, which ultimately leads to a teacher having to actively

fight for an appropriate response. While this reflects the action of a student, it is interesting to reflect that the perceived barrier from the teacher was not the student, but the lack of response in other staff members:

> *I had one kid call another a faggot. I hauled him to the principal; I asked for a suspension, the principal didn't want to suspend him. It was one of the vice-principals and they saw that I was about to blow my top so they suspended the kid. But I really had to push for it.* (Meyer, 2008, p. 562)

Meyer (2008) concludes that the majority of participants in their study highlighted a desire or commitment to challenge gendered harassment in the school, but felt limited due to a lack of support in the school itself. Going forward, it would be important to support teachers in feeling confident in challenging gendered harassment in school, both from pupils and from peers. As this is a little-addressed area, additional research exploring the perceived barriers of addressing staff-led discrimination and harassment in the UK may be beneficial for identifying ways of supporting staff members to do this.

LGBT Staff

Two of the participants in the current study highlighted the supportive impact of having an LGBT member of staff, as they felt that this staff member had shared their experiences and therefore both wanted to help and had ideas of how to. Indeed, Muñoz-Plaza, Quinn and Rounds (2002) also highlight that LGBT peers and adults in a school environment are often able to provide emotional support, information and appraisal to LGBT CYP. Kosciw et al. (2018) highlight that 43.7% of surveyed students could highlight at least one LGBTQ teacher in their school, which they suggest – and as highlighted by the current findings – may be an area of support for these students. However, due to the large-scale nature of the Kosciw et al. study, qualitative findings relating to the impact of the relationships between LGBT staff members and pupils were not explored.

Nevertheless, research suggests that many teachers may not feel comfortable coming out in the classroom. While for some this may be personal preference, for others it is a fear of repercussions. For example, participants in a study on the perceptions of gay and

lesbian teachers in Ireland by Neary (2013) highlights fears of being "*the gay teacher who the gay kids go to*" (p. 589) or recruiting for the gay community.

In the UK, this has been a particular concern. In 1988, the Government passed Section 28 of the Local Government Act (1988), which prevented LAs (and therefore schools) from discussing or promoting LGBT families and lifestyles. This resulted in feelings of fear and uncertainty in LGBT educators (e.g. Clarke, 1996; Kelly, 1992; Sullivan, 1993). While Section 28 was repealed in 2003, feelings of unease and fear persisted for years afterwards (e.g. Greenland & Nunney, 2008). Indeed, even 15 years after the repeal of Section 28, Lee (2019) highlights that many teachers who were teaching during the censorship are still less likely to be open in the classroom and more likely to see their gender/sexual identity and teaching role as incompatible than teachers who qualified after the repeal.

As Edwards, Brown and Smith (2016) state, however, if LGBT teachers are having to self-censor and hide, or even deny, their sexualities and gender identities, the concept of hetero- and cisnormativity are the only identities represented to students. What mattered to the current participants was that there was a figure of authority in the school who had experience of what they were going through and could therefore empathise and support them in overcoming their boundaries through a shared sense of experiential knowledge. While no students highlighted any transgender staff, the presence of LGB staff was enough to facilitate hope. Indeed, with reference to transgender staff, there is very little research available. Harris and Jones (2017) discuss the case of one trans* male-identifying teacher in an Australian school, and highlight that even in LGBT "safe" schools there is uncertainty around transgender staff and support, and transgender teachers report feeling a greater level of discrimination from other staff members than from students (Harris & Jones, 2014). As the participants in the current research highlighted the importance of having a shared sense of experience with LGB members of staff, going forward it will be important that, for transgender and LGB teachers alike, should they wish to, schools be a safe space for them to express their sexuality and their gender identity so that they are able to act as resource and support network for LGB and transgender CYP in the future.

Whole-School Approaches

School Clubs

Each of the current participants discussed the impact of having an LGBT-inclusive club or society as a means of advocating for trans* rights or teaching others language and tolerance. Much of the research in this area comes from America, where Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) groups are more common. Research does suggest, however, that the availability of LGBTQ+-inclusive groups and societies in schools have also been found to protect against absenteeism (Greytak et al., 2013), as well as improving self-advocacy skills (Singh, 2013) and the overall school climate (McGuire et al., 2010; Singh et al., 2013). GSAs are felt to be particularly beneficial for transgender students – more so than LGB students (Greytak, Kosciw & Boesen, 2013). Singh (2013), in particular, discusses the role of GSAs in allowing transgender CYP to explore their gender identity and eventual transition in school, and Kosciw et al. (2018) report that transgender CYP with access to a GSA are less likely to feel unsafe regarding their gender expression, and will hear less anti-LGBT language and go through less severe victimisation.

As highlighted by Superman in the current research, the presence of an LGBT-inclusive club can also be empowering for the individuals involved. Jones and Hillier (2013) and Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam and Laub (2009) highlight the role GSAs can have in empowering LGBT CYP with regard to their knowledge of their rights and resources and how to use them, their own sense of self and agency and their relationship with other group members.

For Superman, this was also a way of identifying a supportive adult in school who wanted to support and advocate for younger LGBT students as well. This echoes findings by Kosciw et al. (2018) where LGBT CYP whose schools had a GSA were more likely to be able to identify a supportive member of staff should they need to.

However, it is important that these societies and clubs are properly managed and resourced. Both Superman and Jubilee discussed the potential benefit the clubs in their school could have, but felt that they were not achieving this due to differing levels of support from the school and the perceived goals of the group. The current research

highlights the importance and significance these clubs and societies can have for transgender CYP, and it will be important that these groups continue to be supported in school, and resources made available to encourage the development of community relationships and advocacy and empowerment skills for the CYP within them.

Gendered Activities and Provisions

While Nightcrawler spoke of the positive steps taken at his school to enable him to use appropriate facilities, both Superman and Jubilee struggled. This echoes similar findings across the literature where access to gendered toilets and changing rooms continues to be a barrier for many transgender CYP (e.g. Jones et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2018; Sausa, 2005), and is highlighted by Wernick, Kulick and Chin (2017) who report that transgender CYP feel unsafe using school bathrooms, and this then impacts on their self-esteem and academic achievement.

Access to gender appropriate toilets is highlighted as "*the most sensitive of all the issues*" (Lancashire County Council, 2013, p. 9) when relating to supporting transgender students in school. There is an increasingly large media presence around transgender CYPs' access to appropriate school bathrooms and the introduction of gender-neutral toilets (Herald Scotland Online, 2018; Neale, 2018; Thomas, 2018), and while the EA 2010 highlights that schools cannot discriminate against transgender CYP in terms of access to provisions, there are no legal guidelines on what provisions schools must provide.

Each of the participants commented on being offered access to disabled or accessible facilities so that they did not have to use the gendered bathroom of their biological sex. However, both Jubilee and Superman reported that using disabled toilets was inappropriate and damaging to their self-esteem because of "*all of the connotations around that*" (Superman, 444–445), highlighting that being transgender is not a disability. This was also echoed in reports in Jones et al.'s (2016) study into the experiences of gender diverse students in Australia, where one participant reported having to use the disabled toilets and feeling frustrated by this, and another shared that, as a result of there being no appropriate toilet provisions for them, they "*have to avoid going to the loo at school (which SUCKS)*" (p. 164). While Superman and Jubilee felt

their schools were trying to support them by giving them access to the disabled bathrooms, neither felt that it was appropriate.

Instead, each of the participants highlighted the need for gender-neutral toilets, or access to appropriate-gendered toilets. For Nightcrawler, this was access to the staff toilets, and for Jubilee this was access to the female student toilets after advocating for this with a number of staff members. A number of LAs recommend that CYP be offered access to bathroom and changing facilities that reflect their gender identity if the CYP feel comfortable doing so (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2013; Cannon & Best, 2015; Lancashire County Council, 2013), and schools should discuss the preference of the CYP going forward.

Whole-School Training

In the current study, two participants spoke about whole-school training and the impact this had on their relationship with staff members or the perception of others. However, all three participants highlighted the need for more education around transgender issues as being the most important thing schools can do.

The idea of needing further education around transgender issues in school is echoed across the literature in conversations with transgender CYP, their families, teachers and professionals (e.g. Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017; Bowskill, 2017; Riley et al., 2013), and this becomes especially important within the UK following the announcement that, from 2020, all primary schools will be required to teach about different families (including LGBT families) as part of Relationships Education, and all secondary schools will have to teach about sexual orientation and gender identity as part of Sex Education in a manner which is "*fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson*" (DfE, 2019, p. 15).

It has been suggested that school staff members "*are increasingly receptive to discussion of LGBT issues, particularly when portrayed in a manner that is respectful and open*" (Kitchen & Bellini, 2012, p. 222), and, as highlighted above, many school staff members want to learn more about LGBT issues in order to better address these in the classroom (e.g. Meyer, 2008). Some projects already exist to help classrooms

become more gender aware, such as the No Outsiders project, which aims to map the concept of gender identity onto the curriculum (DePalma & Jennett, 2010), and the use of visiting teachers to discuss gender norms in the classroom through stories (Ryan, Patraw & Bednar, 2013). Indeed, Case and Meier (2014) highlight the positive impact of inviting transgender role models and allies into schools to share their experiences as a way of increasing the effectiveness of the training that schools receive. Further, it has been suggested that working with schools who have already supported an individual through their transition can be an effective way for other schools to develop their own strategies and for staff to engage with these strategies, as they are seen as coming from someone who understands the school system already (Payne & Smith, 2011).

The Importance of Community

The Wider Trans* Community

As highlighted above, inviting transgender role models to speak with the school can be a useful way to help schools develop their own policies and support strategies (Case & Meier, 2014). However, the importance of role models and the wider trans* community is also vitally important for transgender CYP as well. Indeed, both prior awareness and prior engagement with other transgender people has been suggested to be related to less fearfulness, less suicidality and more comfort in expressing their self-identity in transgender CYP (Testa, Jimenez & Rankin, 2004). Each of the participants in the current research discussed the importance to them of either having someone they knew or someone visible in the media that they could learn from or share experiences with.

For two of the participants, their first role models or known transgender others were online. Bird, Kuhns and Garofalo (2012) found that for many LGBT CYP, access to media-based role models is much more common than knowing role models, and it has been argued that the internet is possibly the most crucial resource for transgender CYP overall (Heinz, 2012). Despite also highlighting that many transgender characters in offline and online media are negatively portrayed, transgender CYP highlight that these individuals offer information around the transition process and a sense of community (McInroy & Craig, 2015).

Many of Jubilee's role models were found on YouTube, which she said enabled her to learn about the transition process from those who had already gone through it and could

offer their resources and advice. This appeared as a common theme in the literature, with one of McInroy and Craig's (2015) participants highlighting:

> *I'd just go online [to] YouTube ... they'd have videos of their whole [transition] process ... So that was really helpful to me ... It gives you hope.* (p. 613)

However, inaccessible role models, such as those in the media, have been suggested to not be sufficient in protecting LGBT CYP against psychological distress, and may even increase this (Bird et al., 2012). Superman highlights the impact on going through the transition process at the same time as another student and the support this provided him, as well as the perceived impact it had on the support provided by the school. This may also reflect the role of student groups and societies and the support they can provide with regard to information on the transition process (Singh, 2013). Grossman and D'Augelli (2004) hypothesise that access to known role models can help LGBT youth view their identities as unique and positive characteristics, and access to a transgender peer has been suggested to provide "*important, unprecedented validation and affirmation*" (Graham et al., 2004, p. 105), improve engagement and academic experience (Goodrich, 2012), and support the facilitation of self-recognition in terms of gender identity and assistance in the transition process (Pinto, Melendez & Spector, 2008).

Supportive Friends

Having supportive peers has been suggested to be a protective factor for overall mental health (Pusch, 2005) and in helping to improve positive sense of self (Singh, 2013). Supportive peers are also suggested to be a protective factor against peer victimisation at school (Cuadros & Berger, 2016), and in supporting transgender CYP in developing their self-advocacy skills in school and higher education (Singh, Meng & Hansen, 2013). For each of the current participants, friends were able to support them in their challenging others, in developing a feeling of normality and acceptance in their gender identities.

Similar to McCormack's (2012) exploration into the positive sixth-form experiences of a transgender student, two participants in the current research also highlighted the loss of friendships as part of their transition. However, as Jubilee highlighted, she was able

to re-pick her friends, which made the ones who supported her particularly important. As discussed in the literature review chapter, peers are said to be one of the most common instigators of negative comments and actions against transgender students, so the importance of finding and working with supportive peers is particularly important to provide a sense of social community and respect in school. In particular, friendships with cisgender peers have been suggested to provide transgender CYP with a sense of normality, to manage their emotions and "pass" in their transitioned gender (Galupo et al., 2014). The latter point was especially important for Nightcrawler, who discussed the role his friendships had in maintaining gender norms and stereotypes.

However, Galupo et al. (2014) also highlight some of the barriers in having cisgender friends, including a lack of awareness of issues of gender and sex, language and the transition experience, as well as some difficulties around discussing these things for the transgender CYP themselves. This again reinforces the importance of education as a holistic support mechanism, as with inclusive education around gender identity, it may be hypothesised that some of the barriers raised in friendships by Galupo et al. (2014) may be overcome, as well as a reduction in overall harassment from peers (Greytak et al., 2013; Horn & Romeo, 2010).

Supportive Family

In his narrative, Superman raised that he "*find[s] it strange … that family and school can be so … integrated*" (789–791). For each of the participants, family had a pivotal role in their narratives, whether this was from the – often surprising – support they provided, or whether it was raising concerns around transitioning at home. Kuvalanka, Weiner and Mahan (2014) discuss how parents can become advocates for their transgender child's rights, similarly to the role in which Nightcrawler viewed his father, and in their systematic review, Johns et al. (2018) highlight the role parental support and acceptance of transgender identity can have on increasing self-esteem, safer sexual practices, life satisfaction and overall positive mental well-being. Additionally, family support has the potential to promote social inclusion at a greater community level (Drescher & Byne, 2012).

However, similarly to Jubilee, Muñoz-Plaza et al. (2002) highlight that most CYP in their US-based study came out to friends/school before family, and many did not transition at home until after finishing high school. For the current participants, this was due to the fear of non-acceptance by family members. Research suggests that transgender CYP who are not accepted at home are more likely to want to leave the family home, with a link also between wanting to leave home and homelessness (Seibel et al., 2018) and facing physical and emotional abuse at home (Grossman, D'Augelli, Howell & Hubbard, 2005).

In the current study, Nightcrawler reflects that his mother initially "*thought she was mourning the loss of a daughter*" (65–66). This idea of loss and "ambiguous loss", which Boss (1999) describes as any loss which is incomplete or uncertain, is prevalent in literature around the family of transgender CYP (e.g. Coolhart, Ritenour & Grodzinski, 2018; Coolhart & Shipman, 2017; Solomon, 2012; Wahlig, 2015). Speaking with both parents and transgender CYP, Riley, Sitharthan, Clemson & Diamond (2011) found that, for the majority of parents, the greatest need they felt related to identifying correct information and obtaining professional support, parenting strategies and peer support.

Understanding the importance of family acceptance and support on transgender CYPs' well-being, Yavuz (2016) highlights a number of ways in which families can advocate for their child's emotional and physical safety, and projects such as the Family Acceptance Project (Ryan, 2009) work with families to support and rebuild family relationships. Further, schools have been highlighted as a source of information for parents and for transgender CYP seeking to disclose their gender identity at home (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017).

My Own Best Friend

Humour as a Support Strategy

While not mentioned explicitly by any of the participants, humour appeared to represent a key coping strategy for each of the participants. More often than not, this appeared to take the form of making light of their negative situations in order to cope with the impact it may otherwise have had. Humour has been suggested as a way of dealing with adversity, as it allows the transformation of serious and unpredictable life circumstances

into less serious and more controlled ideas, which have the effect of reducing their psychological impact (Martin, 2007). Indeed, adolescents who self-report a greater sense of humour are more likely to report lower levels of stress and anxiety and employ more positive coping strategies than adolescents who self-report low levels of humour (Abel, 2002).

Within the LGB population, self-directed humour has been suggested to be a means of demonstrating positive self-expression, cultural critique and solidarity (Bing and Heller, 2003), challenging closed mindsets (Bing, 2004) and as a means of coping with difficult situations (Christman 2012). Further, using a questionnaire specifically designed for the LGBT population, Willard (2010) surveyed 200 LGBT adults, of whom 12.5% identified as transgender, to self-report on their use of humour as a mechanism for coping with homophobia and heterosexism. Willard reported that over half the participants said that they used humour as a coping mechanism for homophobia and/or heterosexism either sometimes or very often, and over three quarters (77.5%) reported that they felt humour was a useful coping strategy. Around three quarters of the participants also reported that they felt other LGBT individuals used humour as a coping mechanism against homophobia and/or heterosexism either sometimes or very often. While some comparison analyses are reported by Willard, there is not a clear record of the difference in views between cis- and transgender participants, so it is uncertain how these reports specifically reflect the views of the transgender participants. However, following their quantitative analysis, Willard analysed a sample of the responses in terms of the specific usage of humour and reported that, similar to the results of the current study, the most common use of humour was to diffuse negative situations and experiences.

Further, Craig, Austin and Huang (2018) used the AFFIRM cognitive behavioural intervention, which had been previously designed by Austin and Craig (2015b) to improve coping and reduce mental health distress in individuals, to explore the coping mechanisms of LGBTQ youth. They worked with 30 CYP, of whom two identified as transgender, six as non-binary and one as two-spirit, to explore coping mechanisms both before and after intervention. Prior to intervention, while disengagement coping – which Craig et al. (2018, p. 23) define as "*a passive or hazardous form of coping that often precipitates internalized and externalized problems*" – was the most common form of

coping for young people, humour was highlighted as the second most common coping mechanism, highlighting its value to LGBT CYP. Post-intervention, while the use of positive engagement coping increased, so did the use of humour, and it remained one of the most frequently used support strategies for the participants.

No research was identified as specifically relating to the use of humour as a coping strategy in transgender youth; however, one study exploring the use of Facebook groups within the transgender community as a support strategy did highlight the role of humour as a coping mechanism within this (McGuinness, 2018). As the relationship between humour and coping has long been identified (Martin, 2007), and it has been suggested that transgender CYP face more stressors and victimisation in school than LGB peers (e.g. Kosciw et al., 2018), it will be important to continue working with transgender youth to highlight their strengths and individual coping mechanisms further.

Reflecting on the current research, however, as Willard (2010) highlighted that humour was most frequently reported to be used in an LGBT-safe environment, it may be that due to the relationship developed between the researcher and the participants, this enabled a greater presentation of humour management strategies in the participants than may otherwise have been displayed. This may also be reflected in the fact that the researcher themself was open about their LGBT identity with the participants, theoretically creating a shared sense of experience and trust that was reported by the participants as being so useful and supportive in LGBT teachers. That said, however, the role in which this method of coping has been described within the transgender (and LGBT as a whole) community suggests that "seeing the lighter side" is a successful and vital coping resource that many transgender CYP rely on. Due to this reason, humour may also be used by LGBT staff and others to support transgender CYP in coping with negative events and managing their own feelings of negative self-worth, due to the shared experiences that were related by the participants as being important. However, it must be stressed that this method of support is especially relevant to the self (and potentially LGBT others) and may not transfer to offers of support from others, and Willard highlights that non-LGBT individuals especially should "*exercise caution when using humour in order to avoid hurting others*" (p. 2).

Self-Advocacy

In a review of the resiliency factors theorised to be protective for transgender youth, Johns et al. (2018) highlight that self-advocacy skills are used by transgender CYP to stand up for themselves when facing harassment, and to actively search for and identify different sources of information and support. Transgender CYP are reported to engage in more activism with regard to gender and sexual difference than cisgender LGB peers (Jones & Hillier, 2013), and Jones et al. (2016) highlight that over 90% of their participants had engaged in at least one act of activism in order to support their rights and identity – from liking and commenting on pages on Facebook to standing up for their rights and correcting others to speaking at rallies for transgender rights.

Singh (2013) also explored the resilience of transgender CYP, and identified a theme around self-advocacy in education systems where transgender CYP have to confront schools to advocate for their rights. These findings also reflect the role of self-advocacy within the current research. Two of the current research's participants spoke of times where they felt they had to fight against something they felt the school was doing to deny or dismiss their gender identity, such as access to gendered provisions, participation in gendered sports and language use and names.

The idea of self-advocacy regarding names was particularly focused in two of the participants in the current research, with Nightcrawler joking about how determined he was to correct someone who misgendered him after tolerating it for a period of time. Similar to the aims of the self-advocacy for the current participants, Singh et al. (2013) found that, for their participants, a major area of self-advocacy related to the use of language and pronouns across school, with participants reporting going out of their way to correct others and seek ways to change their name/pronouns officially. This again highlights the importance of this area of gender recognition to transgender CYP.

Beck (2017) discusses the role schools (and in particular school counsellors) can play in supporting LGBT CYP to develop their self-advocacy. Using a strengths-based approach, Beck discusses how counsellors can work with LGBT CYP to explore their identity in a safe and confidential environment, explore episodes when they have demonstrated strengths or when things have gone well, use empowered-based questions to help identify allies and external support and use resources such as books and role-

play to highlight the strengths of others and possibilities the CYP may have going forward. While Beck's work explored the role of school counsellors, in a British system, where counsellors are less common, it may be useful to explore how staff in schools can adopt these roles and support transgender students in becoming their own advocates.

Wanting to Support Others

In the Jones et al. (2016, p. 166) study highlighted above, it is discussed that most participants' engagement in these forms of activism and self-advocacy was "*tied to the need for improvements in society for gender diverse and transgender people*". Both of the participants in the current research engaged in self-advocacy also discussed engaging in advocacy and activism not only to improve their own situations, but also to make things better for others. This was especially relevant for Superman, who reported feeling "*powerful*" (Superman, 555–559) in his role as an advocate for the transgender community, highlighting that he needs to engage in these activities because others don't understand what it is like to be transgender in school, whereas he does, and he wants to make things easier for future generations. This echoes similar reports from the literature. Brill and Pepper (2008) highlight the desire for change for one transgender young person with:

> *"If I could change one thing, it would be that all people were required to understand that there are more than two categories of gender. That way other kids won't have to suffer like I did".* (Brill & Pepper, 2008, p. 67)

This reflects findings reported by Formby (2014), in that transgender youth expected bullying to occur at school. As such, it may be hypothesised that this engagement in advocacy for others is also tied to a sense of resignation to the negatives for the self. As highlighted above, transgender CYP are reported to engage in more acts of activism related to gender and sexual difference than cisgender LGB peers (Jones & Hillier, 2013), which Jones and Hillier (2013) hypothesise may be attributed to the higher levels of discrimination they face. Both Nightcrawler and Superman discuss the role they have in supporting others immediately after discrimination they faced themselves, and their desire to support others, therefore, may be rooted in a desire to open the transgender community in the school to new others and to support these new others through challenges based on the participants' own learning experiences. In their study into

resilience factors for transgender youth, Asakura (2017, p. 531) highlights that "*the involvement with activism offered these youth meaningful opportunities to make sense of their own pain and seek justice not only for themselves but also for others with a shared experience*". Going forward, it will be important to continue developing the self-advocacy skills of transgender CYP at school in order to them to feel empowered, like Superman, in supporting others and improving the school situation for other community members.

Conclusions

This research aimed to explore the positive school experiences of transgender CYP. In doing so, it has highlighted a number of key areas where CYP feel particularly supported, but also recommends areas where support could be improved. This research was influenced, in part, by the mainly negative statistics around the experiences of transgender students in schools across the world. The aim of the current research was never to downplay these experiences, or to dismiss them, but rather to highlight where actions have been taken which were viewed as supportive and encouraging, and appreciated by the participants involved. While an ecosystemic approach was not formally adopted, it is important to highlight that participants reported the need for systems to work together, including their own strengths, the school and those around them, including family and peers. Going forward, it will be important that any support is considered within an ecosystemic model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to ensure that all relevant parties are able to provide the same level of support and care for transgender CYP.

As reflected in the literature, language was one of the key themes identified by the participants. Being able to change their names and pronouns was central to the participants' happiness in school, and whether or not these were respected played a pivotal role in whether or not they felt supported and respected in school. When schools not only used the students' preferred names and pronouns, but also corrected others when they were misgendered or deadnamed, this demonstrated, the participants said, that they were accepted in the school in their transitioned gender. However, while language was felt to be an immediate sign of respect, it was also suggested that this needed to part of a more holistic approach to ensure that it was not seen as a lip-service.

Throughout the research, participants named individual teachers who had supported them and the actions they had taken. These relationships, and the actions individual teachers took, were valued, as it was taken as a sign of respect and a desire to facilitate change, and it was also felt in many cases that staff would support participants in challenging barriers put in place by the school system. Similarly, the authoritative role of staff members was seen as a protective factor against peer harassment. For each of the teachers, what often set them apart was the idea of education and a knowledge of transgender identities. This was especially relevant for LGBT staff, who were seen as

being a source of information and support due to perceived relatable experiences. This demonstrated an area of improvement: for staff to be trained in transgender issues in order to be better able to address issues when they arose.

The topic of education and staff support also fed into the theme of whole-school support. Participants flagged the availability of LGBT-inclusive clubs and societies as an invaluable avenue of support, as they not only identified supportive staff members, but also opened up the LGBT and ally community within the school and provided information, rights and legislation and opportunities for further advocacy to the participants. However, these groups were felt not to be effective unless they were part of a wider educative programme within the school. Additionally, participants identified areas where schools had attempted to address gendered activities and provisions, but often these were felt to be inadequate. In particular, participants raised that access to disabled bathrooms was often felt to be inappropriate as it suggested to others that their gender identity was a disability, and that there was something wrong with them. Each participant again highlighted the importance of education in schools for better understanding the needs of transgender CYP, and other ways in which they could be supported.

Outside of school, participants highlighted the support they received from family, friends and the transgender community, and the impact this had on their education and their transition. Access to transgender others was an area of particular import to the participants, and this is something that may be beneficial for schools as well, in order to increase education around transgender issues and needs. Both peers and family members were also seen as pivotal in the support received in school, as they were viewed as allies and advocates that could stand up for the participant as and when required. However, it was felt that a lack of education limited the impact both of these support avenues could have.

Finally, each of the participants raised the notion of using their own skills to support themselves. Humour was often used as a coping mechanism, often downplaying negatives or highlighting particularly surprising avenues of support. Participants also reported that they often felt that they needed to fight for their rights and support themselves. While this was seen as empowering, it also strengthened a sense of isolation in school, and demonstrated the need for staff members to support and advocate for

them. Additionally, much of this self-advocacy was based around a desire to improve things in the school for future generations of transgender students, again highlighting the importance of community and holistic school support.

Unique Contribution

The negative school experiences of transgender CYP and the effects these can have on their physical, emotional and social well-being is an area of increasing psychological research and exploration. However, until now, no research has exclusively explored the positive school experiences of transgender CYP. This research has highlighted some of the areas of support discussed by transgender CYP as being most effective and most important to them – in particular the importance of consistent, appropriate language, whole-school support systems, community-support systems and individual resilience factors. Additionally, it has demonstrated the role individual teachers play – doing their own research and learning to better advocate for transgender students and helping transgender CYP to manage harassment and doubt from peers and school staff alike. LGBT teachers were felt to be particularly supportive due to the perceived shared experiences of growing up LGBT. It is hoped that this will provide educators and those working with transgender CYP support in challenging the barriers faced by transgender CYP in a supportive and effective way.

Suggestions for Further Research

The current research has demonstrated that transgender CYP are both able and eager to reflect on their experiences and highlight areas which are going well, areas which are not going well and recommendations for future developments. It will be important for future research to continue working with transgender CYP to sustain the positive narrative around support in schools in order to encourage more positive action and advocacy for transgender students.

Additionally, as this research has highlighted the pivotal role individual teacher relationships can have on the support felt by transgender CYP, future research should continue exploring this, and work with both students and teachers to identify perceived motivational factors and barriers when advocating for transgender students in schools. It will be especially important going forward to explore teachers' perceived barriers towards challenging transphobic harassment from their peers, as well as from students.

Implications for Schools

As highlighted above, transgender CYP are eager to have their voices heard. As such, no matter what recommendations are made here, it is important that CYP are included in any and all discussions about appropriate support strategies to ensure that they are, indeed, appropriate and will make a significant difference to the CYP's overall school experience.

While a number of themes emerged from the data, it is important not to view these as separate entities, but rather individual aspects of a whole-school approach to support. While much of the previous literature, as well as the current findings, highlight that transgender CYP are victim to both verbal and physical harassment, it is important that schools' approaches to support are not centred only on CYP safety (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017; Sadowski, 2017). Instead, a holistic ecosystemic approach is needed to identify the different needs faced by transgender pupils, and to identify strategies to support them in overcoming these. Bartholomaeus and Riggs (2017) identify a number of areas where such changes may occur, including school philosophy, rules, policies, record-keeping, training, teaching and community support. Importantly, participants in the current study demonstrated the individualistic approach that schools can take when supporting pupils, but highlight that, while this may work for them, it does not create lasting support in the school.

A starting point, therefore, may be a specific transgender policy. Kosciw et al. (2018) highlight that transgender students in a school with a policy around gender identity report to be the least likely to face gender-related discrimination – including peer and staff victimisation, and issues around bathroom and changing room use. Considering the use of names and gendered language, Kosciw et al. highlight that in schools with a policy, the prevalence of this form of harassment reduces by half. As previously mentioned, a number of LAs offer transgender policy guidance to schools (e.g. Brighton & Hove City Council, 2013; Cannon & Best, 2015; Lancashire County Council, 2013), and, going forward, it is important for schools and LAs to continue working together to develop best practice guidelines for developing and implementing lasting support strategies in schools for transgender CYP. Support can also be accessed from other

schools to increase the likelihood of these support strategies being effective (Payne & Smith, 2011).

It will also be important for schools to continue working at a community level, involving parents and community members in discussions and planning. Going forward, this will be especially important as, with the reforms around the inclusion of LGBT identity and relationships in Sex and Relationship Education coming into force in 2020 (DfE, 2019), it is possible that some schools will seek advice on how to explore and include this, and, as the media is already demonstrating, it is possible that there may be some backlash from the wider community (e.g. Glass, 2018; Parveen, 2019a; Parveen, 2019b).

While a number of key themes emerged from the data, highlighting a number of positive practices in schools which make transgender CYP feel accepted and supported, a topic that arose was the need for further education around transgender issues. Indeed, this lack of knowledge and understanding from professionals is felt to be leading to negative outcomes for transgender CYP (Case, Stewart & Tittsworth, 2009). While this could, and should, come from transgender adults and allies – reflecting the value placed on LGBT staff and support by the participants, as well as recommendations from the literature (e.g. Case & Meier, 2014) – there is also a considerable role for EPs within this.

Implications for EPs

The role of EPs in supporting schools has already been highlighted in the literature (Bowskill, 2017; Yavuz, 2016). EPs are unique in that, as a profession, we have an awareness of the education system and LA, and are able to bring in psychological perspectives on development, socio-emotional well-being and relationships. As such, EPs are able to support CYP at an individual level in school, at a school level with regard to provision and policy and at a societal level with regard to work with families, communities and the LA. This awareness, while working with – and within – systems places EPs in a unique position for supporting marginalised populations (Dunbar-Krige, Pillay & Henning, 2010).

Individually, EPs are expertly placed to work with transgender CYP to support their socio-emotional well-being in school and to give them a voice with regard to their transition hopes and fears. Indeed, one of the aims of the current research was to highlight these voices, and to ensure that an understanding of what is working, as reported by transgender CYP, was shared.

At a school level, a core function of the EP role is being able to bring psychological research and theory to bear, in order to recommend practice (Scottish Executive, 2002). Yavuz (2016) has previously detailed how EPs can introduce training into gender identity and theory with school staff, but the role of the EP could also be bringing research, such as the current research, into schools to highlight the effect of both positive and negative actions on the academic, social and emotional development of transgender CYP. As highlighted by Yavuz, EPs are also able to support schools in creating gender-inclusive classrooms and how, following the upcoming reforms (DfE, 2019), ideas around gender identity can be implemented across the school.

At a family and community level, EPs can work with families to explore the transition process in and out of the home, and highlight access to resources and support within the LA. Additionally, EPs can work with families to explore any feelings of discomfort or concerns that they have, as it has been suggested that when parents begin to understand their own discomfort around their child's gender identity, they become more empathic towards their child's experiences (Menvielle, 2012).

Finally, at a LA level, EPs can work with policy-makers to design and implement guidance that is available to schools and other community settings (Yavuz, 2016).

However, it has been suggested that EPs themselves are not always educated in the needs and experiences of transgender CYP (Case et al. 2009), and, going forward, it will be important that we, as a profession, continue to explore our own competencies when working with transgender CYP, and what we ourselves can do to make any actions we take more effective and meaningful to the CYP involved.

Plans for Dissemination

As highlighted in the methodology chapter of this thesis, it is imperative that research with transgender CYP be important and meaningful to them, and that it is disseminated back to the community (Adams et al., 2017). Upon completion of the research project, the researcher will return to the youth group and present the project to the participants and their peers. Additionally, the researcher will present the findings to their EP service and to the LA in order to explore continued actions going forward. It is also hoped that this research will be written up and published so that the findings and recommendations can be shared within the professional community.

Reflections

To conclude this research, this final chapter will briefly explore the impact the research has had on my own development and practice. Further reflections on the process can be found in extracts from my reflective diary, included in Appendix J of this thesis.

Starting this research, I was very aware of the impact my own experiences as an LGBT student had had on influencing its aim and purpose. As the interviews went on, though, I began to understand why. Jubilee summarised this when talking about her supportive LGBT staff, in that:

> *I think that… he felt that he had to be there … to avoid a parallel … his stories always came off as him being on his own? I think he was isolated … and I think… he didn't want other people to go through that*. (Jubilee, 683–699)

I realised whilst undertaking this research that I was this LGBT staff member, and everything I was doing was to prevent future generations from going through similar experiences. While I acknowledge that I am definitely in a position of privilege, being a cisgender, white, middle-class male, my own experiences at school have definitely influenced my career trajectory and my desire to support CYP, especially LGBT youth. I was also interested to discover that many of the researchers within this field – and some of whom are cited in this research – are also openly LGBT, which, on reflection, may also demonstrate a sense of community and desire to facilitate positive change for future generations.

However, it also meant that I had to take extra care in the interviews and in my relationships with the participants. One of the most striking quotes that came from the research came from Nightcrawler. During a discussion around access to appropriate bathroom provisions, he initially called this "*a small thing*". When I questioned him on this, he said:

> *I'm justifying it because usually people don't understand what it's like to be trans*, and people don't usually understand that it's… a big deal. Um, and… I understand that you do understand what it's like, but I'm just used to justifying myself. It's not a small thing!* (Nightcrawler, 419–424)

This especially made me reflect – do I understand what it is like to be trans*? To be LGBT, certainly, as discussed above, but to be trans* is something I've never experienced, and I think this was one of the motivating factors for the current research. I was aware I wasn't knowledgeable with regard to issues around transgender CYP, and wanted to learn more so that I might become a better advocate and practitioner in the future.

It also highlighted to me the necessity of the current research, and for further research around transgender (and LGB) issues. Nightcrawler felt comfortable sharing his concerns with me because I was seen as a safe adult who was knowledgeable about LGBT issues, whereas with others he may have been constantly downplaying the significance of events so as not be a nuisance. This, again, was highlighted by Jubilee:

> *I feel like I could go to him. I feel like he's always there? … I suppose… and I suppose this might be my own fault… I don't want to waste… too much of his time … if I… went to him… every single time something happened… I'd be there every week. Umm. And I don't want to go there with nothing. A part of me needs… a list of things that's wrong, not a single incident.*
> (Jubilee, 1085–1096)

Each of the participants used humour to downplay negative events and experiences, but these extracts also show that the participants might be downplaying events in general so as not to be a nuisance for others. This demonstrated to me the importance of education in schools – so that transgender CYP can feel confident in raising issues in school, and that they will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

Going forward, it must be mentioned that this research was not always straightforward to complete. The biggest obstacle I faced when completing the research was the pressure of time. The culmination of a number of factors, including university-set thesis deadlines, placement expectations and the intrinsic difficulties of identifying and working with what is often a marginalised and hard-to-reach participant group, meant that often there was pressure to complete different aspects of the research in limited timeframes.

While completing this research to deadline demonstrated to me my own resilience and perseverance, it must be questioned as to what the impact of a limited timeframe had on the IPA methodology selected. IPA requires the researcher to be truly immersed in the

participants' experiences and stories – to not only understand how each participant individually understands their experiences, but also how these experiences are shared and understood across the participant sample, and how these are then interpreted by the researcher (Smith et al., 2009). Understandably, this process can take a significant amount of time. Were a longer period of time devoted to the analysis of the research, it is possible that different or further themes may have been developed within the IPA process. However, it is a strength of the current research that the independent audit also raised similar themes to my own (Appendix I), highlighting that, even in the limited time available, by dedicating my time and effort to immersing myself in the experiences as much as possible, I was still able to complete a thorough and comprehensive analysis.

The interviews themselves were also difficult at times – both with regard to hearing about the negative situations that transgender CYP find themselves in, as well the normality with which they at times viewed them –it was also incredibly rewarding to be part of the discussions around the success stories and the positives. I think this sentiment was shared by the participants too; when at times the negatives were felt to obscure the positives, a chance to highlight the positives was viewed not only with surprise, but also a sense of empowerment and self-assurance:

> *…'cause those are good experiences in my school, but at the same time, unfortunately, the bad experiences are way, way, way worse. Not being referred to as a boy made me feel awful, y'know? But… thank you for reminding me that there is still hope in this world!* (Nightcrawler, 735–740)

I feel extremely fortunate to have shared this journey with the participants, and it has only strengthened my resolve to be an advocate for all CYP, raising strengths as well as areas of difficulty, and advocating for rights and voices in all marginalised and under-represented groups.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

This glossary was created by participants in the focus group to reflect the terms which they felt were important for others to understand, and highlights their definitions of them.

A-gender – You don't feel like you have a gender – binary or otherwise.

Cisgender – Fully identifying with the gender you were assigned at birth.

Deadname – The name you were born with.

Demi-boy/girl – You partially – but not fully – identify with a different gender.

Gender fluid – Your identity can change over time, and does so in short spaces of time.

Gender queer – Same as non-binary.

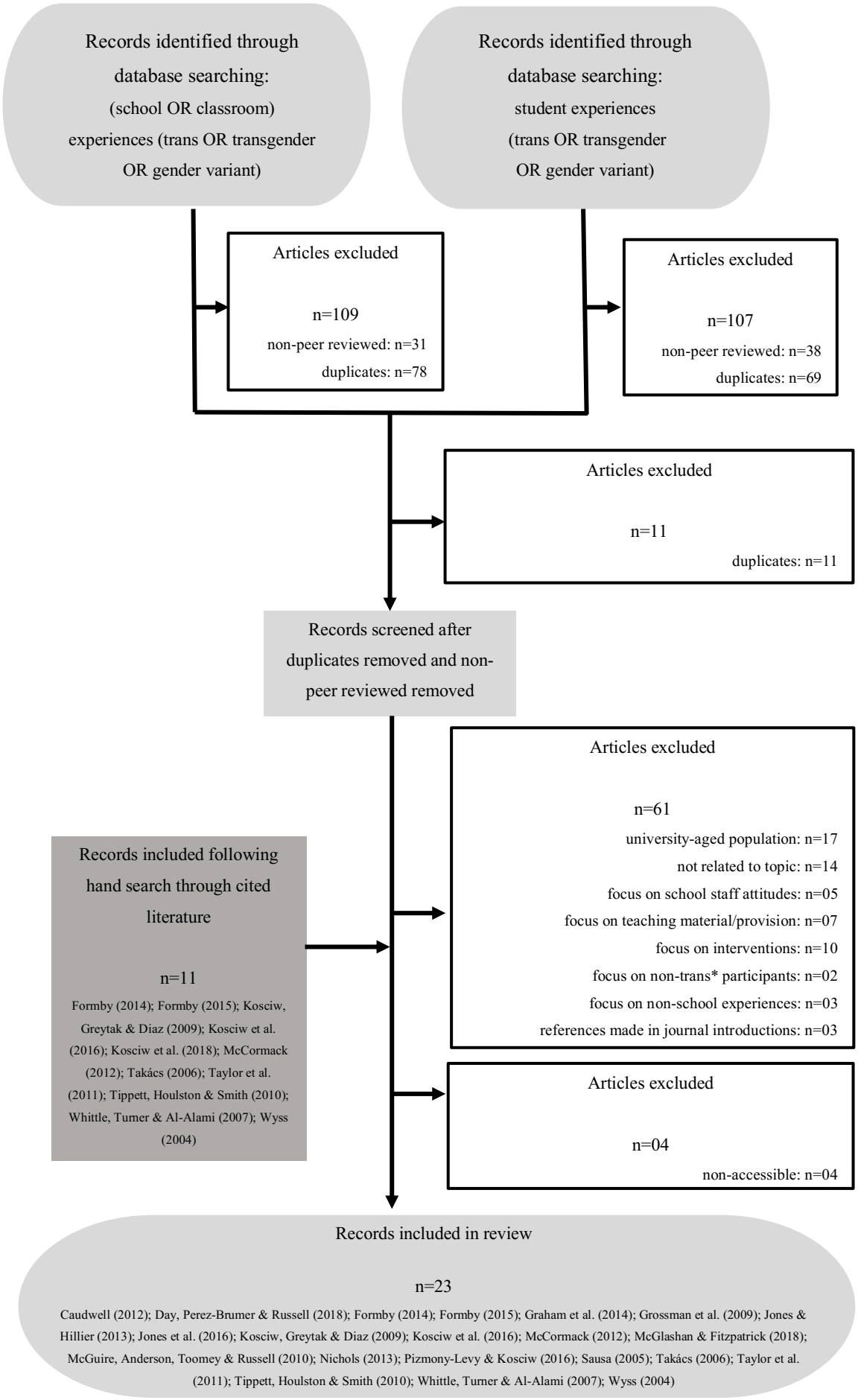
Non-binary – You don't associate (fully) with either gender, and may go by "they"/"them" pronouns. Some non-binary people may still use gendered pronouns.

Stealth/passing – You are living in your identified gender but no one knows you're trans*.

Trans* – Referring to the community of gender-variant people, and including all gender identities which are different to the ones assigned at birth.

Transgender – Not identifying with the gender you were assigned at birth, or when the doctors put the wrong gender on your birth certificate! This does not necessarily mean transitioning from one binary gender to another.

Appendix B – Summary Flowchart of the Literature Review



Appendix C – Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

The Positive School Experiences of Transgender Children & Young People

Interview Questions

1. When did you begin to feel that your gender was different to your birth gender?

2. How did the transition process occur for you in school?

3. Do you feel that your school is supporting you in your transition?

4. Can you tell me about any times at school when you've felt particularly supported?

5. Are there any things your school has done to support you in your transition?

6. Are other things happening at school that you feel are supporting you (i.e. friends)?

7. Did people treat you differently when you transitioned, and, if so, what support systems (if any) did school put in place to safeguard your physical and mental well-being?

8. Did your school offer support with your transition at home?

9. Is there anything else you think is important I know that we haven't covered?

Appendix D – Ethical Approval

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

NOTICE OF ETHICS REVIEW DECISION

For research involving human participants
BSc/MSc/MA/Professional Doctorates in Clinical, Counselling and Educational Psychology

REVIEWER: Debra Jinks

SUPERVISOR: **Janet Rowley**

STUDENT: Matthew Leonard

Course: Professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology

Title of proposed study: TBC

DECISION OPTIONS:

1. **APPROVED:** Ethics approval for the above named research study has been granted from the date of approval (see end of this notice) to the date it is submitted for assessment/examination.

2. **APPROVED, BUT MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED BEFORE THE RESEARCH COMMENCES** (see Minor Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, re-submission of an ethics application is not required but the student must confirm with their supervisor that all minor amendments have been made before the research commences. Students are to do this by filling in the confirmation box below when all amendments have been attended to and emailing a copy of this decision notice to her/his supervisor for their records. The

supervisor will then forward the student's confirmation to the School for its records.

3. **NOT APPROVED, MAJOR AMENDMENTS AND RE-SUBMISSION REQUIRED** (see Major Amendments box below)**:** In this circumstance, a revised ethics application must be submitted and approved before any research takes place. The revised application will be reviewed by the same reviewer. If in doubt, students should ask their supervisor for support in revising their ethics application.

DECISION ON THE ABOVE-NAMED PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

(Please indicate the decision according to one of the 3 options above)

Approved

Minor amendments required *(for reviewer)*:

Major amendments required *(for reviewer):*

Confirmation of making the above minor amendments *(for students)*:

I have noted and made all the required minor amendments, as stated above, before starting my research and collecting data.

Student's name *(Typed name to act as signature):*
Student number:

Date:

(Please submit a copy of this decision letter to your supervisor with this box completed, if minor amendments to your ethics application are required)

ASSESSMENT OF RISK TO RESEACHER *(for reviewer)*

Has an adequate risk assessment been offered in the application form?

YES /

Please request resubmission with an adequate risk assessment

If the proposed research could expose the researcher to any of kind of emotional, physical or health and safety hazard? Please rate the degree of risk:

☐ HIGH

Please do not approve a high risk application and refer to the Chair of Ethics. Travel to countries/provinces/areas deemed to be high risk should not be permitted and an application not approved on this basis. If unsure please refer to the Chair of Ethics.

☐ MEDIUM (Please approve but with appropriate recommendations)

☑ LOW

Reviewer comments in relation to researcher risk (if any).

Reviewer *(Typed name to act as signature)*: *DGJinks*

Date: 22.-3.18

This reviewer has assessed the ethics application for the named research study on behalf of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

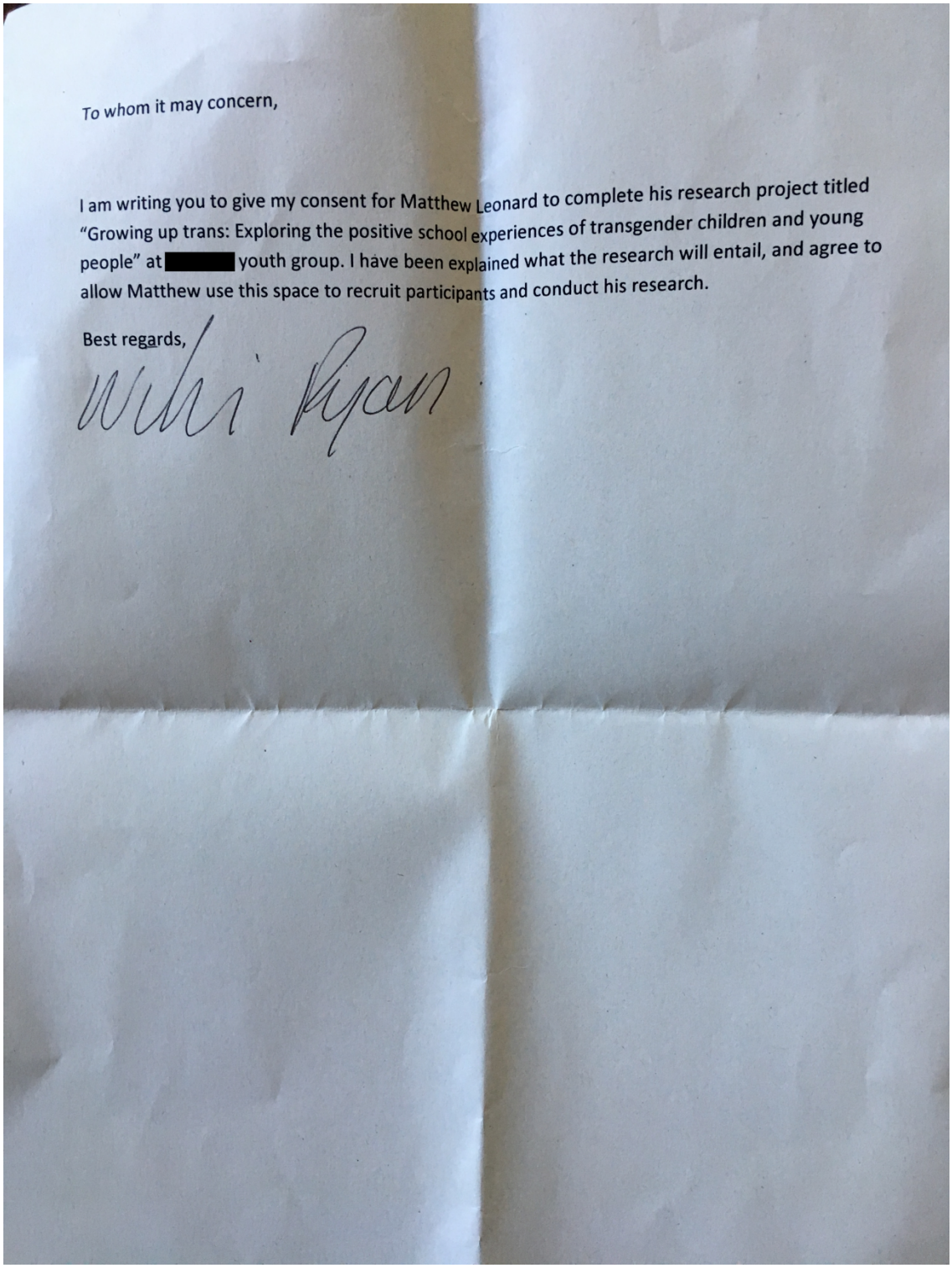
RESEARCHER PLEASE NOTE:

For the researcher and participants involved in the above named study to be covered by UEL's Insurance, prior ethics approval from the School of Psychology (acting on behalf

of the UEL Research Ethics Committee), and confirmation from students where minor amendments were required, must be obtained before any research takes place.

For a copy of UELs Personal Accident & Travel Insurance Policy, please see the Ethics Folder in the Psychology Noticeboard

Appendix E – Permission for Research within Youth Group



To whom it may concern,

I am writing you to give my consent for Matthew Leonard to complete his research project titled "Growing up trans: Exploring the positive school experiences of transgender children and young people" at [redacted] youth group. I have been explained what the research will entail, and agree to allow Matthew use this space to recruit participants and conduct his research.

Best regards,

Mhi Ryan

Appendix F – Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms

Focus Group

Information Sheet

The Positive School Experiences of Transgender Children & Young People
Focus Group

PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you agree, it is important that you understand what your participation would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Who am I?

My name is Matt Leonard and I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology at the University of East London, studying for my Doctorate in Educational & Child Psychology. As part of my studies I am conducting the research you are being invited to participate in.

What is the research?

My research is exploring the positive school experiences of transgender children and young people. I am hoping to hear what's happening in schools currently to support transgender students, and the impact this has had on their educational experiences. As part of this research, I will be conducting a focus group (group discussion) exploring the language used within the transgender community, and positive school experiences.

This research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Why have you been asked to participate?

I am looking to involve individuals over the age of 18 who identify as transgender, or who have a gender identity which is not the same as their sex identified at birth, and who will be happy to share their experiences in a group setting.

I emphasise that I am not looking for 'experts' on the topic I am studying. You will not be judged or personally analysed in any way, and you will be treated with respect.

You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate, and should not feel coerced into doing so.

What will your participation involve?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to join me in a focus group to explore language and terminology used with the transgender community. The focus group is a participant-led discussion of around six to eight individuals based around questions I put forward. The information shared during this focus group will be used by me to influence the conversations I have with transgender school students when discussing with them their school experiences. Additionally, the focus group will discuss the aims of the research and be used to identify and form appropriate questions for later student conversations. The focus group will last around 60 minutes and will be audio recorded, but at no time during the write-up of the research will you be identified, and no one apart from myself will have access to the original audio recording.

I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research, but your participation would be very valuable in helping me to develop a knowledge and understanding of my research topic. It is hoped that, by developing my understanding of language, terminology and previous experiences, I can make the later conversations easier and more comfortable for the students taking part. Furthermore, when completing this research and sharing these experiences, it is hoped that schools and educational professions may be able to have a better understanding of how to support transgender children and young people within an educational environment.

Your taking part will be safe and confidential

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times. As I mentioned above, although the focus group will be audio recorded, no one but myself will have access to the recordings. Consent forms and transcripts (a written version of the audio recording) will be kept separate to prevent participants from being identified. Furthermore, when I write up the topics that emerge from the focus group, if any direct quotes are used the participant will not be referred to by name.

What will happen to the information that you provide?

As I mentioned above, following our conversations I will transcribe the audio recording so that I have the conversations written up. This will be kept separately from any identifying material. The signed consent forms will be stored securely in Wandsworth's School and Community Psychology Service. To make sure that these are separate from the audio recording and transcription, the latter two will be stored on an encrypted hard drive.

Throughout the study I will be the only person with access to any non-anonymised information. When I have completed my research, it will be written up as part of my doctoral thesis. This will be examined by my supervisor at the University of East London, as well as some external examiners. While this write-up may include information you say, at no point will it be identified to you and all participants will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity. It is hoped that following my completed research, the information can be published in an academic journal to share the ideas introduced by you, the participant, as a way to better inform educational authorities and professionals of the best ways to support transgender children and young people. However, as with my write-up, during publication all participants will be given a pseudonym and no schools or other identifiable information will be shared.

At the end of my research, the data will be kept securely for a maximum of one year before being destroyed.

What if you want to withdraw?

During the focus group, if there are any questions you do not want to answer, you do not have to.

Later, if you wish to do so, you are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw, up until the point of my analysis of the data, I would reserve the right to use material that you provide.

Contact Details

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

Matt Leonard
Email: u1622743@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor, Janet Rowley. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
Email: j.e.rowley@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk

Consent Form

The Positive School Experiences of Transgender Children & Young People Focus Group

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I have the read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw; the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)	Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)
……	……
Participant's Signature	Researcher's Signature
……	……

Date: ……..…….

Semi-Structured Interviews

Information Sheet

The Positive School Experiences of Transgender Children & Young People

PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER

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My research is exploring the positive school experiences of transgender children and young people. I am hoping to hear what's happening in schools currently to support transgender students, and the impact this has had on their educational experiences.

This research has been approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. This means that my research follows the standard of research ethics set by the British Psychological Society.

Why have you been asked to participate?

I am looking to involve secondary school-aged students who identify as transgender, or who have a gender identity which is not the same as their sex identified at birth, and whose schools are aware of their gender identity.

I emphasise that I am not looking for 'experts' on the topic I am studying. You will not be judged or personally analysed in any way, and you will be treated with respect.

You are quite free to decide whether or not to participate, and should not feel coerced into doing so.

What will your participation involve?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to join me in a conversation to explore things that you have found supportive in school. In this I might ask you to think about the actions of teachers, staff or other students which have helped you feel supported, or school-wide initiatives that have made you feel included – or even one-off events which you found positively supported your gender identity. These conversations will last around 60 minutes and will be audio recorded, but at no time during the write-up of the research will you or your school be identified, and no one apart from myself will have access to the original audio recording.

I will not be able to pay you for participating in my research, but your participation would be very valuable in helping me to develop a knowledge and understanding of my research topic. It is hoped that, by sharing these experiences, schools and educational professions may be able to have a better understanding of how to support transgender children and young people within an educational environment.

Your taking part will be safe and confidential

Your privacy and safety will be respected at all times. As I mentioned above, although the conversations will be audio recorded, no one but myself will have access to the recordings. Consent forms and transcripts (a written version of the audio recording) will be kept separate to prevent participants from being identified. Furthermore, while I write up the topics that emerge from our conversation, neither you or your school will be identified. If any direct quotes are used in the write-up, the participant will be referred to via a pseudonym (a fake name).

During the conversation, if there are any questions you do not want to answer, you do not have to. Similarly, if you want the conversation to stop at any point, you may say so and we will stop.

What will happen to the information that you provide?

As I mentioned above, following our conversations I will transcribe the audio recordings so that I have the conversations written up. These will be kept separately from any identifying material. The signed consent forms will be stored securely in Wandsworth's School and Community Psychology Service. To make sure that these are separate from the audio recordings and transcription, the latter two will be stored on an encrypted hard drive.

Throughout the study I will be the only person with access to any non-anonymised information. When I have completed my research, it will be written up as part of my doctoral thesis. This will be examined by my supervisor at the University of East London, as well as some external examiners. While this write-up may include information you say, at no point will it be identified to you and all participants will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity. It is hoped that following my completed research, the information can be published in an academic journal to share the ideas introduced by you, the participant, as a way to better inform educational authorities and professionals of the best ways to support transgender children and young people. However, as with my write-up, during publication all participants will be given a pseudonym and no schools or other identifiable information will be shared.

At the end of my research, the data will be kept securely for a maximum of one year before being destroyed.

What if you want to withdraw?

You are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw, up until the point of my analysis of the data, I would reserve the right to use material that you provide.

Contact Details

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

Matt Leonard
Email: u1622743@uel.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted please contact the research supervisor, Janet Rowley. School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
Email: j.e.rowley@uel.ac.uk

or

Chair of the School of Psychology Research Ethics Sub-committee: Dr Mark Finn, School of Psychology, University of East London, Water Lane, London E15 4LZ.
Email: m.finn@uel.ac.uk

Consent Form

The Positive School Experiences of Transgender Children & Young People

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

PART A TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT

I have the read the information sheet relating to the above research study and have been given a copy to keep. The purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and what will happen if I agree to participate.

I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher(s) involved in the study will have access to identifying data. It has been explained to me what will happen once the research study has been completed.

I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me. Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I also understand that should I withdraw; the researcher reserves the right to use my anonymous data after analysis of the data has begun.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)	Researcher's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)
……	……
Participant's Signature	Researcher's Signature
……	……

Date: ……..…….

PART B TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

I have read the information sheet relating to the above research study and give permission for the young person (named above) to be included.

Parent/Guardian's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) Relationship to participant

…… …….

Parent/Guardian's Signature

……

Date: ……..…….

Appendix G – Participant Debrief Sheets

Focus Group

The Positive School Experiences of Transgender Children & Young People Focus Group

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF LETTER

Thank you for participating in my research. While guidance does exist for schools to support transgender students, there is very little research discussing what students themselves have found most supportive or beneficial. With your assistance identifying language and areas of interest, it is hoped that I will be able to use these in conversations with transgender students to explore the positive experiences that are happening in schools, and then hopefully share these stories with educational authorities and professionals to create a better understanding of what is working in schools and how we can help.

As was discussed before you participated, all of your personal details will be kept confidential and stored securely for a maximum of one year. Additionally, the information you have shared will be anonymised and kept separately from your personal information to ensure that your privacy and security is maintained. If at any time after participation you feel you would no longer like to be involved, you are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw, up until the point of my analysis of the data, I would reserve the right to use material that you provide.

Thank you again for participating in my research. I hope you have found it both interesting and enjoyable. However, if you have any concerns about the research itself, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisor at the addresses below. If anything we have discussed has affected you, included below are the websites for some charities to which you can reach out and access different resources and support networks.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Matt Leonard, at: u1622743@uel.ac.uk.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact the research supervisor, Janet Rowley, at: j.e.rowley@uel.ac.uk.

Support

Mermaids – A UK-wide charity providing family and individual support for gender diverse and transgender individuals.
www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

Press for Change – A political lobbying and educational organisation, which campaigns to achieve equal civil rights and liberties for all transgender people in the UK, through legislation and social change.
www.pfc.org.uk

The Gender Trust – A UK-based charity providing support to adults who identify as transsexual, gender dysphoric, transgender, or those whose lives are affected by gender identity issues.
www.gendertrust.org.uk

Semi-Structured Interviews

The Positive School Experiences of Transgender Children & Young People

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF LETTER

Thank you for participating in my research. While guidance does exist for schools to support transgender students, there is very little research discussing what students themselves have found most supportive or beneficial. It is hoped that, by exploring positive experiences with you and listening to the stories and examples you have shared, a better understanding of what is working in schools can be developed and shared with educational authorities and professionals.

As was discussed before you participated, all of your personal details (including your name and school) will be kept confidential and stored securely for a maximum of one year. Additionally, the information you have shared will be anonymised and kept separately from your personal information to ensure that your privacy and security is maintained. If at any time after participation you feel you would no longer like to be involved, you are free to withdraw from the research study at any time without explanation, disadvantage or consequence. However, if you withdraw, up until the point of my analysis of the data, I would reserve the right to use material that you provide.

Thank you again for participating in my research. I hope you have found it both interesting and enjoyable. However, if you have any concerns about the research itself, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisor at the addresses below. If anything we have discussed has affected you, included below are the websites for some charities specifically aimed at supporting transgender youth to which you can reach out and access different resources and support networks.

Contact Details

If you would like further information about my research or have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me, Matt Leonard, at: u1622743@uel.ac.uk.

If you have any questions or concerns about how the research has been conducted, please contact the research supervisor, Janet Rowley, at: j.e.rowley@uel.ac.uk.

Support

Mermaids – A UK-wide charity providing family and individual support for gender diverse and transgender children and young people.
www.mermaidsuk.org.uk

Gendered Intelligence – A UK-based charity providing information regarding youth groups, one-to-one support and resources for trans* young people.
www.genderedintelligence.co.uk

Unite UK – An opportunity to read coming-out stories from those who have gone through what you may be feeling.
www.uniteuk1.com/coming-out

Young Stonewall – A UK-based charity that offers a range of information, advice and guidance for LGBT young people.
www.youngstonewall.org.uk

Appendix H – Examples of Analysis

Initial Coding of the Transcripts

Line	Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments Descriptive = normal text Linguistic = *italics* Conceptual = underlined
1		Int: Thank you again for, uh, agreeing to talk with me-	
2			
3	Desire to facilitate change	Ni: -You're welcome	Eager to change
4			
5		Int: Erm… just to get some background and some	
6		history, can you tell me… when you did you… first	
7		begin to feel that your gender was different to your birth	
8		gender?	
9			
10	Removal from old self	Ni: Umm… around the age of eight?	*Long pause*, hard to think? Perhaps reflects an unwillingness to
11			remember previous gender?
12		Int: And how… how did you become aware of that?	
13			
14	Finding the self	Ni: Erm… I- I was very confused because, as you can	*Repetition, use of "very confused"*, suggests uncertainty, knowledge of
15		probably tell, wearing makeup and wearing	self different to how others perceive?
16	Confusion around gender stereotypes	androgynous clothing I was okay with, but being	Make up and clothes trying to excuse self to others?
17		referred to as a girl never felt right and someone	Importance of gender terms as part of identity
18	Importance of labels and language	accidentally referred to me as a boy once and I was like,	*Repetition and surprise tone highlights realisation for Ni*. Also a sense
19		"hmm, that-that's correct!" y'know? And I started	of joy and happiness in having a label and something to explain feelings
20		learning that boys can wear makeup and wear	of confusion.
21		androgynous clothes, and I was like, "that's what I am!	
22	Self-empowerment	That's me!".	Self-empowerment through understanding sense of self. Joy in this.
23			
24		Int: Thanks, when… you kinda realised that… did you	
25		start acting on it straight away, or did you take some	
26		time to do the research and-	
27			
28		Ni: -I took time to research, and mostly because I was	Importance of being educated and informed in order to explain to others.
29	Self-education	just scared of what my parents thought.	Concern around family, highlights importance of family above others.
30			
31		Int: Mhmm, I guess then, when did you begin the…	
32		outwardly begin the transition process?	
33			

34	Dangers of transition	Ni: Um… accidentally, but around eleven?-	*Accidentally, not of Ni's desire?* Not ready, so being outed? What impact
35			might this have had on confidence during transition, both of self and
36		Int: -okay… can you tell me a bit more?	others?
37			
38	Feelings of	Ni: So… I, um… so one of my friends went "hi A-!"	*Lots of pauses and restarts*. Change from self to other may indicate again
39	unpreparedness/preparedness?	and I was like "oh dear"- my dad was like "that's a boys	the unreadiness?
40	Importance of family	name, what?" and- so, I, um, he had very mixed feelings	Fear of family and their possible reactions highlights their importance.
41		about trans people anyway. He believed that um… if	Change from self to dad also reflects issues were not about self.
42	Need for education of others	you've gone through all the surgery then you are that	Others' lack of knowledge around trans identity
43		gender, but if you haven't, then you're not. And then I	*"then I came out" short sentence*, everything changed because family
44	Removal from old self	came out. I was like, "well dad, I don't feel like H-	loved me?
45	Importance of family	anymore, and being called a… girl doesn't feel right"	*Pause before girl*, still difficult to conceive/remember that gender?
46		and he started to change his mentality – it was lovely.	Power of positive relationships and family acceptance
47		And… so- I eventually told my mum and I- I said "just	
48	Difficulties around gender	because I'm into like, girly things, doesn't mean that	Difference between gender stereotypes and gender identity
49	stereotypes	I'm a girl", erm, and I started explaining everything.	Need for education
50	Need for education of others	And, erm, the response from my family was positive.	Again positive relationships and family acceptance
51		The response from my friends was… I lost a few, but,	*Pause reflects a time that was difficult for Ni? Something Ni didn't want*
52	Lack of support from peers	gener-genery-generally positive-	*to go over?*
53			
54		Int: -mhmm, You sound- if I may, you sounded	I wanted to go back to this as it sounded like an area of support that Ni
55		surprised that your family was so positive, so quickly?	really appreciated and was surprised at, as he mentioned the positivity a
56			number of times
57		Ni: Um… see, they… my family is very, um… it's not-	*Pauses and restarts perhaps because Ni trying to find the words to make*
58	Importance of family	it's not that they're not accepting, it's just that they're	*sure they come across positively?*
59	Family as protective factor	not very well educated on the matter. I have, I have- I	Highlighting again importance of education around trans identity
60	Need for education of others	feel like I've educated them a lot [laughs]. My- my mum	*Use of humour to reflect change in family, shows pride and respect, but*
61	Humour as coping mechanism	wasn't 100% on LGBT as a whole, umm… and my dad	*also self-empowerment*.
62	Self-education	was *so* accepting of gay people, but he just didn't	*Trying to stress positive side of family through stressing of LGB respect*
63	Self-empowerment	understand being trans- but he wasn't not accepting of	Again, importance of education on trans identity and difference to LGB
64	Importance of family support	it, so with my dad it was easy. Um… with my mum, it	
65	Need for educating of others	took a lot of- 'cause she thought she was mourning the	Theme of loss/death of previous self
66		loss of a daughter, and I just said to her "well, this is the	*Use of own voice highlights personal importance to Ni, and that he as a*
67	Removal from old self	person I've always been", and I started giving her	*person hasn't changed*. Still same person. Difference between gender
68		examples from childhood – how I always used to play	and identity of self?

69	Gender vs sex	with boys, how I used to play with boy's toys, 'cause	Defending self using stereotypes, makes it easier for others?
70	Difficulties around gender	even though I believe that things like toys and clothes	Going back to stereotypes and the difference between my knowledge
71	stereotypes	don't have a gender, it was simple to explain in those	and others'.
72	Need for educating of others	terms-	
73			
74		Int: -mhmm-	
75			
76	Importance of family support	Ni: And she was like "oh yeah" [laughs], she began to	*Laughter reflects thoughts it should have been obvious to others, and*
77		see it herself and was like "gosh, you are trans, aren't	*questioning why it took so long?* Ni looks back on this fondly, parental
78		you? Yeah".	acceptance is important to him.
79			
80		Int: And I-I think you've really hit the nail on the head,	
81		that education is really important- people can be scared	Trying to reframe to help Ni see why it may have taken a longer time
82		of what they don't know-	
83	Importance of educating others		
84		Ni: Of course!	Complete agreement with me
85			
86		Int: Thank you. So, erm, if, with your family at the age	
87		of eleven, when did you begin to transition at school?	
88			
89	Importance of language and labels	Ni: Erm,… I- it really was a matter of I got called "she"	*Language and pronouns; sense of not wanting to make a fuss so putting*
90	Putting up with misgendering	too many times, and I got called… my birth name too	*up with misgendering as long as able?* Goes back to initially not ready?
91	Assertion of identity	many times, and I was like "right, I'm *not* a girl!",	*Stress indicates Ni had enough, turning point of one to many.*
92		y'know?-	Importance of gender and pronouns.
93			
94		Int: -[laughs] yeah-	
95			
96	Difficulties around gender	Ni: -and a lot of people were like, "but you wear	*Uses mocking voice, something Ni hears a lot from people?*
97	stereotypes	makeup?" and its like, well… and I tried explaining to	*Pause and past participle "tried", Ni tired of telling others, as feels he*
98	Tired of correcting others	them that it's- 'cause all the makeup influencers I had in	*shouldn't have to and people don't understand*
99		my life were male, so I- I've always thought to myself	Wider community as support/education/role models
100	Difficulties around gender	"oh, makeup's for everyone", erm… and they… uh, oh	Going against gender stereotypes
101	stereotypes	gosh. People at school, *that* was a whole other story,	Bad experience, exasperation
102	Lack of support from peers	'cause bear in mind, by this point, my family had started	Emphasising difference between family and friends, still some surprise
103	Importance of family support	calling me he. My family had started calling me A-, and	at family?

104		they started referring to me as "my son", "my brother",	*Repetition of my family to stress difference and pride in family. Short*
105		so… that was all fine, and school [laughs], every time I	*sentences to demonstrate importance of actions, and importance of*
106	Importance of language and labels	went to school it went back to my birth name and back	*gender pronouns and name*
107	Removal from old self	to- even the teachers I tried to walk into the, erm,	Can't use birth name, doesn't want to consider previous gender
108	Difficulties in single-sex	bathrooms once- 'cause I went to an all girl's school-	Can't finish sentence, too painful? Difficulties in a single-sex
109	environment	and the best they could give me was accessible, and I	environment.
110	Individual support strategies	was very, very grateful for that- teachers would	*Accessible vs disabled toilets, a more positive twist? Repetition of*
111	Bathroom support	challenge me every single time I'd try to go into the	*"very", Ni thinking at least something went right.*
112		bathrooms, it seemed like that-	
113			
114		Int: -yeah-	
115			
116	Downplaying negatives	Ni: -but… the overall thing at school wasn't… fantastic,	*Using extremes to make things seem less bad? Repetition again, to play*
117		but it wasn't overly- overly terrible.	*down negatives?*
118			
119		Int: You… kinda mentioned before that you lost *some*	*Using a stress to highlight positivity in that not all, wanting to talk about*
120		of your friends, so… although that must have been	*positive.*
121		really annoying because you're the same person you	
122		always were, it also meant that some friends obviously	
123		stayed, and can you tell me some more about your	
124		friends?	
125			
126	Caution with disclosure	Ni: So… I had this very, very close friend, and um… I-	Feeling the need to break to friends gently, Ni unsure of outcomes? Ni
127		I'd said to her over the course of time just slow little	uncertain how others will take it, unsure of how to approach it himself?
128		things like "I don't really-" It wa-it wasn't- it wasn't	
129		straight up as harsh as "I don't feel like a girl"-	*Harsh, understands people may find change difficult?*
130			
131		Int: -mhmm-	
132			
133		Ni: -It was just small things, and erm... and I- I	
134	Caution with disclosure	eventually, I told her, and she… she- she d- she didn't	*Repetition reflects Ni's nerves at telling friends, wanting to be accepted.*
135		overly question me or anything, like she wasn't, like,	
136		inappropriate about it and she… what I mean by that is	
137	Questions from others	like, she asked like, so many questions that I'm like "I	Having to explain self to me, having to explain self to others?
138		don't need to answer those"-	

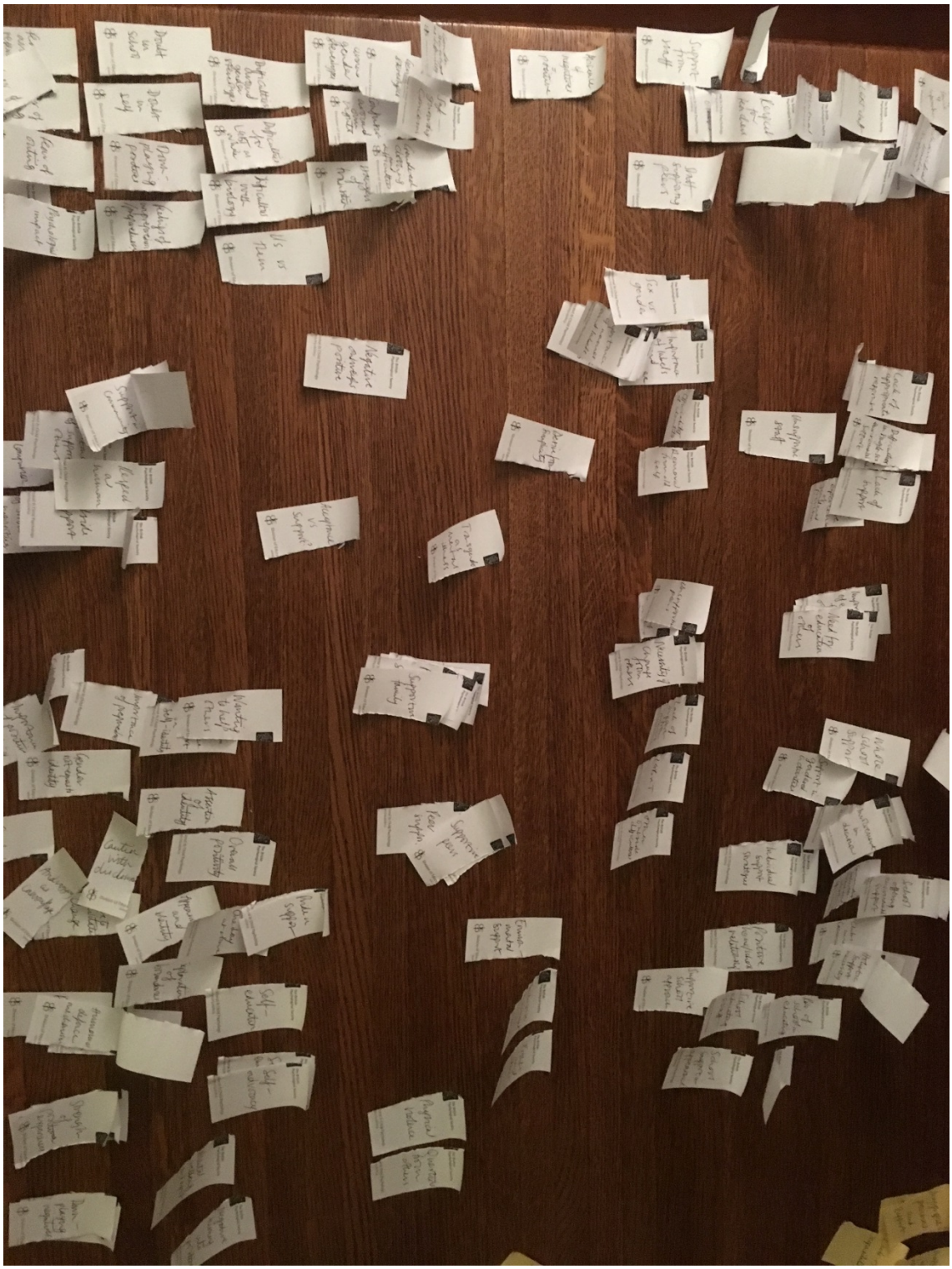
571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593	 Negatives outweigh positive Difficulties in single-sex environment Support form trans community Having to justify self Importance of language, names and labels Rights and laws of transgender CYP Humour as coping mechanism Importance of language, names and labels	Int: Yeah, okay… and were there any other ways, or actions, that the school or teachers did that demonstrated that they respected you? Ju: Um… I've just realised one where they disrespected me- Int: -yeah?- Ju: -when… so in sixth form, erm, I wanted to use the… they had gendered toilets and I wanted to use the female toilets, and-and, at the time… and this was in Year 12… and-and at the time, this was when the whole gendered toilets was a big thing in America, and… because we consume all of our media… it feels like it's a thing here, when it really isn't, and, erm, so I used the female toilets because… I use the women's toilets because… for one, it's not illegal, y'know… it's not America [laughs] and two… it's, it's… my fucking right to piss where I feel comfortable [laughs], so I just sort of did it. I didn't ask for permission. I didn't feel like I had to ask for permission. I was already called E-, I was already called she/her, so why should I have to ask for permission	Negatives overpower positives Needs to clarify gender toilets, as mixed-sex sixth form Support and comparison in trans community Distancing self from American system *Changes female to women's, more personal?* Having to justify use of women's toilet Rights and laws of transgender CYP *Humour to mask uncomfortableness of memory?* Importance of being able to use gendered services Importance of following through – pronouns and name used, but does support stop there? Does this make it tokenistic?
594 595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606 607 608 609 610 611 612 613 614 615 616 617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626 627 628	Inappropriate support School rules as a barrier Self-advocacy Awareness of own responsibilities Supportive peers Unsupportive peers Me vs them Inappropriate support Practical difficulties Gender is not disability Humour as coping mechanism	unless… they don't really respect me, but just sort of pretend like they respect me- Int: -mhmm- Ju: -and my Head of Year… she was… against me using them because it might make certain students uncomfortable? And… I had considered this, y'know? I-I didn't want to just intrude. I did ask, erm, some of my female friends if they would feel uncomfortable, and they all said they wouldn't feel uncomfortable, they'd be fine with it… erm, so I'm not entirely sure- I guess it was someone I didn't ask… who felt uncomfortable, erm, but ultimately that's like a catch 22 isn't it?- Int: -yeah- Ju: -okay- Int: -someone's going to feel uncomfortable at the end of this- Ju: -exactly!- Int: -mhmm- Ju: -and she suggested, Ms J suggested I use the disabled toilets on the ground floor by the exit… and… that is the opposite side of the building [laughs] and two, I'm not disabled! These aren't gender neutral toilets, these are clearly designed for someone in a wheelchair. Someone in a very small wheelchair, 'cause it was a very small room [laughs], but it was designed for someone in a wheelchair. A-and, I felt, like, there was a	Acknowledging tokenistic support. If I can a.; why can't I b,? School considering impact on others. School rules as a barrier? Self-advocacy -Jubilee highlights that she asked permission first. Awareness of difficulties and own responsibilities Supportive peers Unsupportive peers Sense of me vs them? I finish sentence to demonstrate my empathy Staff trying to be supportive, but not seen that way Practical difficulties of support effort. Gender is not a disability or a mental health issue Difference between true support and tokenistic? *Using humour as a coping mechanism to highlight difficulties and the difference between attempts of support and true support.*
629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637 638 639 640 641 642 643 644 645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652 653 654 655 656 657 658 659 660 661 662 663	Individual staff support Forgiveness of mistakes Support in accessing gendered provisions Individual staff support Staff educating selves Laws and legislation Staff vs school Acknowledgement of boundaries School heirachy and implications Staff vs school Importance of being involved in decisions Importance of respect Access to gendered provisions	level of disrespect there, and sort of… and this is where I think Ms S really redeemed herself- Int: -yeah?- Ju: -yeah, 'cause she respected me enough to support me in allowing me to use the women's toilets, along with Mr W, um… Int: h-how did they do that? Ju: Uh… what they did is googled, and they googled "is it illegal to do- for me to use the female toilets" and the government website says it isn't, and they sort of printed it off and gave it Ms J, and there wasn't really a debate there beyond that… uh… unless, she wanted to supersede the law and… sort of, which she can do, y'know, but w-what's the point? Erm,… and it just vilified her a bit, 'cause she felt… y'know, Ms S is very good at vilifying people [laughs] she's very good at making people feel like they're the villain- Int: -Yeah- Ju: -I-I think, it's possible that... Ms J felt she was being vilified by… Ms S… but that was all behind the scenes stuff, erm, I'm not really exposed to that sort of thing because I don't watch them 24-7 [laughs] Int: [laughs] yes, and it would be very sad if you did! Ju: [laughs] yeah it would be! Obviously! But, erm, no, I got the respect back in that and I was able to use it eventually.	Supportive actions of staff, level of forgiveness of mistakes? Support in accessing gendered provisions Individual staff support and activism Staff educating themselves about issues as a form of support Using law and legislation as a support tool Staff vs school as support, going against system Acknowledgement of boundaries of law and legislation *Questioning possibilities of going against others, understands power of support* Having someone with authority as a supportive figure in school Staff vs staff Uncertainty of what happens in school, discussion around being involved in decisions around self. Is there any regret in not being involved in this? Humour to lighten mood *Repetition of respect, important concept to Jubilee* Access to gendered bathrooms

253		Int: are there... other ways the school, you think...	
254		instead of just those things, so recognising your name	
255		and never using the deadname, are there, are other	*Repeating "deadname" demonstrates I agree with role of names and*
256		ways you feel the school has supported the transition	*identity, and am listening to Superman.*
257		process? for yourself? or made things easier for you?	
258			
259	Forgiveness for honest mistakes	SM: I think in terms of me, I don't think they could do	*"In terms of me" – feels due to own relationship with staff, things*
260	Individual staff relationships	a lot more... because you know, like I said you know,	*okay, but not same for all students?* Importance of relationships. High
261		apart from if you make a mistake say, every so often, I	respect for individual teachers.
262		don't, I don't hold them accountable to that because	Forgiveness and understanding of mistakes, and understanding people
263	Necessity of further education and	everyone makes mistakes... I feel like... in terms of	are trying.
264	support in school	visibility and having other people educated about	Superman feels school let down on whole school approaches to support
265	Doubt in school	issues, my school don't do enough on?	*Question perhaps suggests Superman isn't sure whether this means his*
266			*school is doing well or not?*
267		Int: okay	
268			
269	Necessity of further education and	SM: and, erm, from what I've seen... you know, there	
270	support in school	have been attempts to you know, to try and, you know,	*Attempts suggests unsuccessful*
271		educate teachers on LGBT kind of training, and things	Gender neutral bathrooms and teacher understanding felt to be
272	Inclusion vs exclusion in support	like gender neutral bathrooms [inhales], but the school	important by Superman. Does this reflect earlier experiences such as
273	School vs teachers	don't really want to go on board with-	changing room?
274			*Difference between teachers and school, again whole school approach*
275		Int: -okay-	*failure*
276			
277	Doubt in school	SM: -and kind of erm, do... do, you know go into that	*Hesitation and repetition suggests disappointment in school?*
278		kind of thing and I've... [inhales] I've, I'm the leader of	*Inhalation – pride in what he is going to say*
279		the LGBT society at school, erm, and... I've, you know,	Self-empowerment, leading school LGBT society.
280	Self-advocacy	there's no, there's no posters about LGBT equality... let	LGBT society – supportive community
281	Importance of supportive community	alone trans alone, you know? [inhales] when I propose	Lack of support in schools – not doing something systems level
282	Clubs and communities	this stuff, I'm basically the only person in the whole	*"let alone trans" – school not getting any higher order support in*
283	Lack of systemic support	school... doing something. I feel like, anyway...	*place, let alone specific?*
284		[inhales] so, erm... [exhales] so yeah, I feel like, more	Disappointment in school's lack of action
285		education would definitely prevent issues such as you	Self-empowerment, also isolation?
286	Necessity of further education and	know bullying and, calling people their dead names...	*Exhale and inhales suggest feelings of weight and responsibility?*
287	support in school	yeah...	Superman makes suggestions for better support. *Dead names – further*
288			*importance of names and identity.*
289		Int: mhmm. can you tell me a bit more about the...	I notice this was an area of pride for Superman and hope to explore
290		LGBT club?	further.
291			
292		SM: yeah! erm, well, there's been maybe a couple...	*"Yeah!" eagerness demonstrates pride*
293		yeah, two meetings so far [inhales] and... it [exhales] I	*Lots of "I" language – ownership and pride in what he's set up*
294	Self-advocacy	get around 35... ish people? each session which, I think	Pride in community and support for each other.
295	Pride in achievements	is very good-	
296	Importance of supportive community		
297		Int: -mhmm!-	
298			
299		SM: -for something, in my school, which hasn't really	Superman compares the growth and attendance of LGBT club to other
300		been a big thing... 'cause in my school you have	more established clubs to demonstrate his strengths in advocacy, an
301		societies, like debate society, which get's quite a lot...	area of pride.
302		like, you know, 50, 50 plus people, each, umm each	
303	Pride in achievements	session, erm... and so, so yeah. in terms of that I feel	
304		it's been a huge success so... the only problem I feel	Superman again highlights his pride in his achievement. Self-
305	Doubt in school	like, is that you are not allowed to have, erm, younger	empowerment?
306	Barriers put in by school	years kids in LGBT societies, so... [inhales] what I've	Consternation at barriers put in place by school
307	Humour as coping mechanism	essentially done is ignore that [laughs]-	*Inhalation and humour used to demonstrate own will and self-action*
308	Resisting barriers from school		*and self-empowerment despite of school.*
309	Resilliance	Int: [laughs]-	
310	Self-empowerment		
311		SM: -and gone "you can all come in!" umm... "just	*Using own language and quotes to stress own role in empowering self*
312		don't tell anyone that you're here" [laughs] and... and...	*and others.*
313	Pride in achievement	you have to have a teacher supervising and the teacher	Supportive individual teachers

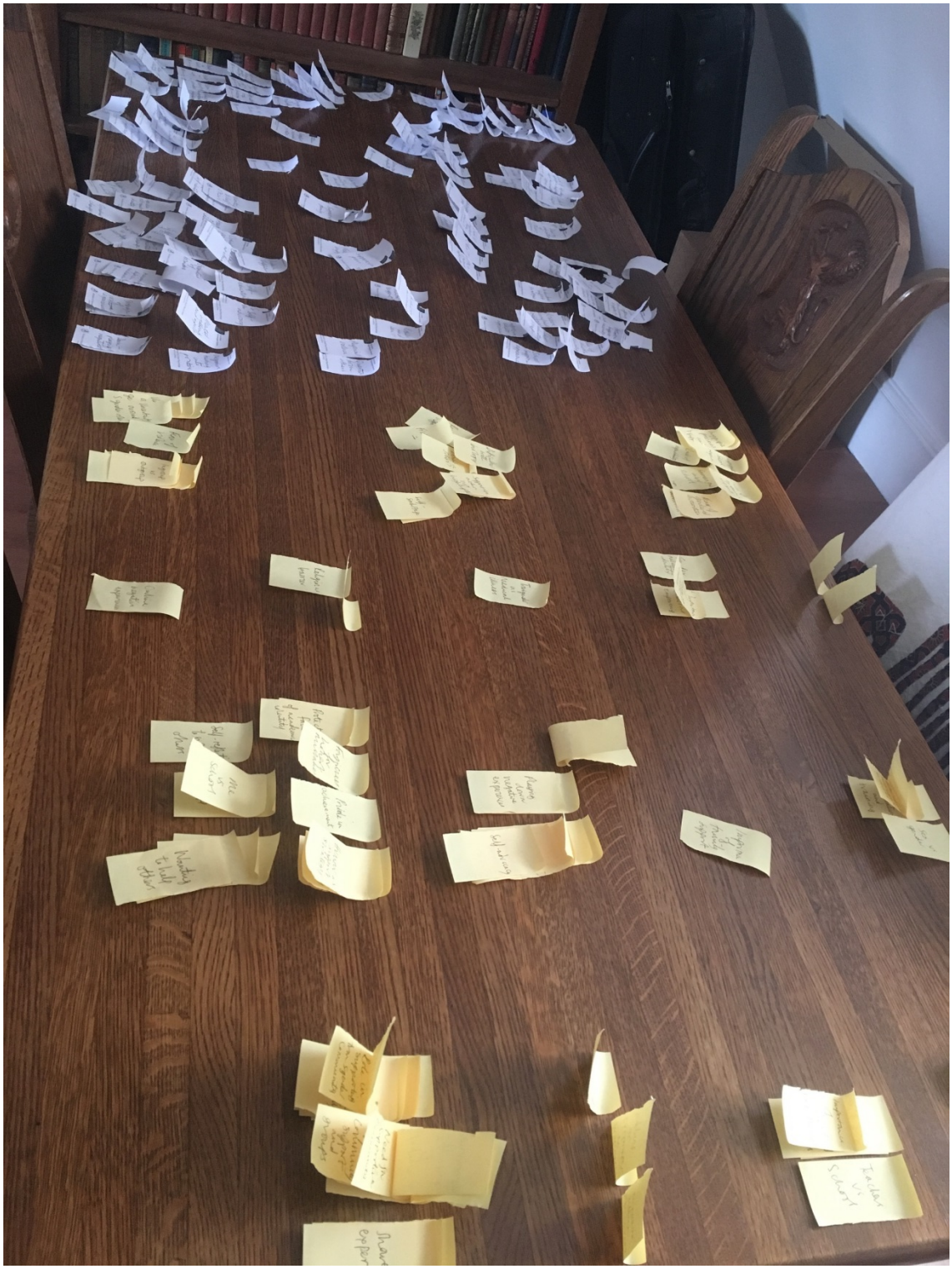
314	Self-empowerment	completely agrees with me and says, you know "it's	Supportive individual teacher. *"Completely agrees" and using*
315	Supportive individual teachers	bad that kids can't have access to this kind of club	*language of teachers to further highlight support and unity and*
316	Teachers vs school	because... you know it *is* what you need" and there are,	*relationships between individual teachers and self.* Teachers go against
317		you know, there are trans people who are in the	school, teachers vs. school as whole.
318		younger years who... you know, I feel could just be	
319		like mirrors of me when I was, you know, when I was	*"Mirrors of me" reflective of community, and group identity. Reasons*
320	Self-reflection to support others	in year 9 or year 10 so [exhales] umm... I want to show	*for wanting to be an advocate, supporting others?*
321		them that, you know, everything is not... so bad, and	*Exhales to show pity for younger pupils and what they might*
322		that you know, with these things we can like, promote	*experience*
323		things like diversity and promote things like, you	
324	Acceptance	know, things like, [emotional] being, being gay is okay	Superman becomes very emotional.
325	T as part of LGB	or being trans is okay, and stop like, homophobic and	*Grouping LBG and T, collective identity of non-support?*
326		transphobic language being, you know, being passed	
327		around-	
328			
329		Int: -sure-	
330			
331		SM: -and used colloquially, you know, when it's not-	Concerns over language. Language has the power to both empower and
332			damage? Importance of language.
333		Int: -yeah-	
334			
335		SM: -really... erm, but yeah, there are other societies,	
336	Doubt in school	like the Afro-Caribbean society, which... apparently	
337		has been *controversial* according to the teachers!	*Superman clearly disagrees.*
338		[laughs] which is, um, related to racism in my opinion	Prejudice in general is rife in school
339		[inhales sharply] but um... so yeah. it's definitely a, a	*Inhales – feels comments may be dangerous*
340		thing within the school that needs to be changed and	*"needs" highlights current practice is unacceptable.*
341	Teachers vs school	it's to do with the staff and with how they want to	*Staff and not teachers, as previously used. Reflect subtle difference?*
342	Self-reflection to support others	promote these issues and I feel that they're just not	*Perhaps a whole school need as opposed to individual teachers?*
343	Self-empowerment	doing enough... so that's why I want to try... with the	Superman discusses his motivation for social change and action. Wants
344	Self-advocacy	society... to start, to help start maybe a future of more-	to improve things for not only his community, but all marginalised
345			groups?
346		Int: and the society is something you helped set up?-	
347			
348			

Grouping of Transcript Themes

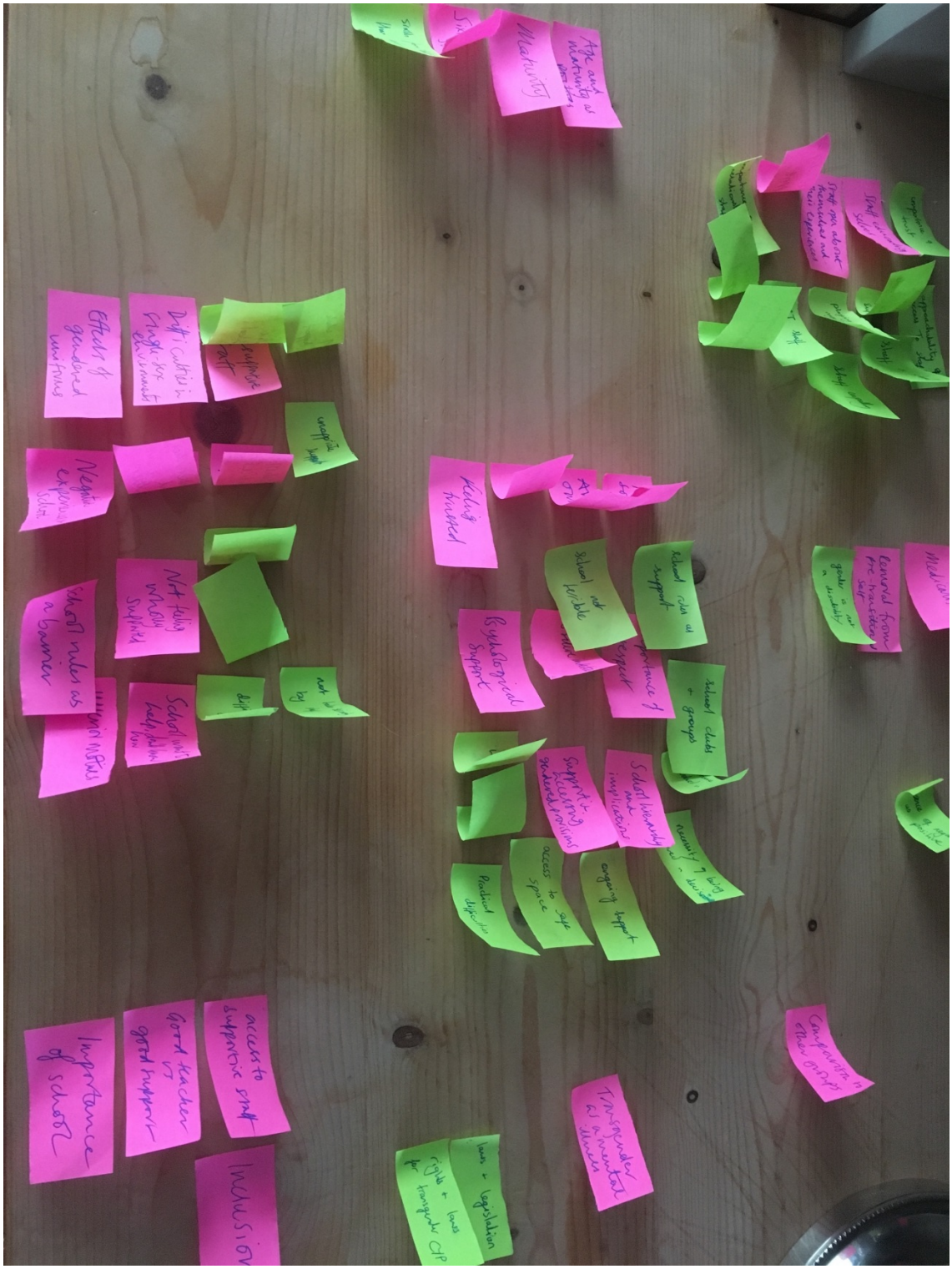
Grouping the transcript emergent themes for Nightcrawler:



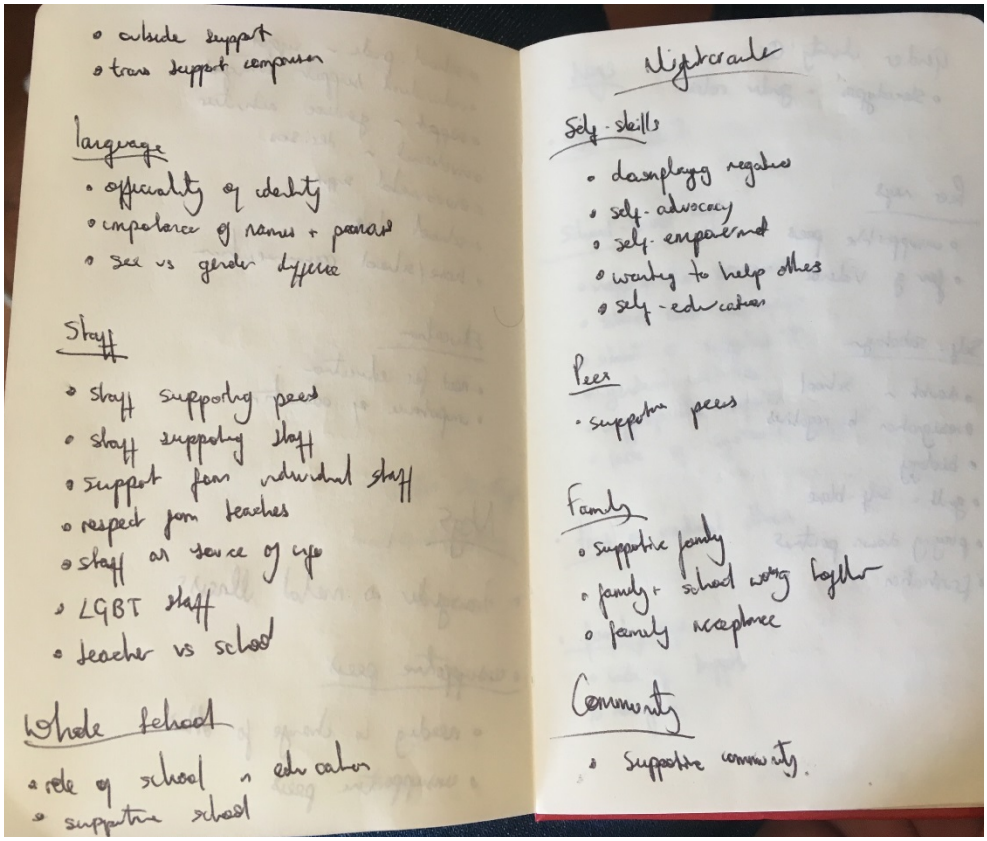
The grouped themes from Superman (yellow) and Nightcrawler (white):

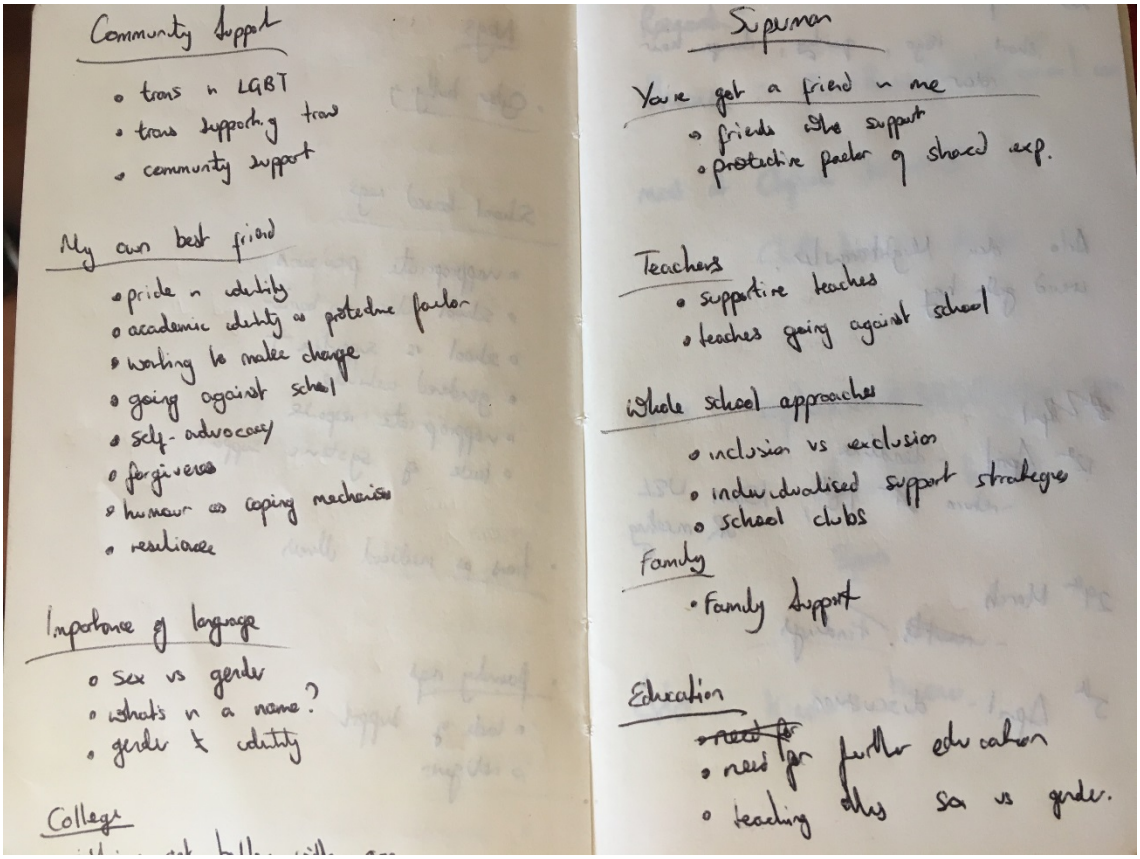


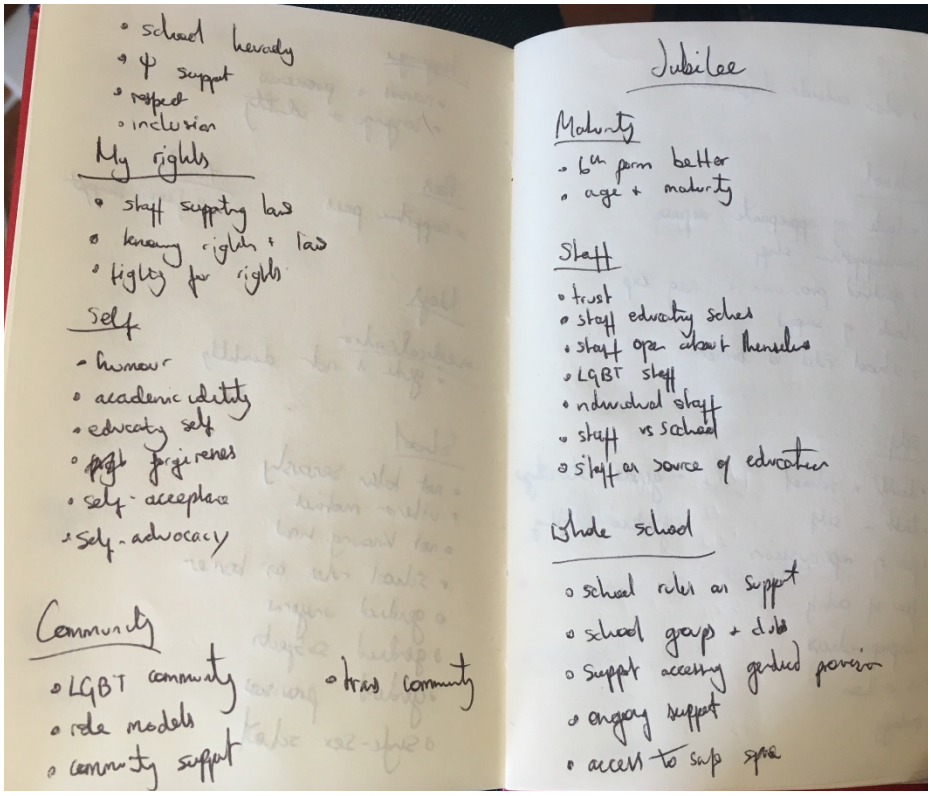
Some of the grouped themes from Jubilee's transcript:



Identifying superordinate and subordinate themes







- school hierarchy
- Ψ support
- respect
- inclusion

My rights

- staff supporting laws
- knowing rights + laws
- fighting for rights

Self

- humour
- academic identity
- educating self
- self forgiveness
- self-acceptance
- self-advocacy

Community

- LGBT community
- role models
- community support
- trans community

Jubilee

Maturity

- 6th form better
- age + maturity

Staff

- trust
- staff educating selves
- staff open about themselves
- LGBT staff
- individual staff
- staff vs school
- staff as source of education

Whole school

- school rules as support
- school groups + clubs
- support accessing gendered provision
- ongoing support
- access to safe space

Appendix I – Audit Notes & Codes from the Independent Psychologist

Analysis for Nightcrawler

Appendix J – Extracts from my Reflective Diary

Date	Reflection	Actions Arising
09/06/2018	For goodness sake. Another barrier. Still no progress with the XXX. After volunteering and supporting and building up relationships and interest with the CYP, XXX has turned around and said I can no longer do the research within the XXX space, as there is no room for me. If I want to do the interviews during the XXX meeting hours, I'll need to book a room, but that's upwards of £25 an hour, and with the interest that has been shown so far, I simply can't afford it. But what are my other options? Find a new setting and new participants? Meet the participants elsewhere? I don't want to do it in schools, as that might undermine the confidence of the participants and bias what they might say. I wanted to conduct this research outside of schools for a reason.	• Explore alternative places for interviews and ways to contact CYP. Talk with Jr. • Consider talking to SH about her role in XX and talking to CYP via her?
24/08/2018	I held the focus group today. Initially, I was upset as I only had three people turn up, and only two of those identified as transgender. However, after a discussion we felt it would be really useful if the cisgender adult also stay and take part, as it would bring different perspectives and understandings to the discussion and ensure that terms were explained in a way which cisgender individuals could understand. Besides that, I think it went well. The participants appreciated being able to create their own glossary of important terms, and though it led to some disagreements, this was actually really useful I feel as it meant we could explore terminology and what it means to different people and the importance the role of language plays within the transgender community. It also helped to go through the questions. Although I had designed the initial questions with a transman, they hadn't transitioned whilst at school, so it felt important to explore this more from individuals who had gone through the process themselves. This also led into a conversation around language again. Despite being worded with a member of the trans*	• Look at Methodology, explain why cisgender participant included. Is there literature for this? • Look at Literature Review, is language important in this? • Review glossary with others available, is there anything different? Do you include it or not? • You've got the questions, start arranging interviews! • Speak with XXX at the XXX to explore options of hiring a room if necessary for interviews, or exploring other options. • Speak with SH re. spaces and participants?
	community, both transgender participants in the research group felt that the language needed adjusting to ensure it was relatable and non-offensive to trans* CYP. This again highlighted to me the role of language within the community and the effect it can have on acceptance and engagement, or disengagement. The participants also added some questions they thought would be important, including one around family support. This was interesting, as it wasn't one I had thought of myself during the process, having my focus on school support. This highlighted to me the role family and school may play together.	

30/08/2018	Handed in the Literature Review today! First section, done! It's interesting to think that this is actually the first part of my actual thesis. So far there's been a lot of research, a lot of planning, and a lot of speculation, but now there is ink on the page and written work showcasing the work I've put in to this. I'm actually quite proud. I think it's the first time I've felt like this is achievable and manageable. I've already started on the methodology, so hopefully that won't take too long, and before you know it I'll have a thesis!	• Keep working on the Methodology • Take time to reflect with JR about writing style when I get draft back. • Consider length in relation to rest of thesis – is this justified?

16/01/2019	I had my first interview today! I felt nervous going into the interview as it was my first interview for my thesis, as well as my first interview for any research project. It helped that I knew the participant quite well due to the time spent volunteering at the Youth Group, which I helped us both relax and ease into the interview quite quickly. We began by discussing the aims of the research, going over the information and consent forms (which were honestly as much for my nerves and confidence as they were his) and discussing the role of anonymity within the data. The participant chose the pseudonym Superman, and we had a discussion about the use of superhero pseudonyms, and he really seemed to like it. He explained that he wasn't a big comic reader, but felt he could see where I was going and thought it was a good idea, which was nice. The interview was shorter than I initially thought they would be, which left me thinking that perhaps I had done something wrong or hadn't got enough information. However, I came out of the interview feeling like I had a good sense of some of the positive experiences Superman had experienced at school, as well as his ideas for further action. The conversation had more negative experiences in it than I would have assumed, but on reflection this may represent the greater sense of negativity that transgender CYPs face in school, as suggested by the literature. This made me question my aim briefly, but I reflected that Superman had appreciated the chance to talk about positives and told me that he thought what we were doing was important, which really helped.	• Consider booking room with windows to make it more comfortable for everyone. • Also, bring water. • Read through questions to familiarise yourself with them more for next interviews, so you feel more comfortable and confident • Play on the relationships you already have with participants! You've been there for over a year for a reason. Remember, this is probably as new for them as it is for you, so just go with it, follow them, and let them talk! • Meet with XXX and XXX on Wednesday. • Arrange more interviews!

18/01/2019	I had planned an additional two interviews today, but neither showed up. Instead, I waited outside the Town Hall for two hours in the rain. Not amused. It's already late on in the research and I only have one participant. I'm left thinking, will I get this done in time? Will I actually have participants? I just want data so I can crack on!	• Find different ways to communicate with participants other than by email. Discuss with JR about use of personal mobile? • Create Facebook group for easier communication? • Return to XXX Youth Group and speak again to participants?

08/02/2019	Following the no-show of participants last month, I arranged with XXX to go to the XXX and try and recruit again, however no trans*-identifying CYP were there! I'm getting desperate now. I still only have one participant, and I have no data analysed, no results, no discussion. The deadline is in April. Is that feasible? What will the impact be if I don't meet that?	• Speak with XXX about ways to communicate to interested CYP when I will and when I will not be at XXX, so they can plan accordingly if possible

07/04/2019	Today I finished the first draft of my discussion. That's it. The final chapter of my thesis! I know it is only a first draft, and also I still have to put everything together and make it coherent, but still, I've now completed drafts of every chapter in the thesis, and it feels good. It's funny to think how far I've come in such a short space of time, and looking back on my reflections how my tone has changed since January when there was no hope to now, when everything is jubilant and the possibilities seem endless. It was interesting going back over the findings and relating them to the literature. I had to do a lot of additional reading, including some bits of the media which really were quite distressing. It made me reflect on the power of community, as raised by the participants both for support and for negativity. Also, I wrote my reflections section today. I found it interesting how easily that flowed, and it made me think that it's something I have been doing within myself for a while, I suppose as demonstrated by these thoughts here. What surprised me most however, was reflecting on the sexuality and gender identity of the other researchers, and I realised that we are all part of this community, and that's why we're researching this. We want to help. We want to make things better. We don't want anyone else to go through what we did. I'm part of a community now!	• Take time to celebrate a little – you've earned it! • Step back and start piecing things together • Check handbook to find style guidelines and directions for the thesis overall • Organise a proofread with DL or WD?