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Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology

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How might a school community promote a sense of belonging in gender nonconforming young people? A narrative exploration with two young people

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THESIS

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Declaration

This thesis is being submitted for the award of Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology. I declare that it is my own work and does not include material that is the work of others without acknowledgement, that I have consulted all materials cited, and have not submitted this assignment for any other academic award.

Ashleigh Holt

September 2019

“Never make a trans child feel excluded…. You know what, I could just cross the T out and it’d still be correct. Don’t exclude children!”

Vincent

Overarching Abstract

This thesis explored the experiences of gender nonconforming (GNC) children and young people (CYP) in schools. It comprises three chapters: a literature review, a bridging document and a piece of empirical research.

The literature review documents a meta-ethnography that explored how school staff could effectively support GNC CYP. The findings suggested that the school community is an important factor in supporting GNC CYP, as opposed to individual school staff. The findings also supported a need for school staff to be provided with additional training and education. This in-turn supported them when managing the responses of other children in the school. At the centre of the findings was the need to have the CYP at the heart of any support provided, and to work with them in designing this support.

The bridging document aims to link the meta-ethnography and empirical research. It presents the theoretical underpinnings of the empirical project; outlining my ontology and epistemology, and how these informed the methodology. Ethical considerations are also discussed.

The empirical research took a narrative approach to exploring how two GNC CYP construct their stories of being supported within their school settings, particularly in relation to their sense of school belonging (SOSB). The findings are discussed in relation to the existing literature and the relevance for Educational Psychologists (EPs). The study reinforced the need to treat each GNC CYP as an individual rather than as a homogenous group.

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First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge that this thesis would not have been possible if it were not for the young people who volunteered to take part, and their families. Your enthusiasm, honesty and commitment to this project have been invaluable and I am forever grateful. Your words will stay with me throughout my work with children and young people.

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Abstract

Whilst research has repeatedly documented the negative school experiences, educational and psychological outcomes for gender nonconforming (GNC) children and young people (CYP) in recent years, it has also pointed to the positive impact of supportive educators. Broader reading indicates that educators often have a desire to act in the best interests of GNC CYP, but feel disempowered by the systems they work within, limited previous knowledge and experience, and also fear. This meta-ethnography aimed to gain an understanding of how some educators have provided support for GNC CYP and perceptions of how effective this has been. As a result of limited available literature the meta-ethnography explored the perceptions of educators and parents/carers; and drew upon a small amount of data from young people themselves. The process of the meta-ethnography is outlined and demonstrates one way of interpreting the process of synthesising qualitative research. The synthesis produced highlights the ways educators are entrenched within wider school communities and the effect that this has on their ability to support GNC CYP in their settings. It also indicates the importance of appropriate and ongoing professional development for all educational professionals, which will allow them to feel more competent in supporting GNC CYP. The effect of positive adult role models on the other young people within the school community is discussed, and finally the importance of consulting with the young person (YP) themselves is strongly advocated. The findings of this meta-ethnography are discussed in relation to the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP).

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 An issue of terminology

The nature of this topic is such that many terms may be used to describe or refer to similar concepts or to name a shared understanding. The terminology may be open to interpretation and may infer different meanings to different readers. It is

therefore necessary to note the ambiguous terms that may be used within this paper, and to explain the intended meaning of each.

Transgender – The term transgender refers to an individual whose gender identity does not correspond to their assigned sex at birth (Brighton and Hove City Council, 2013). Whilst many individuals who experience this identity disparity are happy to identify themselves as 'transgender' or 'trans', there are also those who prefer not to identify with this term (Gutierrez, 2004). Throughout this paper when the word 'transgender' is used it is as a result of using the words of someone else i.e. from the wider literature. I have chosen not to use the term to refer to all individuals discussed within the current review, and to instead use the term 'gender nonconforming' (GNC) as I consider it to be more reflective of a wider range of gender identities.

Gender nonconforming – This term is used to refer to individuals whose gender identity differs from cultural and social expectations prescribed for people of a particular sex (Van Caenegem et al., 2015). This could encompass those who feel their identity does not correspond to their birth sex, as well as those who are perhaps questioning their assigned gender, or those who assign to no gender at all. This encompasses those who identify as 'transgender' (Blevins, 2018).

Cisgender – This term refers to a person who identifies as the gender they were assigned at birth.

LGBT+ (Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender plus) – Throughout much of the existing literature and policy documentation about transgender individuals and particularly youth, GNC individuals are grouped with lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals under the umbrella term 'LGBT+'. I have a dissatisfaction with this term and find it difficult to understand why the needs and experiences of individuals who are experiencing gender identity disparity, are grouped so regularly with an issue of different sexuality; a separate concept. For this purpose, this review will try to avoid the term LGBT+ as much as is possible, as I would like to capture only the experiences of GNC individuals, and those working with them. de Jong (2014) acknowledges the problems created by conflating issues of gender with those of sexuality and suggests it may be partly to blame

for the limited discourse surrounding issues of gender. Encompassing research and writing regarding 'LGBT+ youth' may raise issues that aren't faced by GNC children and young people (CYP), and may focus more explicitly on sexual identity. My focus is specifically those whose gender identity does not fit with society's expectations. However, as much of the previous literature has conflated these concepts and researched the 'LGBT+' community, it has not been possible to exclude studies which focus on 'LGBT+' individuals from the wider discussion in this thesis.

1.1.2 Gender identity in education

Children begin to consider and understand their gender identity within school (K. E. Rands, 2009). Within the education system, there are individuals at all levels whose gender identity differs from that which is considered typical and dominant within society. Often, GNC CYP begin to question their gender identity during childhood (Brill & Pepper, 2008). GNC individuals are becoming more visible within schools, and it is the role of the school community to ensure that these CYP are included (Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2015), feel safe, supported and able to express themselves within the schooling environment. As this is a relatively emerging topic, some educators are left feeling uncertain about appropriate actions (van Leent, 2017).

One resource that schools often draw upon in times of uncertainty are educational psychologists (EPs) (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Broadly, the role of the EP is to work with CYP, their families and schools to promote their emotional and social wellbeing and to allow them to achieve their full potential (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2019). They are therefore in a pertinent position to support schools in the successful inclusion of CYP who identify as GNC. However, research into the profession's possible contribution is limited (Espelage, 2016).

1.1.3 Heteronormativity in schools

The gender binary has been socially constructed through normalising certain discourses about ways of being and doing (DePalma, 2013). Schools, often mirroring society in general, are places which regularly reinforce heteronormative practice, and children's school lives are heavily shaped by

gender (Jones et al., 2016; Ryan, Patraw, & Bednar, 2013). DePalma and Atkinson (2010) recognised how the heteronormative culture in which we live has prevented educators from exploring gender diversity within their settings. When this is discussed as part of the curriculum, Head Teachers often face challenge from the community (E. Morgan & Taylor, 2019). This has allowed the gendered school environment to persist and create a perception of a young person who presents with transgressions from this societal norm as someone who needs to be rescued or tolerated (DePalma, 2013).

It has been suggested that EPs are often well-placed to provide supportive challenge to schools in relation to practices around gender equality and in reducing heteronormative practices within school settings (Rands, 2013). .

1.1.4 Issues for GNC CYP

Research into the experiences and outcomes of GNC CYP paints a bleak picture. The victimisation and harassment faced by GNC CYP within schools has been well documented (Grossman et al., 2009; Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009; Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong, 2018; Stonewall, 2017; Wyss, 2004). They are often more vulnerable to bullying than their cisgender peers, and in turn, at increased risk of isolation within the school environment (Stonewall, 2017). As well as these factors contributing to lower attainment outcomes for GNC CYP (Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013), there are also far more severe consequences of such discrimination. The Stonewall Schools report (2017) highlighted that more than four in five transgender young people have self-harmed, and more than two in five transgender young people have attempted suicide.

The National School Climate Survey (2018) found that CYP who were victimised based upon their gender expression or sexual orientation had significantly poorer psychological wellbeing, and experienced less sense of school belonging (SOSB) than those who reported lower levels of victimisation. Experiencing a SOSB has been found to have positive impacts (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005). Compared to other LGBT+ students surveyed in the National School Climate Survey, GNC CYP faced the most hostile schooling environment and more negative experiences of school.

Despite the negative reported outcomes and experiences for GNC CYP, the positive impact of supportive educators has been recognised (Kosciw et al., 2018; Stonewall, 2017). Kosciw et al. (2009) emphasised the importance of moving beyond research which highlights the victimisation and harassment of gender minority students, but also considers how a supportive school environment can be established for them to learn.

1.1.5 The role of school personnel

Research has indicated the possible contribution of supportive staff within school for GNC CYP (Kosciw et al., 2018; Stonewall, 2017) and the importance of school staff knowing how to include and support a young person who expresses in a GNC way. Jones et al. (2016) suggests that schools should make provision under the assumption that they already do, or at some point will, educate GNC CYP in their settings, as GNC CYP often remain invisible within schools, particularly primary schools.

Teachers have expressed uncertainty and anxiety around supporting GNC CYP within their school, often as a result of feeling ill-equipped to do so (van Leent, 2017). McBride and Schubotz (2017) suggested that a lack of training often leaves school staff feeling unprepared to meet the needs of GNC CYP adequately. If teachers are more confident in providing appropriate support for GNC CYP, they may feel more efficacious about their role and will be empowered to continue.

EPs can work at all three levels of the Currie matrix (SEED, 2002); individual child and family; school and establishment; and local authority (LA). It is not thought that EPs necessarily would need to work directly with a GNC young person (YP) to provide support. Instead, it is deemed more appropriate for EPs to work with school settings to promote their successful inclusion (Yavuz, 2016). In the current review I will, therefore, be focussing mostly on the second level; school and establishment.

1.1.6 The purpose of this review

The purpose of the current review was to identify ways in which school staff can support GNC CYP. By identifying how school staff may already be supporting GNC

CYP effectively, it may be possible to consider how other school staff can provide the most appropriate support for GNC CYP in their settings. I am interested in the perceptions and experiences of individuals involved directly with supporting GNC CYP, or the CYP themselves. This review aimed to shed light on the most appropriate ways in which EPs can be involved in ensuring schools are welcoming places for GNC CYP.

The question for this review is therefore: How can school staff support GNC CYP in the school environment?

1.2 Method

1.2.1 Chosen method of exploration

The research question lends itself to qualitative research, as it is interested in the perceptions or experiences of people who have either been supported by school staff, or the school staff themselves. Britten et al. (2002) emphasised the importance of using qualitative methods to synthesise qualitative studies. I therefore conducted a meta-ethnography; a method considered one of the most well-developed approaches to synthesising qualitative data (Britten et al., 2002). I recognise that conducting a synthesis in qualitative research could be considered problematic in that it may appear an attempt to reduce complex, rich, individual experiences; however, in order to provide an idea of how GNC CYP have been supported by school staff, it was necessary to explore the existing literature and try to identify some commonalities within the accounts. GNC CYP are not a homogenous group. Therefore, it is inevitable that the findings of the synthesis will not be directly relevant to all GNC CYP.

Noblit and Hare (1988) proposed seven overlapping phases which have been used to guide the process:

Table 1: Seven steps of a meta-ethnography as outlined by Noblit and Hare (1988)

Phase	What is involved?
Phase 1	Getting started
Phase 2	Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest
Phase 3	Reading the studies
Phase 4	Determining how the studies are related
Phase 5	Translating the studies into one another
Phase 6	Synthesising translations
Phase 7	Expressing the synthesis

1.2.2 Phases 1 & 2: Getting started and deciding what is relevant to the initial interest

Initial reading highlighted the well-documented negative outcomes and treatment within school settings of GNC CYP (Grossman et al., 2009; Gutierrez, 2004; Kosciw et al., 2018; Stonewall, 2017; Wyss, 2004). Rather than further explore these unfavourable outcomes and statistics, I was interested in exploring the possibility for support. Considering how GNC CYP could be supported effectively within the school environment became my main topic of focus. Feelings of connection to school, support students to achieve positive outcomes, as well as to flourish as individuals (Catalano, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004). Relationships with school staff can be integral in fostering these feelings of connectedness (Roffey, 2015). I am primarily concerned with how change can be facilitated through relationships and human interaction. The focus of the review was therefore to explore how GNC CYP could be supported through relationships with school staff.

Initially, I was interested in the experiences of primary-aged CYP. Scoping highlighted this as a gap in the literature and an area in which there appeared to be heightened anxiety about how to discuss gender (K. E. Rands, 2009; Ryan et al., 2013). Due to the limited available literature in the specific area, I was required to open my search parameters to include all school-aged CYP.

Noblit and Hare (1988) indicated the purpose of a meta-ethnography is not to combine all research findings on the subject of interest, suggesting an in-depth literature search unnecessary. However, a literature-search was conducted to

provide a wide body of research from which the final sample could be selected. The review was conducted between August and November 2017 using the following databases: ERIC, British Education Index, Scopus and PsychInfo. Hand searches were also conducted over the same time period. In accordance with the research interests, the search terms used for this review (in mixed combinations) were:

- Transgender/gender non-conforming/gender diverse/ gender variant/ gender non-binary/ gender identity disorder/ gender dysphoria
- Educat$/ School$/ teach$
- Experiences/perceptions/attitudes/views

Initial searches produced hundreds of results per database (Figure 1). A set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were therefore necessary. These helped to establish which papers would be relevant for the meta-ethnography.

Table 2: Exclusion and Inclusion criteria for meta-ethnography

Exclusion Criteria	**Inclusion Criteria**
Focus on LGBT issues	Written in English
Focus on YP above school age	Western Origin
Quantitative	Qualitative
Focus on children with GNC parents, or GNC teachers	Focus on school staff support

The problematic nature of including studies which focus on LGBT issues more generally has previously been discussed. I also excluded papers which focused on YP older than school age, in order to ensure they were relevant for the current project concerned with those of school age. Many studies documented the challenges experienced by college or university students, but these issues were often very different to those experienced by those who were still in compulsory schooling. The searches also returned many papers which were considering the impact of having GNC parents, or issues for GNC teachers. These papers were excluded as they were not relevant to the specific interest of the review. Similarly, papers which reported upon particular projects aimed at supporting GNC CYP were discounted, as they did not provide information about what

school staff in particular were doing to support individual GNC CYP. Due to the limited research focussing specifically on the area of interest, I included studies of western origin which met all other criteria for inclusion. Although papers returned were based within different educational contexts, I considered this to provide opportunity to learn from other nations, and a richer picture of how GNC CYP can be supported.

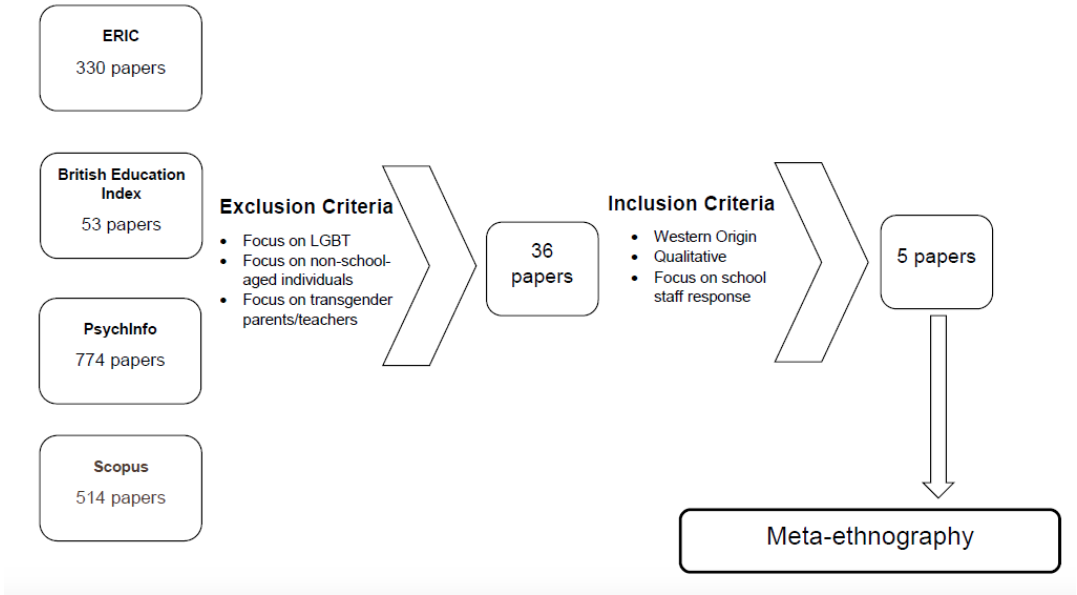

Figure 1: Flow Chart to show the process of selecting papers for the meta-ethnography

The search criteria left five studies for use within the meta-ethnography. Two of these were case studies which detailed the support given to two YP within the USA during their social transitions. Although these could be considered to be interpretive research rather than empirical studies, Geertz (1973, p. 9), as cited by Walsham (2006), suggested that 'what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to'. In this way, I considered that the case studies were ideally suited to be used within the meta-ethnography, as they detailed the first-hand perceptions of those who have supported GNC CYP in their settings. During synthesis it is then the role of the researcher to explore their own constructions of these perceptions.

Five papers were chosen for the meta-ethnography. Table 3 was created to document demographic information of each of the studies. This is shown below:

Table 3: Demographic information for the papers chosen for the meta-ethnography

Author (Year) and Title	Sample	Data collection	Setting
Bowskill (2017) **How educational professionals can improve the outcomes for transgender children and young people**	15 transgender adults (aged 18-68) and 10 professionals that had supported gender nonconforming young people (3 Educational Psychologists, 1 Clinical psychologist 3 teachers, 1 teaching assistant and 2 youth workers).	Intensive interviewing was used. These interviews began with transgender participants which allowed the data to be grounded in their experiences and fed into questions in later interviews. Theoretical sampling was used to guide the interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed following each interview.	UK-based study
Frohard-Dourlent (2016) **'I don't care what's under your clothes': the discursive positioning of educators working with trans and gender-nonconforming students**	62 educators working in public schools (majority secondary schools) where gender nonconforming young people had attended or were attending. All participants had worked directly with these students. The majority of participants were white, heterosexual women in their 40s and 50s. One educator identified as transgender.	In-depth qualitative interviews. Interviews lasted on average 75 minutes.	British Columbia, Canada.

Author (Year) and Title	Sample	Data collection	Setting
Payne & Smith (2014) **The big freak out: Educator fear in response to the presence of transgender elementary school students**	12 participants, including district-level administrators, school principals, student support professionals and classroom teachers from five different schools, both urban and suburban. All participants were directly involved in the support and education of a transgender student.	All data was collected via semi-structured interviews which ranged from 45 minutes to two hours, with questions focussed on the educator's personal experiences with transgender students, their perceptions or their school's success in supporting a transgender child, and their recommendations for information educators need to receive in their training in order to feel prepared to support a transgender child in their school. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.	New York, USA
Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013) **Is this the right elementary school for my gender nonconforming child?**	1 gender nonconforming child's mother, the school guidance counsellor, the school principal	Case study. The paper documents narratives from four key players. It documents and reflects on the work done over	Pennsylvania, USA.

Author (Year) and Title	Sample	Data collection	Setting
	and the consultant who led initial professional development.	five years to support a gender nonconforming child.	
Luecke (2011) **Working with transgender children and their classmates in pre-adolescence: Just be supportive**	1 gender nonconforming child, the child's legal guardian and school district personnel.	This study documents a school district's coordinated response to an elementary student's social transition from a gender variant boy to a female gender expression. Data were gathered through analysis of journal entries, lesson plans, and interviews.	Wisconsin, USA.

1.2.3 Phases 3, 4 and 5

Although distinct phases are laid out in Noblit and Hare (1988) as a guide to the meta-ethnographic process, these are not prescriptive and could benefit from clarification (Atkins et al., 2008). There is a lack of clarity between phases 3, 4 and 5 and I therefore did not progress in a simple, linear fashion, but rather in a more iterative process. The five papers were read repeatedly. Whilst reading, key details and emerging indications of pertinent themes were recorded by hand.

I initially approached these phases of the meta-ethnography as a thematic analysis; coding each paper and theming the codes to try and understand how they may relate to one another. However, it became clear that I had coded too much information; I had coded information which was not directly relevant to the question for the synthesis. I took a step back and considered each paper individually to identify the main themes which I considered emerged from each. This process required interpretation on my part, as some papers reported a 'findings' section, whereas others did not. I made the decision to interpret main themes from each paper as opposed to relying on the findings of the authors. I did this for each paper in the interests of maintaining a consistent approach. This way, the themes I pulled from papers did not directly relate to the author's findings if they were present. The interpreted themes can be found in table 4.

It is suggested in Noblit and Hare (1988) that there are different levels of interpretation and distinction should be made between first and second-order constructs. Atkins et al. (2008) described how this can be problematic as it is difficult for any author to truly represent the participants' voice without adding any of their own interpretation or meaning. This is further complicated, due to the nature of the papers being synthesised. In Slesaransky-Poe, Ruzzi, Dimedio, and Stanley (2013) the author is also one of the participants as the paper is an account of her own experiences as a mother of a GNC CYP. Interpretive levels were difficult to separate. Therefore, I made the decision to consider all constructs drawn from the papers as second-order.

Table 4: Table displaying themes from each paper

Paper Author (Year)	Themes identified
Bowskill (2017)	• Gender divisions and stereotyping within school • The need for professionals to access helpful information • Staff qualities viewed favourably • Responding to the individual not the label • Collaboration
Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	• Educators anticipation of bullying from peers • Focus of external systemic obstacles to supporting young person • Limited experience/knowledge with GNC youth • Educators downplaying their actions • Adults as protector for GNC young people • Educator attitudes towards GNC young person • Educators altered attitudes/actions
Payne & Smith (2014)	• Educators feeling that they lacked education or experience in gender diversity • Educator emotion • Having limited information/protocol to direct work • Perception of GNC YP being a 'problem' • Educators wanting to do the right thing but not knowing what that is • Confidentiality • Fear of community perceptions
Slesaransky-Poe, Ruzzi, Dimedio & Stanley (2013)	• Experience and knowledge • School ethos/culture • Keeping children safe • Collaborative working • Concerns of educators

Paper Author (Year)	Themes identified
	• Individual approach
Luecke (2010)	• Educators showing support • Involving the whole community • Keeping the young person central to the process • Encouraging support from peers • Working collaboratively • Being open and honest with others • School ethos/climate • Importance of training and protocol

The main themes from each paper were compared in. Table 5 indicates which themes were present within each paper. Only themes which were apparent in two or more of the papers were taken forward to the synthesis in order that no voices were heard much more strongly than others.

1.3 Findings

1.3.1 Phase 6 – Synthesising translations

It was established that the synthesis could form a line of argument. The goal of lines-of-argument synthesis is to 'discover a "whole" among a set of parts' (Noblit & Hare, 1988, p. 63) and it allows for an interpretation of all of the selected studies. The first step of the synthesis is to translate the studies into one another by comparing the main themes and constructs. This is expressed in Table 5. A more detailed version of the table with examples can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 5: Table displaying which concepts are present within each paper

Concept	Present in paper?				
	Bowskill (2017)	**Frohard-Dourlent (2016)**	**Payne & Smith (2014)**	**Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)**	**Luecke (2010)**
The value of education, experience and protocol	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Educators' attributes and actions	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Individual approach	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Collaboration	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
The other children	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

The second phase of the synthesis required me to theorise how the similarities and differences between the studies fit into an interpretive order. This required me to reinterpret the 8 second-order constructs (in Table 5) and consider how they could provide a new understanding. This process is demonstrated in Appendix 3, it is outlined in Figure 2. It was established that these 4 constructs could form a line-of-argument synthesis.

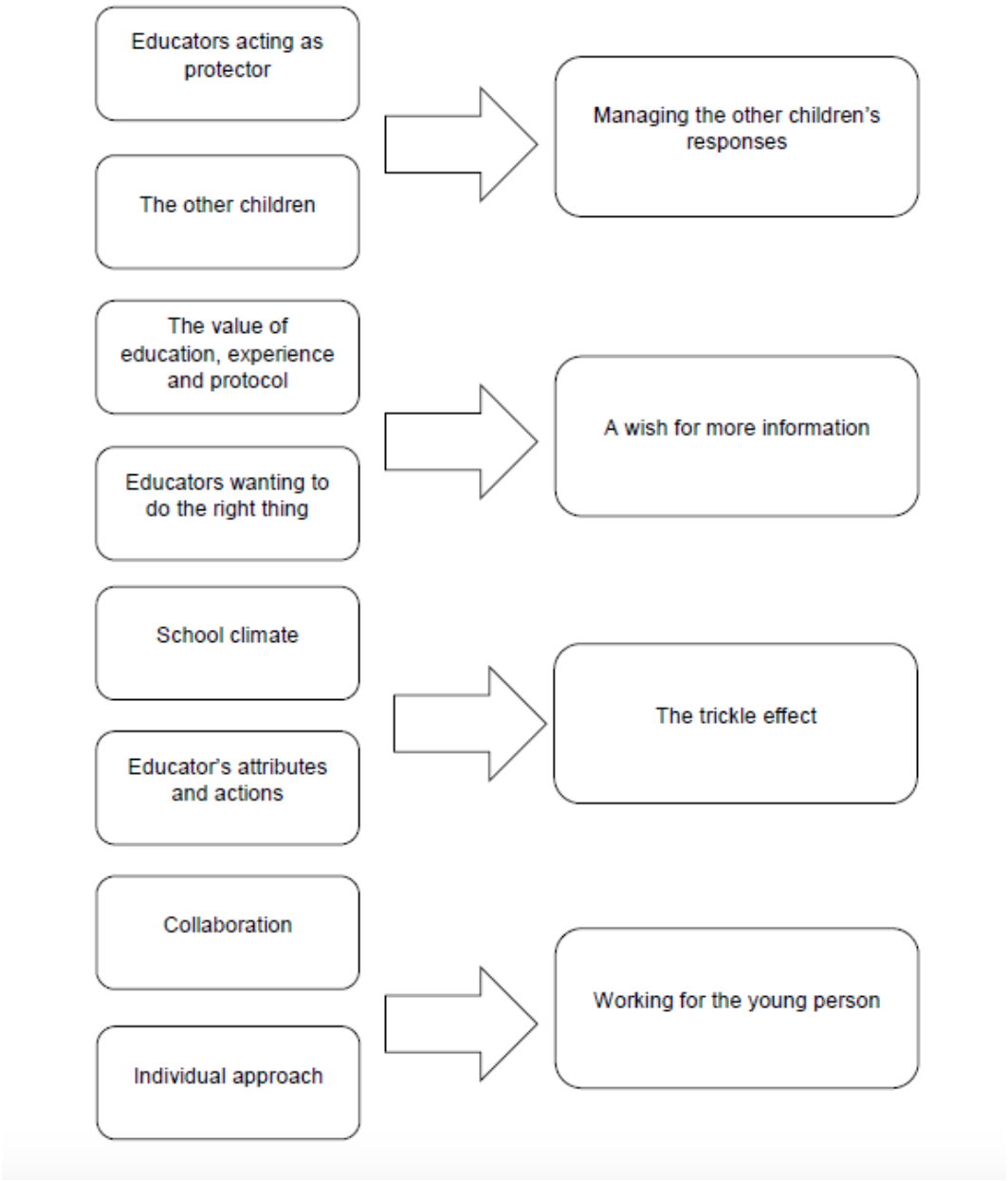

Figure 2: Outline of process synthesising second-order constructs to third-order constructs

1.3.2 Phase 7 – Expressing the synthesis

The synthesis of the studies is expressed in Figure 2 below. I have used a circular model to represent how the different concepts relate to each other. A particular sentence from Luecke (2011, p. 130) resonated with me; 'It's like we were wrapped around Jaden - she was at the centre, and then her friends, her teachers, her classroom, her grade, the school, the larger community- it spiralled out in layers wrapping around her' and although not intentional, I wonder whether this had some influence when designing how I expressed the synthesis. The layers of the model are bound by permeable membranes to reflect the dynamic nature of a school community and the impact that this has on the response to the GNC YP, and arrows indicate the bidirectional relationship between layers. The synthesis acknowledges the culture and history surrounding the school environment which will influence its community values and feed into the system of support.

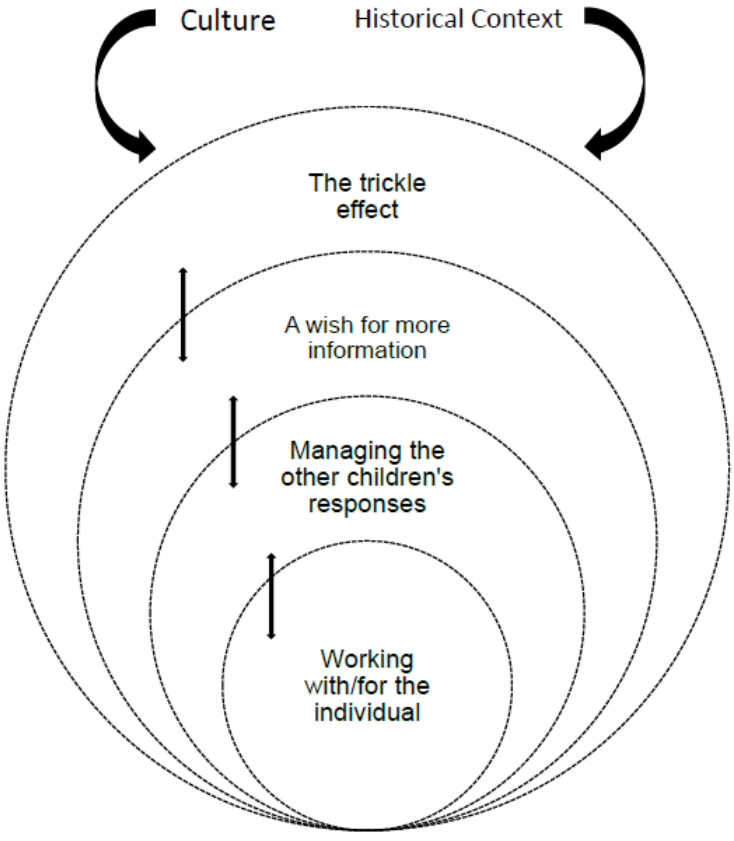

Figure 3: Visual expression of the synthesis

I will now consider the findings outlined above, in relation to the existing literature. I will consider the implications of the findings, and the limitations of the meta-ethnography.

1.4 Discussion

1.4.1 The trickle effect

This theme is named 'The trickle effect' as this highlights the way a supportive school ethos is built when it begins with senior management. It can then be fed down through each of the layers in the school community. It is essential to also acknowledge the positioning of the school within a larger community (Kosciw et al., 2009); a community with its own socio-historical context and subsequent values which therefore influence the school climate. In the same respect, it is important to be aware of the position of educators within the school system. School staff are part of a school community and their actions and attitudes will inevitably be shaped by this. The synthesis highlighted that a supportive school community is built from the top and this feeds into the attitudes and actions of everyone involved. This is consistent with the suggestion of Brill and Pepper (2008, p. 163) that 'creating an inclusive school culture requires a comprehensive approach based on defining core values and consistently reinforcing them'.

Collier, Bos, and Sandfort (2015) found that teachers who participated in their research generally reported strong intentions to intervene in hypothetical scenarios of harassment based on sexual orientation or gender expression. Although it could be argued that this may be circular, and teachers who volunteer to participate in research may be more likely to intervene, this mirrors the attitudes presented by many of the teachers in the studies involved in the meta-ethnography. The synthesis highlighted clear positive intentions on behalf of school staff. In some cases (Luecke, 2011; Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013), staff were supported by senior management, which resulted in a GNC YP being perceived to have been supported effectively. Conversely, in other papers in the synthesis, educators observed management experiencing difficulties making decisions when they did not feel supported by their own administration. This resulted in educators feeling powerless to act in the ways they highlighted they would like to (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016; E. Payne & Smith, 2014).

Schneider and Dimito (2008, p. 66) hail anti-discrimination policies 'a key place to start' in the support of LGBT students within schools. McBride and Schubotz (2017, p. 301) highlighted how transphobia can be connected to 'heteronormative structures, ethos, curriculum and policies of some schools'. Although this research was conducted within Northern Ireland, and reflects particularly the impact of the religious community, it indicates the impact of the school community on GNC CYP. However, Brill and Pepper (2008) acknowledged that schools cannot expect to create a fully inclusive school climate through policies alone. Instead, they indicate the importance of consistently reinforcing the value of inclusivity.

McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, and Russell (2010) highlighted the benefits of schools working to reduce harassment and discrimination, explaining that when schools took action to reduce this, GNC CYP who participated in their study reported feeling more connected to school staff, which in turn increased their feelings of safety at school. Ullman (2017) called for a better understanding of how teachers are implicated in a sense of school connection for GNC CYP and how this can be supported further.

Another common thread that was present within papers reviewed was that of heteronormativity. There is acknowledgement that schools are settings in which gender roles and the gender binary is often reinforced (Jones et al., 2016; Ryan et al., 2013). Educators can perceive themselves constrained by systems which reinforce the gender binary and gender stereotypes. Riley, Clemson, Sitharthan, and Diamond (2013, p. 253) acknowledged the need for schools to support gender diversity by 'eliminating gender stereotyping'. This was echoed by Malins (2016) who suggested that professional development should make educators aware of issues surrounding gender and heteronormativity. Considering the 'trickle effect' discussed, this is something which is required to begin with school management.

1.4.2 A wish for more information

Despite the synthesis and existing literature (Bartholomaeus, Riggs, & Andrew, 2017; M. Smith & Payne, 2016) highlighting positive intentions of school staff,

their lack of experience and training, as well as a lack of guidance and suitable school policies, often leaves educators feeling incompetent and unsure of what to do when supporting GNC CYP. In addition, GNC CYP recognise when staff are undereducated about gender diversity (Sausa, 2005).

The synthesis highlighted that in supportive school communities, in which staff are encouraged to be open with each other and to ask questions, an acknowledgement of their lack of knowledge, experience and confidence in working with GNC CYP was met with further training and support around gender related issues (Luecke, 2011; Slesaransky-Poe et al., 2013). Bartholomaeus et al. (2017) outlined that professional support is essential for educators working in such an ethically and politically sensitive area. Their study highlighted that the support of organisations considered to have 'expertise' in the field of gender diversity had a positive impact on the confidence of the teachers involved.

In settings where staff members were supported by a more knowledgeable organisation, they considered themselves to be more equipped to respond appropriately to GNC CYP in their setting. Extended support of these organisations and individuals was also seen as beneficial. Brill and Pepper (2008) also recognise the essentiality of training for staff within schools, and indicate that this should not be one-off training, but continuing support for all school personnel. They highlight that as well as upskilling school staff about gender-related issues, this helps to reinforce the school's commitment to including GNC CYP – something which will serve to further influence the wider school community and ethos.

1.4.3 Managing the other children's responses

The meta-ethnography suggests when school staff had received specific training and education, they often reported more confidence in responding to the questions and comments of other young people about gender diversity. In supportive school climates, staff often did this with a knowledge that their seniors would support their decisions to speak openly with the other children about this often sensitive topic. In these cases, other young people, who, in a less supportive school climate setting, were framed as potential bullies and were seen as a danger to the GNC YP (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016), were utilised in the support of the GNC

CYP. Staff in settings where an ethos of respect and equality was not embedded, often saw themselves as 'protector' because they feared the actions of other young people. Ryan et al. (2013, p. 101) indicated that the results of their study suggested primary aged children were 'ready to learn about gender diversity' and suggested that this can be addressed appropriately through teaching over time. In settings where there was an established climate of respect and a zero-tolerance policy on harassment and victimisation, educators recognised that they were required to be available for the GNC YP, but also made themselves available to the other children to answer any queries that they might have. Young people were able to observe the staff around them modelling acceptance of gender diversity and this behaviour trickled-down into their own actions. One of the main recommendations in Riley, Sitharthan, Clemson, and Diamond (2013) was that GNC CYP need acceptance, which encompassed being accepted within school and the wider community. When staff modelled this acceptance of gender diversity, a message of positivity was given to other young people.

1.4.4 Working with/for the individual

Finally, when the above concepts had been established and a system of support had trickled-down from the wider school community, senior leaders and teaching staff were able to work with the child's family, the child's friends and most importantly the individual child. This ensured that support was tailored specifically to the individual and that the GNC YP was the driver behind any decisions made. Collaboration emerged as a vital component of successfully supporting a GNC YP through the meta-ethnography, however the most important person deemed necessary in the collaboration was the YP.

Whilst considered unnecessary for external professionals, such as EPs, to always work directly with the YP (Yavuz, 2016), it is often emphasised that their work should be directly in relation to what the YP wants and requests. This is consistent with the Children and Families Act (2014) which highlights the need for professionals to work with the best interests of the YP in mind. Bowskill (2017) and Slesaransky-Poe et al. (2013) both highlighted the need to see the CYP as an individual rather than a label, and design support around their individual needs. Similarly, Luecke (2011) advocated that it is essential to keep

the YP at the centre of the process and ensure all work carried out is in-line with their wishes.

1.5 Considering the implications

1.5.1 Implications for Educational Psychologists

Several findings from this synthesis suggest roles for an EP. As previously highlighted, EPs work at three levels; LA, school and establishment, and child and family (SEED, 2002). It has been emphasised that creating an inclusive school community in which GNC CYP can feel welcome and supported must go further than policies alone. However, EPs are able to assist LAs and school settings in their efforts to produce such policy documents. These can therefore form the basis of the inclusive school ethos. This must be reinforced within school, and the importance of ongoing support from external professionals has also been highlighted above. Through developing trusting relationships with schools in which they work, EPs can offer a 'critical friend' approach (Costa & Kallick, 1993) to support the monitoring of the implementation of such policies.

EPs can also support staff through training and ongoing professional development (Peter Farrell et al., 2006; SEED, 2002). The benefits of school staff receiving education and specific training regarding supporting GNC CYP has been highlighted above. EPs are well-placed to provide this and to consider practical ways individual school staff can reflect upon their own practice. EPs can offer suggestion in relation to reducing heteronormative practices within schools, and ensuring classrooms are inclusive and welcoming spaces for GNC CYP.

There should be no reason why EPs must work directly with the CYP or their family (Yavuz, 2016) as it is the responsibility of the school community to be equipped to support GNC CYP. However, EPs may be well-placed to consider the views and wishes of the YP if no one else is able to do so. This can help to ensure that support offered is in-line with the YP's wishes.

1.5.2 Limitations

There has been debate about the use of quality-assessment tools when synthesising qualitative data (Campbell et al., 2011; Toye et al., 2013) however no clear conclusions have been drawn. Toye et al. (2013, p. 11) highlighted the

difficulty in determining a universal understanding of the term 'quality' and highlight how this can be problematic, stating that 'the concept of quality is constructed and dynamic'. I consider that in-line with my social constructionist stance, rating studies based on the quality of the information offered by each appears to lack ontological coherence. Barbour (2001) argued that the use of a qualitative method of assessing qualitative data, Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence tool for example, can be inappropriate as the unique contribution of that particular study is then lost. Campbell et al. (2011, p. 45) explored this debate to some extent and concluded that although there is a place for quality-appraisal, the inclusion of less rigorous or 'poorer studies' was 'unlikely to have a very distorting impact on a qualitative synthesis'.

It is important to acknowledge my own influence on the outcome of the synthesis. As the meta-ethnography requires interpretation on the part of the researcher, (Noblit & Hare, 1988) it is unavoidable that my own experiences and values will have had some effect on the synthesis. Doyle (2003) highlights the challenge of separating your interpretations from one paper whilst trying to approach the next with an open-mind, and it is therefore likely that as the process continued my own thoughts were influenced by previous interpretations and understandings.

1.5 Conclusion

The meta-ethnography originally aimed to focus on the effective ways that school staff could provide support to GNC CYP. The importance of the school community in the design and implementation of this support has been highlighted. This required me to consider the school context more broadly within my discussion.

In taking a more systemic view of how GNC CYP can be supported within the school community, it has been possible to consider how focussing on individual staff may have been quite limiting in itself and may have also been quite reductionist in nature; assuming perhaps that school staff are free from the systems and contexts within which they work. Rather, individual school staff are embedded in the context of the school and the wider community, which will inevitably have an effect on their own actions. The review has reflected upon

how an ethos of support and respect for GNC CYP is developed through more than school policy. It must filter down from willing leadership, who will allow their staff to extend their knowledge and skills around supporting GNC CYP, allowing them to feel comfortable in addressing issues of gender and equality with the rest of the school population. Several areas have been highlighted in which EPs may offer support to school communities in providing a welcoming space for GNC CYP.

It was striking to note the lack of research from the perspective of GNC CYP themselves. The synthesis highlighted the importance of support being designed specifically for the individual, as opposed to a blanket approach being offered. It is therefore imperative that GNC young people are consulted with in the design of support offered to them.

The meta-ethnography provides a new interpretation of the ways in which GNC CYP may be supported within school settings, however I consider the key outcome from the synthesis was the central circle – the importance of any support being driven by what the YP wants and needs. The lack of research available from the CYP's perspective means at present that we have limited understanding of what these needs may be. Therefore, further research which aims to hear the school experiences of GNC CYP would be beneficial.

Chapter 2: My stance as a researcher: The journey from meta-ethnography to empirical project

2.1 Introduction

The aims of the present chapter are to consider the findings of the meta-ethnography in relation to the design of an empirical project; to consider my stance as a researcher and how my ontology and epistemology have underpinned the way in which I have conducted this project; and to consider the ethical implications of the empirical project. This chapter will start by considering the motivations for undertaking this particular piece of work.

2.1.1 Motivations

My interest in this area began with involvement in a piece of casework whereby a seven year old was questioning their gender. This brought confusion and a sense of helplessness to those around the young person. This interest developed when I commenced work in a local authority (LA) within the North East of England, and noticed many email queries within the LA on the subject of gender nonconforming (GNC) children and young people (CYP). I found a lack of guidance about what might be useful amongst the Educational Psychology (EP) profession in the North East. A growing, nationwide discussion was also gaining momentum (Reed, 2017; Richardson, 2017; Turner, 2017; Yorke, 2017) as more CYP identified as GNC. The Tavistock and Portman Gender Identity Dysphoria Service (GIDS) reported a significant increase in referrals for CYP (Gender Identity Development Service, 2018). A discussion with two specialist advisory teachers within the LA's Equalities Education Service highlighted a number of CYP in the LA who were experiencing gender dysphoria to some extent. It is also highlighted that school staff were often unsure how best to support their needs.

A media discussion began, which further highlighted the confusion and concern in relation to supporting GNC CYP in schools. I began exploring the subject of GNC CYP, and believed further guidance for schools and EPs would be helpful.

2.1.2 Terminology

For the purposes of this project I was required to use a term to describe the focus CYP (Page 2). I considered 'Gender nonconforming' to be most appropriate, however I have continued to question this decision. Both participants indicated that they felt comfortable with the term, 'Transgender'. Neither indicated the term, 'Gender nonconforming' to be problematic. However, I have questioned whether I should be led specifically by them and use the term 'transgender'. The term 'transgender', to me, signifies a process of change that is incomplete. I'm unsure if this is how the participants would want their gender to be positioned. I am also unsure, though, whether the term 'gender nonconforming' suggests that they should in fact conform. However, whilst not my own perception, this is an assumption of many people within society. This attitude alone provides warrant for this project. I will continue, tentatively, to use the term 'gender nonconforming', as it continues to seem most appropriate to me. When talking specifically about the young people I will describe them as 'Transgender', in the interests of being led by them and respecting their wishes, and in line with recommendations of The British Psychological Society (2012) to use the individual's preferred language.

2.2 Theoretical Underpinnings

The initial question for review was shaped by a perception that the actions of staff within school, and their relationships with GNC CYP would be instrumental in the support provided to GNC CYP. On reflection, I did not appreciate the influence of the school community. Although school staff are agentic beings, they do not exist in isolation and they themselves are part of the school community in which the GNC YP is educated. Therefore, a more appropriate question may have been:

How can a school community support gender nonconforming children and young people?

This prompted me to consider my own understanding of the term 'community', and its relevance for the current research. This will be discussed in the section below.

2.2.1 Community

A community can be defined in a number ways, and the notion of what constitutes a community is ambiguous (Mason, 2000). Roffey (2013, p. 40) describes that "there is a sense of emotional connection, shared values and inter-dependence" between the members of the community. A community in this case, does not necessarily need to refer to a geographical location, but refers instead to a feeling of connectedness between members. This suggests that this is something that can be experienced by those within a community.

2.2.2 Sense of community or sense of belonging

Researchers have been interested in how human beings experience this community. Within the literature, a number of terms exist to refer to this. These include: 'sense of belonging', 'sense of community', and 'connectedness'. I have found little consistent difference in the definitions of these constructs, and therefore consider the different terms unproblematic. It would appear that each describes a very similar concept, however may have been captured differently depending on the social context in which the term was derived. A sense of belonging is also sometimes referred to as an aspect of a sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Definitions of these terms consistently have a relational basis. A sense of community has been described as feelings of being part of 'a readily available mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one could depend' (Sarason, 1974, p. 1, in Nowell & Boyd, 2010), where members mattered to one another (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), and where members won't experience sustained loneliness (Sarason,1974, in Nowell & Boyd, 2010). This is mirrored in definitions of a sense of belonging, which is described in relation to the sense a person has of being connected to those around them in a meaningful way (Baumeister & Leary, 1995a; Osterman, 2000; Prince & Hadwin, 2013; Roffey, 2012a).

For the purpose of the research, I will refer to the concept as a sense of belonging.

2.2.3 Why is a sense of belonging important?

Maslow (1987) introduced the need to belong as a fundamental need. He suggested that it is important for survival and humans will strive to experience a sense of belonging once their physical needs are met. Its significance was further asserted by Baumeister and Leary (1995b) who considered that human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain positive and lasting relationships. There is a general understanding among researchers that belongingness is fundamental in shaping behaviour across the lifespan, and that meeting this need leads to positive academic, psychological, behavioural and social outcomes (Prince & Hadwin, 2013; Roffey, 2013). Conversely, a lack of belonging could lead to negative outcomes, for example, psychological distress and poor health behaviours (Kelly-Ann. Allen & Kern, 2017; Baumeister & Leary, 1995a).

2.2.4 A sense of belonging to school

Having a sense of belonging has been linked to a range of positive outcomes in the school context (Bond et al., 2007; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Osterman, 2000; Prince & Hadwin, 2013). The most widely accepted definition of a sense of school belonging (SOSB) comes from Goodenow and Grady (1993, p. 80), who described it as 'the extent to which students feel personally accepted, rejected, included and supported by others in the school social environment'. The concept has been researched under different terms such as school connectedness, sense of school community, school climate, and student engagement. There is often a lack of conceptual clarity offered as to the exact definitions of the terms selected by researchers, which can make it difficult to distinguish if studies are exploring the same concept (García-Moya, Bunn, Jiménez-Iglesias, Paniagua, & Brooks, 2018; Gowing & Jackson, 2016).

2.2.5 A sense of school belonging for gender nonconforming young people

Sanders and Munford (2016, p. 155) described schools as having the potential to be 'game changers' in the lives of vulnerable children. Roffey (2012a) indicated that for vulnerable young people, feelings of being accepted by peers and having positive peer interactions can increase confidence. This has potential links for some GNC CYP, for whom their gender expression has exposed them to some adversity in the school community.

It has been highlighted that GNC CYP may be less likely to experience a SOSB than their peers (Kosciw et al., 2018; Stonewall, 2017). GNC CYP have also been found to have higher rates of self-harm and suicide attempts than their peers (Kosciw et al., 2018; Stonewall, 2017). If relatedness is accepted as a fundamental psychological need and human drive (Baumeister & Leary, 1995a) then it is assumed that GNC CYP require this to the same extent as others. It might be possible that the increased self-harm behaviours attributed to those who are GNC, is linked to a lack of SOSB. Therefore, if it is understood how to support a GNC CYP's SOSB, perhaps this may reduce self-harm behaviours amongst them as they may experience greater relatedness.

2.2.6 How has this influenced the Empirical Project?

The sections above highlight the relevance of considering GNC CYP's SOSB. Understanding how a SOSB may be fostered in GNC CYP may help to improve their outcomes, which have been highlighted to be relatively poor. The existing literature exploring a SOSB in GNC CYP was not sufficient for the meta-ethnography described in Chapter 1. However, there was warrant to begin to explore this in the empirical project, described in Chapter 3.

I will now discuss the methodological considerations made in relation to the Empirical Project.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Philosophical underpinnings

Grix (2004, p. 58) referred to ontology and epistemology as the 'foundations upon which research is built' and asserts the importance of a researcher understanding their own philosophical assumptions. Marsh and Furlong (2002, p. 177) likened ontology and epistemology to, 'a skin not a sweater' highlighting the relatively consistent nature of these. It is therefore important to understand one's own philosophical standpoint prior to undertaking a piece of research, as methodology will inevitably be shaped by this stance.

2.3.2 Ontology

Blaikie (2000) referred to ontology as being concerned with our beliefs about the nature of social reality. It is concerned with what is real (Willig, 2013). The way

we understand social reality can broadly be defined as 'objectivism' or 'subjectivism'. Objectivists consider that the social phenomena exist independently to social actors, whereas constructivism pertains that social realities are continually being revised and understood through social interaction. Broadly, ontological positions can be considered to be either realism, or relativism. I hold a position of relativism, in that I consider there to be multiple truths dependent on the frame of reference.

2.3.3 Epistemology

Epistemology can be understood as what we can know about the world, and how we can know this. It is described as 'being concerned with the theory of knowledge' (Grix, 2004, p. 177; Willig, 2013, p. 2). Throughout doctoral training, I have found myself consistently drawn toward social constructionist ideas. Social constructionist ideas emerge from a process of ongoing dialogue and consider that the realities we live are outcomes of the conversations we engage in (Gergen, 2009). Social constructionism does not suggest that there is nothing that exists outside of dialogue, but instead that we make sense of the world through engaging in dialogue with those around us. Therefore, multiple realities exist dependent on the system in which meaning is created (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). The concepts and categories that we use are constructed through discourse rather than being real features in the world (Burr & Dick, 2017). Knowledge is therefore considered to be relative, as opposed to absolute.

2.3.4 Data Generation

A more detailed account of the steps to data generation is provided on page 42 . This section provides insight into the reasoning for the methodological decisions made.

In considering my method for the empirical research, I have been guided by my emerging professional values of respect, empowerment and collaboration. In addition to this, as a result of the gap identified in the existing literature, I also felt it important to hear the voices of GNC CYP. I therefore wanted to work directly with GNC CYP. I consider myself a practitioner-researcher, and therefore hoped this research would reflect my EP practice. I often use a narrative

approach to casework and find it to be illuminating in allowing those I work with to tell their story.

Narrative approaches to research often feature first-hand accounts of participants, in contrast to more traditional research methods which can suppress their voices in favour of researcher voice (Gergen, 2009). Narrative approaches have core values which are consistent with a social constructionist perspective, as they both emphasise the cultural and social factors that influence people's thoughts and identities rather than positioning primary influences within the individual (M. Payne, 2006).

GNC CYP are often considered to be marginalised by society (Kennedy & Hellen, 2010; Riley, Sitharthan, et al., 2013). I therefore sought to use an approach to data collection which would be respectful and allow for the voices of participants to be heard. Gilling (2016) described that narrative approaches endorse co-research and the opportunity to develop a shared understanding and a joint-construction. This collaborative stance is held strongly within my professional practice and is something I wish to reflect within this research project. Co-research involves the narrative practitioner maintaining a stance of genuine curiosity as they endeavour to co-story the participant's life (Epston, 1999). Narrative approaches facilitate a sense of agency in the young people, who can be active contributors to the lives of others as well as to their own lives (Denborough, 2008). This project aims to give voice to young people who have so far been relatively unheard. Gergen (2009) indicated that narrative research can use first-hand experiences help to generate understanding of some of the most unheard and marginalised in society. It is hoped that this experience has been empowering for participants.

Narrative was thought to be an appropriate methodology for the current project as it highlights the value of listening to individuals in order to provide challenge to existing socio-cultural narratives and illustrates alternative, richer understandings.

2.3.5 Data analysis

Further information about the method used for data analysis can be found on page 46. However, a summary of the key literature which helped me to make the decision about which method of data analysis to use will be presented below.

When choosing a method for analysing the data generated in the empirical project, there were a few key factors I thought necessary to consider:

- A small number of participants
- A commitment to keeping each participant's stories separate throughout analysis so as not to merge voices
- A method which would best be used to analyse rich data which could be generated using a narrative approach to data collection
- A method which would help to illuminate things of importance to the participants

I considered Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to be the most appropriate method for analysing data. IPA is typically used for research with a small number of participants, where rich data can be generated (Braun & Clarke, 2013; J. Smith, Larkin, & Flowers, 2009). Using IPA allowed me to honour my commitment to retain the voices of each participant separate, allowing their stories to be heard.

I have used IPA as a tool to analyse the constructed narratives in depth. Whilst some may argue that IPA is grounded within the 'real' (Willig, 2016), and aims to uncover participants' lived experiences of a 'real' event or phenomenon; I believe this method can also be used to interrogate the co-constructions created during a narrative discussion, whilst acknowledging the transient nature of these accounts. IPA researchers acknowledge that claims made about the participant's 'truth' are 'tentative and subjective' (J. Smith et al., 2009, p. 80). IPA is interpretive by name, and therefore encourages the multiplicity of voices within the analysis in order to create meaning. Larkin, Watts, and Clifton (2006) consider two commitments of IPA; the first being to 'give voice' to the experiences of participants and the second to 'make sense' of these from a psychological perspective. I have sought to honour these commitments

throughout this research project by supporting the voice of GNC CYP to be heard, and considering these voices in light of psychological theory.

2.3.6 Practicalities

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) highlighted the usefulness of an interview plan, which can facilitate the discussion, when collecting data for an IPA study. J. Smith et al. (2009) indicated the aim of this is to facilitate discussion which will allow the generation of rich data. I consider the narrative style discussions to be a mid-point between semi-structured and unstructured forms of interviewing. I prepared a set of 'Big Questions' (page 42) and used Statement of Position Maps 1 and 2 (Michael White, 2007) to guide 'follow-up' responses in a way that encouraged participants to expand upon and thicken their narrations.

I maintained a reflexive stance throughout discussions and attempted to follow the lead of the participant at all times. Whilst I did not produce in-depth notes throughout each interview in a bid to be 'present', I made occasional jottings of themes I thought were emerging, or aspects of interest, as a reminder to return to these. This also supported me in continuing the use of the participant's own language.

2.3.7 My role as a researcher

It is necessary to acknowledge the influence of the researcher. As highlighted by Stanley and Wise (1993) the researcher is always present with research. It is, therefore, important to consider my own positionality and the ways in which this will have inevitably shaped the research project. I acknowledge that as a cisgender female in my mid-twenties, I do not bring personal experience of being a GNC YP. Therefore, my capacity to hear and interpret the narratives of the participants is limited, to an extent, by who I am. Finch (1984) reflects on this matter when considering why women often find it so easy to be open with her in an interview situation. This raises questions of exploiting trust and the complexities of trying to overcome this. My distance in gender from participants in this project allows me only to gain a partial understanding of their experiences.

However, from a practical standpoint as a practitioner-researcher, it is necessary to outline that this partial-knowledge is often the deepest level of understanding

an EP can aim towards. As EPs, there are always differences between ourselves and those we work with. Our role, therefore, is to go as far as we can to understand the 'other' psychologically, in order to move the situation forward in relation to the aims of those we are working with, in a positive way. This reflects the nature of this research. Although tackling a sensitive research area, the central aim is that of being helpful to the EP profession, and indirectly to school staff and GNC CYP.

The narrative practitioner should be a good listener (Mishler, 1986), maintain a stance of curiosity and ask questions which they genuinely do not know the answer to (Epston, 1999). I considered it important to allow space for the participants to produce their narrative, often offering minimal input or non-verbal cues to encourage them to talk more about particular issues. This stimulated the participants to begin to form their narratives by allowing them space to interpret their experiences. As a researcher, I supported the development of this narrative through dialogue and questioning. The narratives are therefore co-constructed, but the voice of the participants remains dominant.

In acknowledging this co-construction, I am aware of the influence I may have brought to the narratives produced throughout the research. In addition to the co-construction of narratives during discussion, it is necessary also to consider the hermeneutics present in data analysis. J. A. Smith (2004) indicated that IPA involves a double hermeneutic, as the researcher makes sense and interprets the interpretations of their participants. It is likely that each reader will construct their own understandings of the research when reading this paper.

2.3.8 Validity

Some researchers claim that member checking can enhance the validity of their findings (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). Returning to participants to clarify meaning is inconsistent with my social constructionist stance, which considers that meaning is constructed within a particular time and place through dialogue between individuals, and also that no one 'true' representation can be achieved (Byrne, 2017). It is also inconsistent with IPA, which acknowledges the researcher's influence due to IPA's interpretive nature. Harvey (2015) proposed

an alternative to member-checking, whereby each stage of the production of narratives builds on the initial interpretations of the last. This is the approach I took to the second discussions; building on specific aspects of interest, if participants were interested to share it.

2.4 Ethical considerations

This project followed the guidance of the BPS Code of Ethics (2009) and the HCPC (2016) Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics. The project is also in-line with the updated BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018). A proposal was also approved by Newcastle University's Ethics Committee. Qualitative psychological research is laced with ethical dilemmas (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Ethical issues arise at all stages of a research project (Willig, 2008), and adhering to ethical guidelines requires more than simply 'solving' ethical dilemmas at one point in the research. Rather, these must be continually revisited (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

In all research, it is essential that participants are protected from any harm and have their wellbeing and dignity preserved at all times (Willig, 2008). Liamputtong (2007) indicated that confidentiality is vital for those who are marginalised or stigmatised by society. However, although confidentiality is often discussed as being possible in qualitative research, J. Smith et al. (2009) highlighted how this cannot be achieved. Rather, researchers are only able to ensure anonymity for their participants, as confidentiality suggests that no one will know what the participants have said; a false claim when research is going to be disseminated. Anonymity was ensured by allowing participants to choose a pseudonym.

Participants gave written, informed consent and this consent was clarified at each stage of the project. Parker (2008) indicated the need for this to be an ongoing process. I also gained written consent from the parents of participants as they were under 16 years of age. A challenge arose when Vincent opted not to write a letter. This decision was fully respected, however his ideas for the letter formed a part of the recorded discussion, which he had consented to be used. Vincent's mother suggested Vincent had declined to write the letter as it was no longer of immediate relevance. It coincided with a school holiday, and

Vincent had disengaged thoughts of school. I made the decision to retain his ideas as part of his narrative, understanding that he declined to physically write the letter.

Some issues were raised which, as a practitioner EP, I would consider unpicking to facilitate positive change. However, this was not my role. Although narrative approaches are often used for therapeutic means (A. Morgan, 2000; Michael White & Epston, 1990), neither participant had consented to this. It was, therefore beyond the scope of the project.

2.4.1 Power

It has been suggested that qualitative research seeks to reduce power differentials between researcher and participant (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009). In qualitative research participants are generally following the interviewer's schedule meaning discourse can be heavily researcher-led (Anyan, 2013). I have retained an awareness of my potential power over the research throughout the process. I have aimed to address these wherever feasible, one of the reasons leading me to a narrative approach to the project. Riessman (2008) argued that power can become more equal in interviews if researchers are able to be led by participant's narratives.

Hyden (2009) discussed that when dealing with sensitive topics of research, there is always potential for the interviewee to position the researcher as superior. By utilising a narrative approach, I aimed to make the process as transparent as possible. I also tried to reduce power differences by allowing the participants choices about interview logistics. I aimed to empower participants, allowing them to feel heard and respected.

Chapter 3: How do gender nonconforming children and young people experience belongingness to school, and how can this be supported within the school community?

Abstract

Research has documented that school communities are often not welcoming environments for gender nonconforming (GNC) children and young people (CYP). Research also indicates that GNC CYP often experience less sense of school belonging (SOSB) than their cisgender peers. A SOSB has been linked to numerous positive outcomes, both academic and in relation to wellbeing. It is therefore problematic that GNC CYP may not experience this to the same extent as others. This project aimed to hear the voices of GNC CYP, in order to learn more about their experiences of school, and consider implications for their SOSB. Narrative discussions with two GNC CYP allowed for rich data to be generated, which was then analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The findings are discussed in relation to the role of Educational Psychologists, and the existing literature.

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Rationale

The following sections will briefly outline the rationale behind the current research project.

3.1.2 The school community for gender nonconforming children and young people

The National School Climate Survey (2018) highlighted that many gender nonconforming (GNC) children and young people (CYP) experience harassment and abuse within schools. It would appear that there is already an existing dominant narrative regarding the experience that GNC CYP *may* be experiencing at school. The aim of the current project is not to further add to or reject this current dominant narrative, but rather to consider how to support school communities to effectively promote a sense of school belonging (SOSB) in GNC CYP, to allow both GNC CYP and their school communities to thrive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

3.1.3 The findings of the meta-ethnography

The National School Climate Survey (2018) also highlighted the potential positive effects of supportive members of staff. The meta-ethnography (Chapter 1) reflected upon the ability of staff members as individuals to make a difference and highlights the importance of considering support from a community perspective as opposed to the actions of individuals. The school community is important in supporting gender nonconforming young people, as positive institutions foster positive wellbeing in individuals (Boniwell, 2008).

3.1.4 Promoting a sense of belonging

I have already discussed the importance of a sense of belonging on page 30. However it is important to outline the significance of this for the current project. Research has demonstrated benefits of a sense of belonging to a school community in relation to behavioural, social and academic outcomes (Bond et al., 2007; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; McGraw, Moore, Fuller, & Bates, 2008). The National School Climate Survey (2018) highlighted that GNC CYP are less likely to experience a SOSB. This does not mean that a GNC student can't achieve a SOSB, but perhaps there are additional barriers in place which can prevent them from experiencing this to the same extent as their peers. The survey found that 44.6% of those surveyed reported feeling unsafe in school as a result of their gender expression.

A SOSB is widely understood as the extent to which students feel accepted, valued, included and supported within school (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Willms, 2003). Experiencing a hostile school environment is likely to reduce perceptions of acceptance and respect, which may therefore reduce feelings of belongingness to the school community. Roffey (2013) suggested that a SOSB can be a significant protective factor for children who experience some adversity, and that those who can be considered vulnerable require more feelings of connection to school, not less.

3.1.5 How can a sense of belonging to school be fostered?

Research has shown that a SOSB is achieved through a minimum number of mutually beneficial relationships between a student and their peers and teachers (Meloro, 2005; Uslu & Gizir, 2017). The interaction adolescents have with peers

and teachers within school contexts affects their SOSB. Uslu and Gizir (2017) added to research which suggested that being perceived positively by the school community is strongly predictive of their feelings of school belonging. They specifically found teacher-student relationships to be the most important predictive variable of an adolescent's SOSB. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) youth with supportive school staff have reported lower levels of victimisation and increased feelings of school connectedness (Kosciw et al., 2018). Robinson, Bansel, Denson, Davies, and Ovendone (2013) highlighted the negative effects of unsupportive teachers for GNC CYP, and how this often leads to a lack of trust in staff. This highlights the importance of GNC CYP being able to view adults within their school community as sources of support.

Bansel (2018) indicated that for GNC CYP the culture of the school community is a critical factor in their SOSB. This mirrors findings of the meta-ethnography, which highlighted that more effective support for GNC CYP may be provided in schools where there is a more supportive ethos.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Research aims

This research aimed to explore how GNC CYP experience school, and explore how the school community may promote a SOSB.

The research questions were:

1. What are some experiences of GNC CYP in schools?
2. What do some GNC CYP highlight as helping them to experience a SOSB?

3.2.2 Participants

Participants were recruited with the support of an organisation in the North East of England which provides support for LGBT+ youth. I provided a flyer (Appendix 1) for the organisation's staff to pass to young people, which gave them information about the research and invited them to contact me if interested. From this I received interest from two young people who took part in the project. The ethical dilemmas which arise regarding parental consent for LGBT youth have been outlined (D'Augelli 2006), and I acknowledge that requiring parental consent for participation in the project may have limited participation.

However, following the BPS and HCPC codes of ethical conduct, and guidance of the university ethics board, this was a non-negotiable aspect of the research.

Another consideration in relation to recruitment was the relationship of one of the participants to a member of staff from the organisation. It was necessary to ensure that the participant wanted to be involved in the research, and was not participating because they were asked to by their family member. I carried out repeated checks with the participant to ensure their willingness to engage in this project.

Participants chose pseudonyms for themselves to maintain anonymity. Throughout the research project they are referred to by these names. Basic information about the two participants can be found in Table 11, below.

Table 6: Demographics of participants

Vincent	Rebecca
• In year 7 at the time of data collection • Presented as male and preferred he/him pronouns • Identified as female-to-male (FTM). Also identified with the term 'Transgender'. • Considered it important that readers are aware that he has a diagnosis of Autism	• In year 8 at the time of data collection • Presented as female and preferred she/her pronouns • Does not generally identify with terms/labels, but indicated that she felt comfortable with the term 'Transgender'.

3.2.3 Generation of narratives

Narratives were generated through narrative conversations and letters. Each participant took part in two narrative discussions, and an exchange of letters. As discussed in Chapter 2, the initial discussion was guided by three 'Big Questions' (Figure 4).

Big Question 1. *I wonder whether you could consider and tell me a little bit about how you think identifying as GNC (or other term used by participant) impacts upon your school life?*

Big Question 2. *I wonder if you could tell me about a moment in school which has gone well for you recently?*

Big Question 3. *Can you describe a moment or an experience that you've had, that tells me something about the kind of school you would prefer to belong to/attend/be in?*

Figure 4: Outline of the 3 'Big Questions' used to generate data in discussion 1

Follow-up questions were led by the participants' responses and encouraged a thickening of the narratives that they shared using Statement of Position Maps 1 and 2 (Michael White, 2007). The openness of the questions allowed for participants to choose what they decided to share. The second discussion allowed for a more in-depth exploration about aspects of the first conversation which were of interest, and questions were therefore specific to each participant. A letter sent to each participant between sessions provided indication about these areas of interest. Following the second discussion, each participant was asked to create their own letter to staff who might be supporting a GNC young person (YP) in school in the future. Both participants were initially willing to write this letter and engaged in a process of generating ideas for them. Vincent later decided against writing the letter. Discussions were audio recorded and transcribed. All recorded information was used in analysis, including the generation of ideas for each participant's letter. Further discussion about this can be found on page 38. Rebecca's letter is presented on page 62.

3.2.4 Narrative letters

Letter writing can be significant in narrative practice (Fox, 2003). Letters can help to thicken stories, and support reflection (A. Morgan, 2000). There are different purposes of narrative letter writing. M White (1995) indicated that letters can be most useful when it is pre-agreed how recipients will respond. I discussed this with the participants, and they agreed that if they wanted to respond they would. Alternatively, they were given the option of bringing some thoughts to

discuss during the next session following reading the letter. The letters that I sent to each participant after the initial narrative discussion highlighted areas which we had discussed which I found to be interesting, and indicated areas I might like to discuss further in session 2. This also served the purpose of allowing participants time to think about the things I might ask about in the second discussion. The letter sent to Vincent is highlighted in Figure 5, for example.

Dear Vincent,

I wanted to write this letter after we met on Thursday, as there were so many things that caught my attention from what you told me. I have been thinking a little more about some of these and feel curious to find out more about some of them. Perhaps these things might be of interest for you to talk about some more too?

Something that caught my attention was when you were talking about the adults who had helped you in school at difficult times. You described one member of staff who you said you thought was "important enough" that he could help you with difficult experiences with other young people. I wondered whether this meant that you think some members of staff wouldn't be able to help. I wonder why this might be, do you have any ideas about that?

I was also particularly interested when you told me that you felt that there was a difference for you between acceptance and tolerance. You mentioned you often feel that you are 'tolerated' at present, rather than accepted. I've been wondering about how you might know this. What are the signs, do you think, that people accept you as opposed to tolerate you? How would you know the difference?

A few times during our conversation you told me that you didn't feel like you really speak to many people, and you identified feeling like you didn't really know many people. Relationships did seem to be something that you valued though, and you described some moments of connection with other young people, and adults, which you valued and felt positively about. These seems to be important for you, is that right? Do you think anyone would know about this? I wondered whether staff within your current school, or previous school, had ever tried to support you with this?

I was also interested to hear that you seemed to talk about the present time more positively than experiences you have had in the past. You said, "Life's calming down now" I wonder why that might be?

These are just some things that I have been thinking about, and maybe we could talk about them a little bit more next time I see you. You might also have some things that you would like to discuss next time?

See you soon,

Ashleigh

Figure 5: Narrative letter sent to Vincent following discussion 1.

Participants were also given the opportunity to write their own letter following session 2. Ideas for these were co-constructed in the second session. Participants took notes to support them in writing their letter if they wanted to use them. Narrative letters allow the person being consulted to retain expertise about their own lives. This was an important aspect of the research for me; ensuring that the voices of participants are presented rather than my own.

3.2.5 Analysing the narratives

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as a tool to guide data analysis, as discussed on page 35. The steps from J. Smith et al. (2009) were used as a guide to the analytic process. The stages of analysis undertaken can be found in Table 12, below.

Table 7: Steps of IPA

Step 1	I initially began by reading each transcript for Vincent repeatedly to immerse myself into them. Each transcript was then read twice whilst simultaneously listening to the recording of the discussion. Following this, each transcript was read again in isolation. Some initial notes were taken at this stage which, following the first discussion with each participant fed into the narrative letter sent. They also supported the generation of the question prompts for the second discussion. I underlined parts of the transcript that seemed to be immediately relevant to my question, or things of interest.
Step 2	Each transcript was read closely with explicit attention being paid to exploratory and descriptive themes. Comments were made in the left hand margin to reflect my thoughts about Vincent's language use and inferred meanings, and questions that arose for me during this reading.
Step 3	By reading each transcript along with my initial comments, I was able to develop the 'emergent themes' which I noted in the right hand margin. During this time I tried to be led by my instincts at that time, rather than trying to fit the data into pre-existing themes. An example displaying the first 3 steps can be found in Appendix 2.
Step 4	The next step required me to explore how the emerging themes were connected. I used a number of methods to do this at different levels, initially laying emergent themes out on a large piece of paper and searching for broader themes which encapsulated the emergent themes. Following this, I considered how these broader themes interacted and refined them through abstraction and subsumption (Appendix 3). At the end of this phase I created a visual model to represent the interaction between the emergent themes.
Step 5	I repeated this entire process for Rebecca's transcripts. I was then left with two visual models representing the themes; one for each participant. These can be found in the 'Findings and discussion' section. I also had a table for each participant which

	highlighted the process and the end result of the analysis (Appendix 4).
Step 6	This step in IPA usually encourages the researcher to look for patterns across cases. However, I made the decision not to complete this stage, and to retain each participant's narrative separately.

3.2.6 Data management

All transcription and data analysis was completed by me in order to maintain anonymity. Data was stored on secure university software, and audio recordings were deleted following completion of data analysis.

3.2.7 Findings and discussion

It is problematic for me, as a researcher, to try and capture the narratives of both participants in one overarching model. I consider this to be arbitrary and inconsistent with my own understandings about knowledge and how this is generated. The narratives were co-constructed in a particular space through discussion, and I believe they should each be afforded their own attention as opposed to being merged together. A main aim of IPA is to give each participant's account full appreciation (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The purpose of merging the models would be to present an overall, potentially generalisable account of the experiences of belongingness for GNC CYP. As both Rebecca and Vincent have presented very different experiences I believe this would have been unethical, in failing to respect their individuality. I therefore made the decision to present an individual model for each participant.

I will now discuss the main findings from each participant's accounts. You will notice more discussion focussed on Vincent's narrative than Rebecca's. Rebecca's discussions were much shorter than Vincent's. This could be due to a number of factors which I have reflected on, some of which are highlighted in the limitations section of this document. Despite appearing to have been given less weight, Rebecca's contribution to this project has been substantial. The themes that have emerged from her narratives are just as valuable as those which were constructed by Vincent.

3.3 Vincent

The findings from discussions with Vincent are displayed in Figure 6, below.

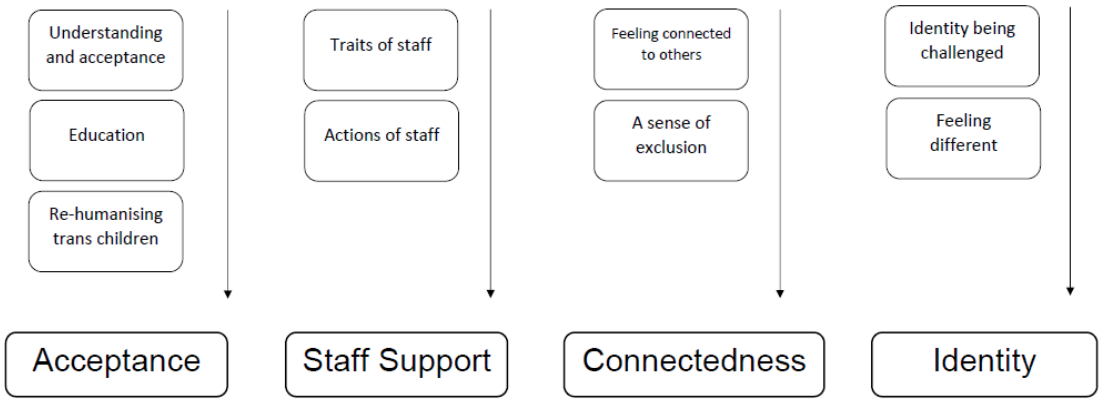

Figure 6: Model representing the themes from narrative generated with Vincent

3.3.1 Acceptance

Vincent spoke regularly about the importance of acceptance, and presented a clear distinction between being *accepted* and being *tolerated*. Vincent's understanding of acceptance focussed on other people "being okay" with who he is:

"The tolerance I feel is just like a, "Okay, you exist, I guess I won't be awful to you". But acceptance is, "You exist and I'm okay with that. And I will either be your friend or I will leave you alone…""

Vincent related acceptance to education. There was a sense from him that people often become more accepting of gender nonconformity when they have more of an understanding of it. This mirrors the findings of Riley, Sitharthan, et al. (2013, p. 247) that having knowledge about gender variance 'set the foundation for acceptance'. Vincent placed emphasis on his view that all young people should be provided with education about gender diversity, as he thought this would make many people more accepting of it, and of him. Greytak, Kosciw, and Boesen (2013) found that an LGBT+ inclusive curriculum led to less reported victimisation based on gender expression. The findings of the meta-ethnography indicated that school staff often reported lacking the knowledge to adequately support GNC individuals in school, and welcomed education to equip them. This in turn, may allow them to be more confident and able to embed LGBT+ inclusive

topics into the curriculum in order to educate students. However, the challenged associated with teaching about gender identity have been acknowledged (E. Morgan & Taylor, 2019).

Comber and Woods (2018) indicated that children not only benefit from experiencing a sense of belonging to the environment in which they learn, but also to the material they learn. It is possible, therefore, that providing an LGBT+-inclusive curriculum may support a GNC YP to feel valued and respected within school, leading to an increased SOSB.

There was a recognition from Vincent that things that are not known about can be difficult for people to understand and therefore accept; hence the need for education:

"It was like explaining a new type of food to people who have only been eating mashed potatoes their entire life"

He seemed to mock perceptions of those he perceived to have little understanding of gender diversity, and highlighted some misconceptions that he has experienced or perceived:

"People are just getting used to me. And possibly realising that transgender people aren't a different species"

"Surprisingly, I'm human as well"

"Your local transgender kid is probably not a Martian"

Ultimately, Vincent highlights the importance of being accepted by others as a transgender YP, indicating how it can influence their own thoughts and feelings about themselves:

"If a transgender person feels, if a transgender person is accepted, they'll probably be more likely to accept themselves, if they haven't already"

The relationship a student has with their teachers has been shown to impact self-esteem (Dessel, Kulick, Wernick, & Sullivan, 2017). Ma (2003) indicated a relationship between self-esteem and a SOSB. Having high self-esteem was found to be the single most important predictor of SOSB for students in Ma's

study. Ma (2003) suggested that this relationship may be circular. A young person with higher self-esteem is more likely to engage in activities that promote a SOSB for example, being involved in extra-curricular activities. However, feeling a SOSB may also be likely to increase the likelihood of feeling accepting of yourself, therefore increasing self-esteem.

Whilst discussing how school communities can respond to GNC CYP in ways that may support them to feel accepted, Vincent highlighted the importance of remembering that GNC CYP are just children:

"Never make a trans child feel excluded. Mainly because they're trans but, that's just important… You know what, I could just cross that out and it'd still be, I could just cross the T out and it'd still be correct. Don't exclude children!"

This reinforced important values about inclusion. Inclusion is not just about including children with special educational needs, or physical disabilities. It is about providing an environment for education where all children and young people can thrive. P. Farrell (2004, p. 7) indicated that in order for inclusion to be effective, 'All pupils must actively belong to, be welcomed by and participate in a mainstream school and community'.

3.3.2 Staff Support

Vincent spoke of traits or actions of staff that he either appreciated or did not receive positively. Overall he appeared to think he had not been well-supported in his school community:

"But the support I receive in school isn't the best"

However, he did acknowledge people who have been sources of support to him. He appeared drawn to warm individuals who are friendly toward him. He valued being treated with respect and with no judgement. This mirrors the findings of Cemalcilar (2010) who indicated the benefits of teachers who respected students and developed good rapport with them. When talking about spending time with the school counsellor, Vincent said:

"I can talk to her and she won't judge me. And most of the time it's confidential"

Vincent valued members of staff who supported him without necessarily understanding what he is experiencing:

"And while she may not understand it, she tries to be supportive and that's really nice"

Vincent also spoke highly of individuals who he perceived had tried their hardest to support him with worries or incidents that had occurred. He did not necessarily value the outcome of their support, but more the effort and willingness that they showed to help. Roffey (2012b) found that students perceived a greater sense of connection to school when staff members showed care and interacted positively with them.

"And he's always been able to be like, 'Okay, we can't absolutely fix this but we can do this, this and this'"

"I know that quite a few schools would say that because it didn't happen on school grounds they couldn't do anything about it. But that wasn't the case here"

Vincent reflected about the value of being able to talk to someone about problems or difficulties that he was experiencing.

"And then suddenly that problem is not my problem alone anymore"

It would appear that part of the support that he values from those within the school is just knowing that there are people looking out for him. There aren't specific actions which are deemed to be supportive, he just needed to feel cared for:

"It was just important that [pause] it's just important that they're, they're there for me"

Many studies have indicated that teacher support is the most essential for young people. Sanders and Munford (2016) reported that one of the main factors that made a difference in the SOSB experienced by excluded young people was the perseverance of staff. Perseverance contributed to a sense of safety in school, as well as highlighting the commitment of the adult involved. It has also been suggested that school staff can promote a SOSB in their classrooms (Anderman, 2003). Numerous studies indicate the benefits of teacher support, and how it

may be more essential than any other types of social support (Brewster & Bowen, 2004; Dessel et al., 2017; Sakiz, Pape, & Hoy, 2012).

3.3.3 Connectedness

A recurring theme in Vincent's narrative is that of connection to others. He spoke positively of times during which he had experienced this sense of connectedness to others, however also appeared to recognise the rarity of such occasions. He reflected regularly about having little contact with others, and feeling little sense of connection to the wider school community. He attributes this to a number of factors, including the fact that he was not originally from the area:

"I haven't made many friends here, in this school. But another disadvantage I have is that, I just moved into the area a few years ago. And most people have been here their whole life… So there's already a connection between a lot of people that I'm not a part of. So that's affected my ability to make friends as well"

We instinctively search for connections and ways in which we are like others when looking to form a bond. When discussing the value of an LGBT+ group that had been created within school by a year 11 pupil, it appeared that this offered something to Vincent which he had not experienced before in school. Research has indicated the supportive benefits of such in-school groups, associating participation in them with greater feelings of school connectedness (Greytak et al., 2013; Toomey, McGuire, & Russell, 2012). Vincent's narrative suggests he finds comfort in other people experiencing the same kinds of adversity as himself:

"And it's just so uplifting that, when I remember that all of these people are here because they have similar problems and issues as me"

It did not appear that Vincent wanted other people to experience adversity. However, knowing people were experiencing something similar to him appeared to offer something to his sense of himself, and his identity. Perhaps this allows him to feel a sense of belonging to an 'outsider' group. Roffey (2013) described inclusive and exclusive belonging, with exclusive belonging having the potential to leave those *outside* of the group of people who belong feeling marginalised.

Inclusive belonging on the other hand promotes the inclusion of all. Although Vincent appears to feel like an 'outsider' within his community, he also longs for those connections, particularly with individuals who he feels can empathise with him. Social Identity Theory suggests that being part of a group increases self-esteem (Hogg, 2016; Tajfel, Turner, Austin, & Worchel, 1979). Hogg also suggested that the more 'self-conceptually uncertain' an individual is, the more they strive to belong to a group which will reduce this uncertainty. By interacting and engaging with those who Vincent feels share certain characteristics and experiences with himself, perhaps he is able to feel more certain about his identity.

3.3.4 Identity

Vincent also regularly made comments which indicated his thoughts about himself and provided clues to his sense of identity. A sense of belonging has been described in relation to a sense of self and identity building (Kelly-Ann Allen, 2017). Vincent's narrative has two clear strands regarding his identity; his perception of himself as someone who is 'different' to other people; and ways in which his sense of self is threatened by things which he perceives have occurred as a result of his gender nonconformity.

With regards to his perceptions of himself as different to others, Vincent seems to have a clear view that he *is* and always *has* felt different from others:

"I've always been different"

He attributes this not only to his gender expression, but also to his diagnosis of autism which appears to strongly influence his sense of identity.

Vincent described himself in many ways in his narrative, and gave many clues to his sense of who he considers he is. It was interesting though, that although he appeared to have a strong sense of who he was as a person, this was being challenged as a result of other people's responses to his gender. Erikson (1993) indicated that identity formation depends on the interplay between what young people think about themselves, and what they appear to mean to others who are important in their lives. Peer relationships can be dynamic in adolescence and support the development of a sense of identity (Kelly-Ann. Allen & Kern, 2017).

For example, Vincent portrayed himself throughout the narrative as being intelligent, academic and hard-working. He then described difficulties he had experienced with a particular teacher, and the effect that this had had:

"Not only has my attitude to school gotten more negative… it's reflected in like, test scores, and how much homework I'm handing in each week… and because of that I'm starting to feel worse about myself. Because I used to be a smart kid"

This suggested that this challenge to his academic sense of self was having a negative effect on him. Cohen and Garcia (2008) found that when a minority person perceives they are being treated unfairly, it causes them to perform less well. This, in turn, leads to changes in their perception of themselves. Although mainly referring to racial minorities in this study, perhaps this same theory may apply to GNC CYP in some cases too. The process of self-identity development is fluid and relational (Rönnlund, 2015), and can be particularly influenced by interactions with others which demonstrate that a narrative is incorrect (Sanders & Munford, 2016). Enduring, positive, encouraging, warm and empathic relationships with staff were found to contribute toward re-authoring a narrative about young people who were disengaged from school.

Vincent also appeared to be more affected by comments which he considered could be reflective of the negative ways in which others viewed him. When discussing a particularly difficult incident during which an older boy in school had called him a 'Tranny', Vincent reflected:

"And to be honest, if I could swap that incident for being called a loser a thousand times I would take being called a loser a thousand times. Because I know that I'm not a loser"

He seemed to be sharing that there is some part of him which perhaps worries that people might perceive him as a 'Tranny', and this is something which deeply upsets him. Vincent often referred to himself in ways which suggested feelings of being a problem or a burden. He would say this in a jovial manner, but it was evident that this was something he has come to internalise about himself. He views himself as creating a nuisance for other people:

"And he's [teacher], he's had to deal with me (laughs) he's had to deal with me for almost a year now. Poor guy (laughs). I'm barely putting up with myself, don't know how he can"

Osterman (2000) indicated that student's beliefs about themselves develop through their interactions. Positive relationships are affirming. Ma (2003) considered that alienation may be a major reason for students' lack of SOSB.

3.3.5 Brief summary

Vincent's narrative suggested the benefits of being connected to other people. This was most beneficial for Vincent when the connection was with those who he was able to identify with, feel accepted by, and those who respected him. It is recognised that a role for EPs is to support school settings to be more inclusive spaces for GNC CYP (Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2015; Yavuz, 2016). Vincent highlighted the positive impact of the LGBT+ group that he joined in his school. This is an area in which EPs could provide guidance for school communities, as they have been described as having potential to be allies and advocates for diverse groups such as GNC CYP (Agee-Aguayo, Bloomquist, Savage, & Woitaszewski, 2017; Bartolo, 2010; Yavuz, 2016) which can involve supporting schools to set up support-groups for them in their settings.

Vincent emphasised a perception that when people have more understanding about gender nonconformity, they are more likely to be accepting of it. One of the main functions of an EP is to deliver training to schools (SEED, 2002), and therefore they are well-placed to support school communities in upskilling staff and providing further information about gender nonconformity (Yavuz, 2016). In this way, EPs may act as agents of change (Roffey, 2015).

3.4 Rebecca

I will now discuss the findings generated from Rebecca's narrative. The findings from her narrative can be found in Figure 7, below.

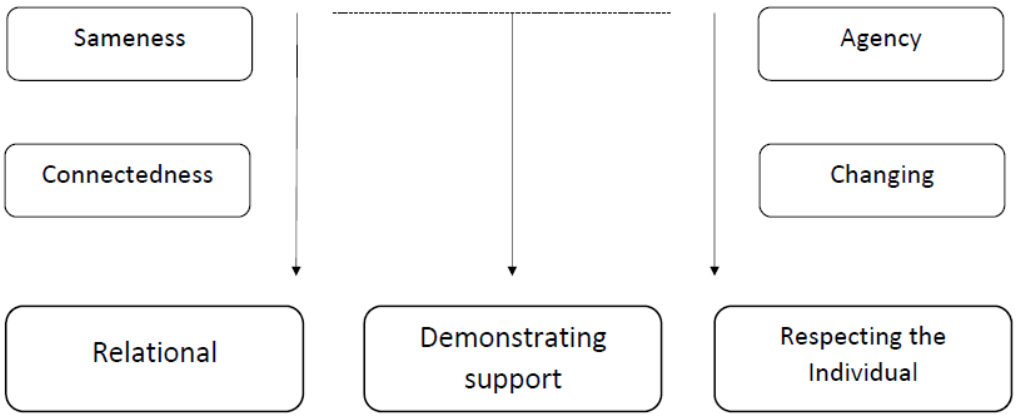

Figure 7: Model representing themes generated through discussion with Rebecca

3.4.1 Relational

Rebecca spoke positively throughout her narrative of relational aspects of her school life which have been helpful to her. Her friends appear to hold central importance in her school life, and she describes the value that she places on these connections with them. During our discussions, I considered that Rebecca was highlighting an awareness of how her friends may have helped protect her from any adversity as a result of her gender expression, through being supportive of her decisions:

"It was fine, they [friends] were just [pause] they were all supportive"

Hamm and Faircloth (2005) looked at the role of friendships in experiencing school belonging. They found that for many young people, strong peer relationships prevented feelings of alienation and contributed to a means of feeling a sense of community and SOSB. Peer relationships were found to be fundamental in promoting a sense of connectedness to school by Gowing and Jackson (2016). Gowing and Jackson (2016) found that although relationships with staff were important, they did not provide the intensity, influence or endurance that peer relationships offered. Rebecca also discussed valuing school staff being there for her so she knew that if an issue did arise she wouldn't face it alone:

"Um well, because I know I can always have someone to talk to"

Throughout discussion with Rebecca, it seemed that she values being given the same opportunities as everyone else within school:

"Yeah, being able to do all the things that everyone else [does]"

She does not perceive that identifying as transgender has prevented her from being included, which she recognises that for some GNC CYP it has. There are some activities which Rebecca may have found difficult to join in with, for example, swimming. However, as her school do not currently go swimming, this has not presented a barrier to her, which Rebecca views as positive. Rebecca indicated that if her school did go swimming, she would find ways to avoid this, but that this would not be acceptable:

"Not really [okay if she didn't go swimming] because everyone else would be going"

It has been important to Rebecca to be able to be treated equally, and in the same way as others.

3.4.2 Respecting the individual

It also appeared to be important to Rebecca to be consulted about important decisions, and to be given a choice about the support that she receives. She appeared to value a sense of agency, and considered that this was important for school communities to provide for GNC CYP, and to be aware of things which they realistically might need to not expect some GNC CYP to participate in:

"Or, like my school doesn't go swimming, but if they do swimming, like ask them [young person] what they want to do about that"

"Not forcing them [GNC CYP] to do anything like swimming"

Agency was described by Bandura (2008). Being an 'agent' is intentionally holding influence over your own life and circumstances. Deci and Ryan (2008) consider having a sense of autonomy and control as a fundamental psychological need. When this is not met, it is more difficult to function effectively. Rebecca was able to provide examples of times when her school community has allowed her agency and choice in situations, which has resulted in a positive outcome for her. One particular area she felt that she had been respected and consulted with

about, was where she would get changed for PE. This was an area she highlighted had been a concern prior to meeting with school staff, however these concerns were diminished as a result of their response:

"Well, when we had the meeting they like suggested it and then like said, 'So do you want that?' I could have just said, 'No' and said something else but, like, I liked what they said…. Cause like, they asked if that was okay and they said, like, 'If that's not okay we could so something else'"

"Because I get like, changed for PE in a different room… [it's] a good thing for me because then I can just like, get changed by myself. Without other people"

"Like the changing rooms like, ask them what they wanna do"

3.4.3 Demonstrating support

Although Rebecca generally discusses her experiences in a positive light, she recognises the support that those in the school community have provided to her in order to allow her to feel comfortable and included:

"Umm the teachers. They're mostly quite nice…Umm, they're just like helpful and they're always willing to help like with lessons, like with work or anything"

She appears to value them showing genuine willingness to support her. Slesaransky-Poe et al. (2013) and Frohard-Dourlent (2016) both highlight the importance of school staff showing willingness to support GNC CYP. Rebecca suggests that in the future staff who are supporting GNC CYP could make an effort to:

"… make sure that they [young person] are okay. Like, like they feel comfortable."

3.4.4 Brief summary

Rebecca's narrative demonstrated the SOSB that she does experience. Literature described above highlighted the importance of supportive peer relationships in relation to this; something which Rebecca has experienced. She also indicated how positive relationships with staff in school have allowed her to feel that she could approach them with difficulties. EPs are well-placed to support schools in developing a positive 'relationship culture', and helping school staff to understand the importance of positive student relationships with both pupils and

staff (McGrath & Noble, 2010). Rebecca valued having her voice heard in relation to how she wanted to be supported. Yavuz (2016) indicated that EPs would not generally need to work directly with a GNC CYP unless their voice is not being heard, and Rebecca reinforced the importance of this for some GNC CYP. As has previously been mentioned, EPs can be advocates for GNC CYP. However Bowers, Lewandowski, Savage, and Woitaszewski (2015) highlighted the need for EPs to receive training about gender issues to facilitate appropriate support and advocate for them. The BPS suggests that psychologists are encouraged to access professional development which may help them to recognise their own attitudes and assumptions which may be relevant in working with gender diverse individuals (The British Psychological Society, 2012).

3.4.5 Limitations of the study

It is important to reflect upon the limitations which may have influenced the current project. I acknowledge that although a narrative approach to data collection appeared the most appropriate for me as a researcher, some people require more structure when asked to talk in-depth about their lives. I have highlighted the difference in length of interviews and depth of information provided by Vincent and Rebecca. I consider this to be as a result of my questioning technique, which I think Rebecca found to be difficult to respond to at times. This was compounded by my decision not to lead participants to consider particularly positive or negative experiences; but to just tell me about particular events. In fitting with a narrative approach, I did not place value judgements on a person's experiences until this was named by them. Rebecca appeared to benefit from more structure to the conversation, and I therefore found myself providing more follow-up questions in discussion with her than Vincent. As previously stated, the data generated with both participants is extremely valuable, and highlighted further the individual differences between GNC CYP.

In addition, the requirement to seek consent from parents limited the number of participant's who were willing to take part in this project. Whilst for the current project, this requirement was not negotiable, I realise the implications of this in terms of accessibility.

I do not consider the findings of this research to be generalisable to all GNC CYP. To me, the value in this project is that more professionals can hear some voices of GNC CYP; and most importantly, two GNC YP were given the opportunity to share their views. If this research adds to the growing discussion about how GNC CYP can be supported, then I believe this project has worth. If this project allows other GNC CYP to be treated with respect, kindness, and acceptance, then sharing the voices of Vincent and Rebecca has been valuable beyond measure.

3.5 Conclusion

This study aimed to hear some school experiences of GNC CYP in North East England. It specifically considered their SOSB. Both Vincent and Rebecca's narratives demonstrated the importance of social connection to others. They suggested these to be integral factors in allowing children to feel a sense of belonging to their school community. For Rebecca, it could be viewed that her social connections had protected her from potential adversity, whereas for Vincent the lack of meaningful connections to others was striking and could be considered an area which prevented him from experiencing such sense of belonging to school. Literature has also previously demonstrated the role of relationships with staff and peers in experiencing a SOSB.

School leaders may find it useful to consider providing additional training for their staff in order to allow for a greater understanding of some issues which surround gender nonconformity. As highlighted in the meta-ethnography, this may increase staff confidence in working with GNC CYP, and may in-turn better equip them for opening dialogue with other young people in the school about gender issues. Another finding relates to the importance of treating GNC CYP as individuals, and listening to their preferences and concerns with regards to the support they are offered. This reflects an important finding of the meta-ethnography, giving further weight to the need to understand that GNC CYP are not a homogenous group. Fundamentally, this research has highlighted the individual differences between GNC CYP, their experiences, and their views. This reinforces the need for support to be tailored specifically to each young person.

The findings from each participant have been considered in relation to how EPs may provide support for school to become more inclusive settings for GNC CYP (Riggs & Bartholomaeus, 2015). Whilst EPs would not necessarily be required to work directly with GNC CYP (Yavuz, 2016), they have skills which make them well-placed to enable those around them to provide the most effective support. It would be beneficial for school communities to aim to offer an inclusive and welcoming environment for GNC CYP. In doing so, EPs may be appropriate professionals to support with increasing knowledge and skills through training (SEED, 2002), and supporting in the development of school policies. EPs are well-placed to support school communities in promoting positive relationships between all those within it. Roffey (2015) described EPs as agents of change, which highlighted the way their work with schools can facilitate positive outcomes for GNC CYP. EPs have also been highlighted as potential allies and advocates for GNC CYP, who can facilitate their voices being heard if they aren't already.

Whilst this research has gone a small way in hearing the voices of some GNC CYP and considering how their experiences may be able to offer some guidance to school staff and EPs supporting their inclusion and SOSB in the future, there is a long way to go. It continues to be of integral importance to hear from GNC CYP in order to build on our understanding of their experiences.

Rebecca's letter is a fitting way to end this piece of work. This can be found in Figure 8.

3.6 Rebecca's letter

Dear School Staff,

I am writing to give you ideas on how to support a transgender pupil in your school.

My first idea is to always try to give them a choice in things like where they get changed, for example I had a choice on where to get changed for PE.

Another idea is to always listen to them whenever they need some help. For example, if they cannot find the changing rooms that they will be getting changed in, help them find it.
You could also try to do everything you can for the student, for example, if you go swimming as a school and they feel too uncomfortable with going swimming as a class, let them stay at school.

My other idea is to never force them to do some things, for example, if the student is supposed to be getting changed with other people, but feels too uncomfortable to do that, let them get changed separately, but never make them get changed with other people.

My final idea is to check that the student is doing OK in school, for example, if you have not talked to them in a while, just go up to them and ask if they are doing OK.
Yours sincerely
A Pupil

Figure 8: Rebecca's letter to school staff

Appendix 1 Example of table used to document decisions about inclusion or exclusion of papers

24	Slesaransky-Poe, Ruzzi & DiMedio	2013	Is this the right elementary school for my gender nonconforming child?	*Journal of IGBT youth*	This article describes what followed after a mother wondered if the school in her neighbourhood was the right elementary school for her gender nonconfoming young child.	Pennsylvania, USA	4 key players - the Mom and teacher educator; the school's guidance counsellor; the principal; and the consultant who led the initial professional development.	**Qualitative -** It documents and reflects on the work done over five years to transform a great school into a welcoming and inclusive one for gender nonconfomring and transgender students.	10 C's that contirbuted to successful schooling for this particular gender-nonconforming child : -Collaboration -Consultation -Confidence -Change -Climate -Courage -Curiosity -Community -Compassion -Commitment	**YES** This paper documents a school staff response to the knowledge that a GNC child will be joining them It higlights the real life struggle sof all of those invovled and how they enabled their school to be supportive for the pupil.
27	Bowskill	2017	How educational professionals can improve the outcomes for transgender children and young people	*Educational and Child Psychology*	This piece of research looked at how educational professionals can improve outcomes fr transgender children and young people.	Sheffield, UK	25 participants - transgender adults, and professionals that have worked with transgender young people.	**Qualitative** - semi-structured interviews Anaysis using grounded theory	Educational settings need to have a greater understanding of gender. This reduces gender stereotyping and reinforcment of a gender binary. Training for staff was felt to be instrumental in ensuring an appropriate response and therefore better outcomes for the pupil. Specific recommendations included use of appropriate language, having an individualised approach, use of proactive response, as well as many practical considerations to ensuring a trans friendly educational environment.	**Yes** Paper focuses specifically on how educatornal professionals, including school staff, can provide support for TG and GNC young people. This paper captures the experiences of both TG adults
29	Yavuz	2016	Gender variance and educational psychology	*Educational psychology in practice*	Three practice examples demonstrate the potential roles for educational psychologists and highlight possible implications for educational psychology.	Inverness, Scotland, UK	Three practice examples	**Qualitative -** Case study examples	Educational psychologists are well placed to support at all levels. They should never have the need to work directly with the young person unless the child's voice is not being heard. Educational professionals are well placed to supportively challenge segregation based on gender and any practices that contribute to the oppression of young people that are gender diverse.	**No** Not a focus on how school staff in particular can work with TG or GNC CYP
32	De Jong	2014	"He wears pink leggings almost every day, and a pink sweatshirt.." How school social workers understand and respond to gender variance	*Child & Adolescent social work journal*	This study attempted to explore the perceptions, attitudes and self-reported practices of a sample of school social workers in the Northeastern United states with respect to gender socialisation and gender variance in the classroom.	New York, USA		**Qualitative** - Individual interviews	The data indicate that social workers in this study seemed willing to support and to advocate for gender-variant students. However, there also appeared to be some misunderstandings about the nature of gender identity. It is suggetsed that the full engagement with gender-variant students requires more training, not only for social workers, but for other school personnel, and as part of pre-service programs.	**No** Focus on social workers within schools which is not relevant to our educational systems
33	De Jong	2014	"I think it would be a very sensitive topic..." School social work, gender variance, and the silencing of differences.	*Journal of human behaviour in the social environment*	This article discusses an orientational study of perceptions of school social workers regarding gender-variant students.	New York, USA	14 social wokrers made up the final sample - all were employed in either secondary or elementary public schools in the northeastern United States. Participants spanned the age range 26-64. All self-identified as female.	**Qualitative** - Conceptual anchoring in queer theory. Orientational research is aimed at confirmation and elucidation, rather than discovery.	The findings confirm and elucidate the increasing presence and visibility of gender-variant stuents in public schools. However, they also demonstrate the continued reign of the traditional gender binary due to the silencing of any meaningful discourse about gender and sexual identity. Interventions, though well justified, appear to be reactive raher than proactive.	**No** Focus on social workers within schools which is not relevant to our educational systems
35	Zeeman, Aranda, Sherriff & Cocking	2017	Promoting resilience and emotional well-being of transgender young people: Research at the intersections of gender and sexuality	*Journal of Youth studies*	The aim of this paper is to provide greater understanding of transgender young people's views of what is needed to promote their emotional well-being and resilience.	East Sussex, UK	97 young people, 5 of whom were trasgender	**Qualitative** - Primary research data were generated via 19 focus groups of young people in the UK based at schools around East Sussex. Data for this paper were drawn from a cross-sectional data-set that included a focus grup with trans young people. Focus group facilitators were used to ensure ground-rules and psychological as well as physical safety. Participatory research.	Findings suggets that both individual and collective capacities or resources enable and sustain resiience and well-being for ttans young people. The adversity trans youth face is present in school, the community and in healthcare, but they are anle to find places where they feel safe and connected to others. Practitioners, teachers, and school nurses are well positioned to facilitate structural change in alliance with trans youth to promote resilience.	**No** Focus specifically on resilience and not the support of school professionals

Appendix 2 - More detailed table comparing constructs across papers

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
The value of education, experience and protocol	There was felt to be a lack of training for education professionals about gender diversity. An acknowledgement that if staff were better educated on gender diversity they would show a deeper level of understanding and support. It was felt that the local authority should offer guidance on working with gender nonconforming young people.	Many participants had never attended any training on gender diversity. Some staff recognised that they could be better educated on gender diversity. Staff acknowledged their need to educate themselves and admitted that they had learning still to do. Educators were willing to learn.	There was a feeling of the experience being 'new' which was anxiety-provoking due to the lack of experience educators felt they had. There was a perception that university courses had not prepared educators for working with gender nonconforming young people. Participants felt unprepared as a result of a lack of training.	Educators were concerned that they had no previous experience in a similar situation. Staff being aware of their lack of education, experience and understanding. Staff were willing to learn about gender variance and how to reduce gender stereotyping within their classrooms.	There was an acknowledgement that staff had not been trained on issues of gender variance. There was a perception that one-off training was not sufficient, and that schools should provide ongoing training which encompasses a wide range of areas which may be important when working with a gender nonconforming young person.

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
		Educators had limited 'exposure' to gender nonconforming people in general.	Teachers craved information about 'what to do'. Educators felt they did not have the information necessary to support the young person effectively. There was a feeling of safety in protocol which left participants feeling uneasy when there was no guidance to direct their actions.	Staff development was seen as key in supporting the young person. Educators were committed to learning about gender variance.	There was a recognition that it is useful to have a 'resource person' – someone staff can turn to for advice and support and who has knowledge of gender variance. Teaching staff craved more information and wanted to know what to do.

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
			Lack of protocol heightened anxiety of educators.		

Educators' attributes and actions	A consistent approach was felt to be important to the young person and for their wellbeing. It was considered important for staff to be flexible in their approach. Educators should admit when they make mistakes. Educators should try to show understanding in their actions and not ask insensitive questions or use inappropriate language.	Educators often downplayed their actions and those of their colleagues. Educators saw non-intervention as unproblematic. Educators occasionally acknowledged that working with gender nonconforming young people had led them to question their own actions and change their practice. Educators framed themselves as accepting.		Educators being committed and willing to learn in order to support the young person.	Staff gave the other children the permission to ask questions and be curious. It was useful for staff to make themselves available to the other children to ensure that they could answer their questions. Educators committed to making their school and classroom safe and respectful places to be. Educators seeing their role as one of support. Educators showing a commitment to

					supporting the young person.

Individual approach	Having an individualised approach was mentioned in almost all of the interviews. It was felt to be important to ask the young person what they want before taking any steps. It was felt important that staff knew the person well and could respond to their individual needs. Educational Psychologists can help to access the young person's views and support staff in meeting their needs.			Seeing the child as an individual rather than a label. Plans were made based on the individual child's needs. The school encouraged the child's parent's to present to staff in order to keep the child at the centre of the work they were doing.	The young person was consulted in the implementation of the plan for moving forward. The young person was encouraged to speak to others about herself to help them understand what it was like for her. Young person read a poem to her classmates. A perception that the child was at the centre of the process and everyone else 'wrapped around her in layers' Empowerment for the young person when encouraged to take the lead.

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
Collaboration	It was felt key to coordinate with the young person and their family. It is key to develop a clear, joint plan with the school, family and young person. The focus of the intervention should be largely on the social systems around the child. Educational psychologists may be in a good position to support school staff in their efforts to support the young person.			High levels of collaboration between the family and school staff. Resources and information shared between school staff and the family. A perception that everyone was 'in it together'. A sense of a clear, shared goal and a sense of purpose.	Benefit of educators being supported by a more knowledgeable member of district staff who could support them in their understanding and their work with the young person. School staff also provided support for the systems around the child. Plans were devised collaboratively. There was a feeling of not being alone.

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
				The school psychologist was also used for support.	There is a need for consistent communication between everyone involved. Importance of a shared language. The principal was supportive for her school staff and tried to take on a lot of responsibility to protect them. Young person was involved in the process very heavily.

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
The other children		Educators often anticipated peer to peer bullying and victimisation. Bullying from peers was such a concern that many participants were surprised when the other young people responded with indifference or acceptance. Bullying often framed as the primary issue facing gender nonconforming youth.	Participants were concerned about other children finding out when the gender nonconforming pupil was not 'out'. There was a concern that perhaps the other children and their families had a 'right' to know. Teachers possibly could have inadvertently made the other children believe that gender variance is taboo by not directly		School staff encouraged other young people to ask questions and to be curious. Peers were encouraged to support the young person and to act as allies for her. Young people were aware of the expectations of them and it was made clear that there was a zero-tolerance policy on harassment.

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
			answering their questions.		Adults modelled acceptance which made it easier for the other children to be accepting. Young person appreciated her peers being on her side.
Educators wanting to do the right thing		Educators expressed a clear commitment to creating supportive school environment which were welcoming of gender nonconforming students.	Educators feeling that they should be doing something else to support the young person but being unsure about what that is. Educators feared the questions of other young people as they were	There was a feeling of collective responsibility.	Teachers craved information about the right thing to do. Educators were committed to supporting the young person effectively.

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
			unsure how to respond correctly. Educators felt stressed, anxious and incompetent as they were unsure what to do.		
School climate	Teaching staff should look for ways to reduce gender stereotypes through the curriculum. This will help gender nonconforming young people to accept their gender variance.			There was a feeling that Cynwyd elementary school's climate was already fertile for work around gender variance. There was a sense of friendliness, respect and school pride shared by members of the community.	Climate at school seen as 'open' and allowing people to make their feelings known. It was felt to be important that the principal knew her school and staff very well and listened to everyone.

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
				School feeling a responsibility to be the right setting for the young person. School principal encouraging open dialogue amongst her staff and supporting them to ask questions openly and honestly. The aim of a school climate built on respecting, embracing and celebrating the uniqueness of everyone in the school community.	A perception that the school community was progressive in nature and that this played a role in the success of the transition. School have a strong anti-bullying message and this is reinforced regularly throughout the curriculum. A school that teaches respect with regards to diversity and difference and weaves it through the curriculum.

	Paper				
Concept	Bowskill (2017)	Frohard-Dourlent (2016)	Payne & Smith (2014)	Slesaransky-Poe et al (2013)	Luecke (2011)
Educators acting as protector		Educators often framed themselves as someone who could protect the gender nonconforming young person from the potential victimisation of other youth. The need to identify 'safe' adults who had prior experience or had shown some awareness of trans issues.		Parents feeling a sense of needing to know the school setting they chose would keep their son safe. There is a sense that educators must ensure their schools are safe places for children to learn and thrive.	

Appendix 3 - Table demonstrating the process of synthesising second-order concepts to produce third-order concepts

Concepts	**Second order interpretations**	**Third order interpretations**
Educators acting as protector	Educators framed themselves as someone who could protect the young person from the victimisation of other young people. A sense that educators must ensure their schools are safe places for children to learn.	**Managing the other children's responses** There was a concern, in varying degrees depending on the study, regarding the response of other children to the gender nonconforming young person. Whilst some schools proactively sought to minimise this before it had even begun by raising awareness of gender variance and allowing young people the option to ask questions and be curious, other schools and school staff identified 'safe people' and spaces where the gender nonconforming young person could be protected by adults. In these situations, adults were framed as a protector by educators, although the protection did not go far enough to minimise bullying in the first place.
The other children	Educators anticipated bullying from peers and there was often surprise when this didn't materialise. There was a sense that teachers' actions modelled behaviour for the other children. Some staff involved the other children heavily and encouraged them to ask questions. This allowed them to gain an understanding of the situation rather than making assumptions. The young people were seen as allies.	

Concepts	Second order interpretations	Third order interpretations
The value of education, experience and protocol	There was a clear wish for more information, education and training to be available for educators on gender variance. There was a sense that educators felt unprepared and unequipped to support the young person effectively as a result of a lack of experience or training. Staff felt safety in protocol.	**A wish for more information** Despite the best efforts and intentions of educators, their lack of experience and training, as well as a lack of guidance from policy and people higher than them often left them feeling incompetent and unsure of whether they were doing the right thing to support the young person. Where staff were supported by a more knowledgeable individual or organisation and given continuing support they felt more equipped to be able to support the young person.
Educators wanting to do the right thing	Educators often expressed a clear commitment to supporting the young person and wanted to make sure they did everything "right". Not knowing what the "right" thing was left educators feeling stressed, anxious and incompetent.	
School climate	Schools are places in which the gender binary is reinforced and staff can and should challenge this through the curriculum. Schools which already had a climate of respect, and one in which everyone was valued and listened to were places which allowed effective	**The trickle effect** It is important to recognise the way a supportive school community is built from the top and trickles down to all of its members. School principals who had a supportive district and knew that their decisions would be

Concepts	Second order interpretations	Third order interpretations
	support to be implemented effectively as the attitude was already right. A school climate that celebrates diversity and uniqueness is useful. The value of a supportive principal and district.	supported by their bosses, made themselves open and available to members of staff who had questions. These climates felt comfortable for staff to raise any issues or questions that they had. In the same schools who raised the supportiveness of the principal as a key factor – the staff presented themselves as committed to supporting the young person and doing everything that they could to make this effective. In other studies where principals were not identified to be a key factor in successful support for a GNC YP, staff continued to present themselves as open and committed, however there appeared to be more of a limit to what they felt they could achieve and therefore in the support that was implemented.
Educators' attributes and actions	Educators being flexible, yet consistent was seen to be valuable. Educators who were understanding were valued. It was important for educators to be committed to supporting the young person, by being available and making their classrooms safe places to be. Educators often framed themselves as 'accepting' and felt that they were doing everything they could given the circumstances.	
Collaboration	It was felt key to coordinate with the YP themselves as well as their family. A clear, jointly prepared plan was felt valuable.	**<u>Working for the young person</u>** Whilst collaboration was mentioned in many of the studies and seen as a key factor in

Concepts	Second order interpretations	Third order interpretations
	It was useful to share resources and information between the school and the family. There was often a sense of 'being in it together'.	effectively supporting the young person – it was collaborating and consulting with the young person themselves which was often felt to be essential. It was identified regularly that decisions should be made with the young person and that the support systems around the young person should also be supported and collaborated with. Plans were deemed best implemented when the young person felt it was the right time.
Individual approach	Having an individualised approach was felt to be important and it was often mentioned that it was essential to consult with the young person about what they needed and wanted. It was considered important that staff knew the young person well and could respond to them as an individual. Plans were often made based on the individual child's needs and it was clear that staff often saw the child as being at the centre of the work they were doing.	

Appendix 4 - Initial Invitation for Young People

How can school staff help to support gender nonconforming children and young people?

Hi, I am Ashleigh Holt. I am a student at Newcastle University, training to be an Educational Psychologist. Educational Psychologists try to make things better in schools for lots of different children and young people.

I am interested in finding out how gender nonconforming young people feel that school staff can support them in schools. I want to hear your own experiences of being supported by staff in school, and your ideas about how this could be made better.

I hope that this research will show me how school staff all over the country can help other children who identify as gender nonconforming.

I really hope that you would be interested in taking part in this research project. I am looking forward to hearing your views!

Do you identify as gender nonconforming, transgender, gender variant or gender diverse?

Would you like to tell me your thoughts about how staff in school can support young people like you?

Newcastle University
Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology

With your permission, I would like to hear about your experiences. All of your information will be kept confidential and only me and my supervisor will have access to it. Any published results will not include your real name or any personal details. I hope to see you soon ☺

Newcastle University

Appendix 5 - Sample of Table showing initial commenting and emerging themes for IPA

Exploratory Comments	Original Transcript	Emerging Themes
Spoken to the cleaning ladies once or twice. You can tell from looking that they are friendly people. Again the personal characteristics of staff within the school setting are raised as something which he seems to find important when trying to find someone who he thinks can support him. Never rude to him. It is telling that he finds it easier to name the staff who are not rude to him rather than those who are. The caretaker is also someone he likes. And the counsellor. Refers to people he can talk to as 'cool', 'nice' and 'friendly'.	A: /Okay/ V: I've never learnt their like, their name the poor, poor, poor women. But like, you can just tell from looking at them that they're friendly people. A: Mmm V: Like the people who work behind the counters at lunch time, they're nice they're never rude to you. And the caretaker, the caretaker is cool. And obviously the counsellor. A: Mmhmm V: She's pretty cool and I think the new one that we're getting next year I hope she's nice, well I hope he's nice. [Pause] The only people in the school that I can't really confirm as nice people are the people that I don't really talk to A: Yeah V: Which would be, pretty much the entire school population and most of the teachers	Valuing positive personal characteristics Non-teaching members of staff that he is comfortable with Naming the staff members who are not rude, rather than those who are Valued personal characteristics in a staff member Doesn't speak with most of the school population

Can't say whether the majority of school pupils and most of the teachers are nice because he doesn't speak to them. He feels comfortable if he knows the person he is talking to won't get angry at him. Be upset by him or be negative towards him. <u>In the past this implies that people may have been angry/wierded out/upset by him. He appears to be cautious about this. Potentially why he is reluctant to make friends.</u> He can be friendly. Jokes about this being strange. <u>Have people perceived that he would not be a nice person? Maybe he thinks this because people keep their distance from him?</u> Things seem to be calming down at the minute. Everyone's gotten used to everyone. <u>Is he saying that this is because it is the end of the year? So they have had almost the year to get used to him?</u>	A: Okay. So if you know somebody's nice and friendly, or cool as you said, then you tend to feel quite comfortable talking to them? V: Yes A: Yeah? V: If I know that someone won't either get angry at me, be wierded out by me, be upset by me or any other combination of negativeness surrounded by me then think I'd be okay with them A: Mmhmm V: Because as strange as this may sound, sometimes I can be rather friendly! Shocking, I know! (Both laugh) A: Okay. So, I was wondering, on a few occasions last time we spoke you mentioned how things seem to be calming down at the moment now V: Yeah A: Erm, and I wonder if you had any thoughts about why that might be? V: Well, it's nearing the end of the year meaning that everyone's gotten used to everyone by now	A sense of isolation? He is comfortable with other people if they are comfortable with him Views self as friendly but thinks others might not assume this A perception that things are calmer at present because

His use of 'everyone' here suggests that he is not just talking about himself that people are getting used to, but potentially that all social difficulties appear to have settled? People starting to ignore each other. *He says this as if it is a positive thing.* <u>Does he mean ignore as opposed to be abusive towards?</u> He is anxious about the new year 7 group coming in next year. He says that this is due to the fact that some will inevitably be taller than he is. <u>Is it also because he is worried he might have to experience it again with a new group of people having to 'get used to' his gender nonconformity?</u> Seems relieved that he has some time to prepare for that. *People have probably found some other poor kid to pick on. He says this again as mentioned previously. Almost an expectation that people must be bullying someone so if it is not him then it must be someone else. Says 'poor' as if relating to that other young person who might be the target at present.*	A: Mmm V: And people are just starting to ignore each other A: Okay V: And stay within their friend groups. However I am not looking forward to the new year when there are children two years younger than me that are still taller than me. Seriously that was an issue that I had in primary school A: Okay V: Argh! Why have I been cursed with shortness? But yeah, not looking forward to a hundred or so new students in the new year. A: Mmm V: But at least I have got some time before that, yay. And but yeah it's nearing the ned of the school year, everyone's gotten used to each other by now, people have probably found some poor other kid to pick on (laughs). And I know that's not nice but it's probably true. And hey at least it's to happening to me. A: Is that how you feel about that then V: Yeah to be honest. That's not nice, but it's true. A: Mmm	people are getting used to his gender nonconformity. Being ignored is better than being abused A view that bullies will always find something about someone to talk about

He has an awareness that it isn't nice that someone else is potentially being bullied but he is pleased it isn't him. Almost a moral dilemma for him of being happy that he isn't being bullied but knowing that it potentially means someone else is. Not nice but true. Uses someone else's words to convey his meaning. I wonder if he feels that it is better if it is not in his own words? Reflects on the difference between the speech of another and his life. He doesn't have to deal with people. Recognises that this is a good thing but also sad. What is this saying to him about his life and his identity? How does not really connecting with people affect your sense of self? People have got over the initial shock of a transgender person being in their school. Does this part indicate he thinks people view him as male now? Which is why there is surprise when he has long hair? Discusses the incident again where someone in the LGBT group mistook him for a girl.	V: To erm, to paraphrase Bo Bernum, "Yeah life sucks. I can look at all that bad stuff and be like ugh at least it's not happening to me, but I've gotta deal with all the people who it is." (Laughs). Got to deal with them. But I don't really have to deal with people. Not complaining! But also pretty sad. Um, yeah. People have gotten over the original shock of, "Oh look, a transgender (gasps)" A: Mmhmm V: And are now like, "Why is that kid's hair so long?" Because my hair was horrendously long. I refer to the um, incident I spoke about last time we met where someone in an LGBT group actually mistook me for a girl because of how horrendously long my hair had gotten A: Yeah V: And then he realised and immediately apologised A: Mmhmm V: Because I almost had a bob. A: Mmm, because it had grown?	An awareness of being alone/isolated Initial shock response to gender nonconformity Physical appearance contributes to sense of identity

Appendix 6 - Table demonstrating how themes were refined through abstraction and subsumption

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
People are fearful of what they don't know Lack of understanding of gender nonconformity Not understanding isn't a problem Understanding facilitates acceptance With understanding comes acceptance A lack of understanding rather than a lack of accepting Having knowledge allows for acceptance	Acceptance	Subsumption	**Acceptance** • *Understanding and acceptance* • *Education* *Re-humanising transgender children*	"And, while she may not understand it, she tries to be supportive and that's really nice". "And while people can change, there's an awful lot of people in this school I believe, that those stereotypes are set in their mind for life". "And the one or two people from school didn't understand it, because I was the first transgender person they'd interacted with" "it was like explaining a new type of food to
People are fearful of what they don't know Lack of understanding of gender nonconformity Not understanding isn't a problem	Understanding and acceptance	Becomes a sub-theme through process of subsumption		

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Understanding facilitates acceptance With understanding comes acceptance A lack of understanding rather than a lack of accepting Having knowledge allows for acceptance				people who have only been eating mashed potatoes their entire life" "The tolerance I feel is just like a, "Okay, you exist, I guess I won't be awful to you". But acceptance is "You exist and I'm okay with that. And I will either be your friend or I will leave you alone…"" "If a transgender person feels, if a transgender person is accepted, they'll probably be more likely to accept themselves, if they haven't already"
The importance of education about LGBT issues for primary school children Simple education might make a big difference LGBT education at an early age could have helped with his identity LGBT education in primary school might make people more accepting	Education	Becomes a sub-theme through process of subsumption.		

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
The importance of LGBT education The power of education The importance of education about LGBT issues Stereotypes and misconceptions as a result of lack of education Educating young children about transgender issues Young children should be provided with the facts Learning about others Gender nonconformity being a new idea to people Gender nonconformity often not known about Initial shock response to gender nonconformity Gender nonconformity being novel to some				

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
A perception of people disagreeing with gender nonconformity A perception that some people refuse to acknowledge the existence of gender nonconformity A view that posters are not adequate for education				
Awareness of individual difference Normalising gender nonconformity Transgender people are human beings Transgender children are still children Transgender children are human beings Advising school staff that transgender young people are not aliens	Re-humanising transgender children	Becomes a sub-theme through process of subsumption.		

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Awareness of individual difference Encouraging acceptance of difference in young people Mocking the potential perception of others that transgender people are a different species				
Making connections with other young people A sense of connection to others Connection in problems Feelings of connection to peers Feeling connected to others Memories of being connected to others Memories of feeling connected Blending in	Feeling connected	Abstraction. Change name to 'Feeling connected to others'	**Connectedness** • Feeling connected to others • A sense of exclusion	"And I've made, some [pause] friendships… kind of with some of those people that have also showed up there" "Because I'd found a group of people that had similar problems to me. And then suddenly it was just, gone". "And it's just, so uplifting that, when I

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Feelings of sameness A sense of being the same Feeling part of something Positivity experienced when surrounded by people he feels are like him. Positive memories of people signing his shirt The power of connectedness and belonging Valuing regular interaction with people Having fun with other people Having fun with others is rare and valuable The importance of inclusion Reminiscing about positive experience				remember that all of these people are here because they have similar issues and problems as me" and just blending in with the school. That makes me feel good, and, tomorrow, it's the school sports day and it's 'Oh it's a non-uniform day wear the colour that your house is" And I'm participating in that, and that's making me feel, "yes, this is a place I belong…" "I haven't made many friends, here, in this school" "And I end up, um, currently I just sit in a room by myself and work through maths"

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Feeling like he knew people at Primary school Feeling connected to people at primary school Identifying with transgender people Being more comfortable with his identity in a similar group				
Lack of connection to other people Losing friends Friends not really being friends Not having many friends Avoiding friendships as a defence mechanism Not feeling connected to the community Experience of exclusion Outsider? Being isolated/excluded An awareness of being alone/isolated	Exclusion	Abstraction. Change name to 'A sense of exclusion'		

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Being aware when he is not accepted Being ignored is better than being abused Doesn't speak with most of the school population Perception of self as alone A sense of isolation?				
The impact of gender nonconformity on friendships Finding the social world confusing Views self as friendly but thinks others might not assume this Factors hindering his success in making friends Maintaining relationships can be effortful	Social difficulties			
Some sense of belonging to school	School Community	Abstraction		

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Being involved in day to day events supports a sense of belonging Everyone in school as a unit Size of school Wants school to be a happy place for everyone				
Impact on self-perception Distorting sense of identity Impact on identity Sense of self as different Sense of identity Sense of self Perceptions of himself Self-identity View of self as academic Challenging his identity Physical attributes feed into identity	Identity	Identity becomes main super-ordinate theme. Splitting this into two subthemes: • Identity being challenged • Feeling different	**<u>Identity</u>** • Identity being challenged • Feeling different	"And, to be honest, if I could swap that incident for being called a loser a thousand times I would take being called a loser a thousand times. Because I know that I'm not a loser". "Um [short pause] well I've always *been* different" "With teachers deciding that no,

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Can other people decide who you are? Whose choice is identity? Struggling with disparity between sense of identity and current situation Perception of himself as a child Academic perception of self Viewing himself as smart Viewing himself as a burden/problem Impact on sense of self Perception of self as academic Challenge to his academic sense of self? Incidents affect sense of self Impact of physical appearance				you're not a boy and, pupils here deciding 'oh yeah, teacher is right, you're not man…'" "Yes. I think I might have figured out who I was a lot quicker [Having LGBT education in primary school]" "And he's, he's had to deal with me (laughs) he's has to deal with me for almost a year now. Poor guy (laughs). I'm barely putting up with myself, don't know how he can". It means to me that not only has my attitude to school gotten more negative,

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Perception of his physical appearance Identity Identity: The first known transgender pupil in school Physical appearance contributes to sense of identity Comfortable with FTM Perception of self Identifying as transgender male. Abuse is worse if it speaks a potential truth				yes, negative-er isn't a word (laughs), but it's reflected in like, test scores, and how much homework I'm handing in each week, hmmmm, and just, and because of that I'm starting to feel worse about myself. Because I used to be a smart kid"
Non-judgemental The value of someone trying to be supportive People who are willing to try to be supportive despite not understanding Positive traits People being kind	Staff Support – Things which have supported	Use 'support' as a super-ordinate theme and split this into two sub-themes: • Traits of others • Actions of others	**<u>Staff support</u>** • Traits of staff • Actions of staff	"Even when they, when they don't understand… but they try to anyway… I think that's, I think that's a good trait for a person to have." "It's that, once again we can all be

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Being supportive No judgement Valuing positive personal characteristics Valuing nice, warm members of staff Valuing the willingness of staff to help people Personal characteristics/qualities seen as helpful Contagious happiness Being himself Mistakes are okay Not making a big deal out of it Being himself Staff fixing problems Personal qualities Personal attributes/characteristics Putting trust in staff members Staff being able to help				ourselves there and not be judged for being ourselves" "The counsellor, she's really nice" "One of them, she is, she was my English teacher. Was just such a *happy* and *sunshiney* person" "And [pause] he's always been able to be like, "Okay, we can't absolutely fix this but we can do this this and *this*"" "And he's also been a very kind person." "because I know that quite a few school would say that because it didn't

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Staff responding quickly Characteristics of others – good Seeing the school counsellor is helpful Not feeling alone The importance of feeling someone is there for him Someone to talk to A perception that staff have done a lot to help him Staff member being helpful from the beginning Staff being willing to help him as positive Valuing positive personal characteristic Valuing efforts to support him Valuing positive personal characteristics				happen on school grounds they couldn't do anything about it. [Pause] But, that wasn't the case here" "I can talk to her and she won't judge me. And most of the time it's confidential" "And then suddenly that problem is not my problem alone anymore"

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
Feeling comfortable talking to staff Valuing positive personal characteristics Valued personal characteristics in a staff member Respecting the transgender child's wishes about their gender identity A feeling of being in it together with a member of staff Non-teaching members of staff that he is comfortable with A perception of the school doing more than he thought they had to on some occasions School response having a positive impact on his				

Emergent themes	Initial clustering	Process	Super-ordinate themes	Quotes from the text
feelings about the situation				

Appendix 7- Table demonstrating the final table of superordinate themes and subthemes

Clustered emergent themes/themes	**Refined themes – Superordinate, subthemes and themes** Superordinate *Sub-themes* Themes
Relational	Relational *Connectedness*
Connection	
The importance of relationships	
The need for connectedness	
The need for someone to talk to	
Friends accepting of transition	
Supportive friendships	
Friends being aware of transition	
Importance of friends	
Friends as central	
The importance of support from friends	
Positive about support from friends	
Support from friends is helpful	
Feeling a sense of belonging to school	
Sameness	*Relational* *Sameness*
Inclusion promotes belonging	
Sameness supports belonging	
Belonging promoted through sameness	
Belonging promoted through sameness	
A desire for sameness	

Clustered emergent themes/themes	**Refined themes – Superordinate, subthemes and themes** Superordinate *Sub-themes* Themes
The importance of being like everyone else	
Feeling normal	
Respecting the individual	Respecting the individual
Changing	*Changing*
The issue of changing rooms	
The issue of changing rooms	
Feeling uncomfortable with others seeing male body	
Positive experience of changing separately to others	
The importance of getting changed separately	
Pre-planning with regards to changing room facilities	
Changing separately to others	
Agency	*Respecting the individual*
A sense of agency and control	*Agency*
The importance of agency for the young person	
Choice indicates support	
Value of agency over situation	
Agency	
Allowing them agency	
Participation as meaningful	
Being given a choice	
Genuine choices provided	
Lack of choice would be experienced negatively	
The importance of giving transgender young people a choice	
The importance of genuinely being listened to	

Clustered emergent themes/themes	**Refined themes – Superordinate, subthemes and themes** Superordinate *Sub-themes* Themes
Valuing not being forced to participate in an uncomfortable activity	
Demonstrating support	Relational/Respecting the Individual *Demonstrating support*
Staff willingness is valued	
Connection to school comes from willingness of staff	
The importance of school staff checking in	
Showing willing	
Staff have supported her holistically	
Valuing staff who can support holistically	
School staff accept Tavistock visits as normality	
Values 'nice' members of staff	
Willingness is important	
Helpfulness is important	
Teacher suggestions perceived as helpful	
Overall experience of school	*Overall experience*
Viewing school positively	
Positive experience of school	
School seen positively	
An awareness of her school's support	
Feeling generally positive about experience	
Little adversity experienced	
Current school close to ideal	
Impact of being transgender only impacts in a physical way on school life.	

Clustered emergent themes/themes	**Refined themes – Superordinate, subthemes and themes** Superordinate *Sub-themes* Themes
Inclusive ethos in school community	
Hasn't experienced exclusion	
Planning for transition	**Not relevant to question? More about what she did!**
Expecting the school to be helpful	
Worrying about transition	
Anxiety around the issue of changing rooms before she started	
The importance of a plan	
Wondering how school can accommodate needs	
Being proactive	

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