

**Facilitating inclusion in schools for gender-diverse children and young people including those at the intersection of neuro and gender diversity**

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## Abstract

The experiences of gender-diverse children and young people (CYP) have come into sharp focus recently with a proliferation of research evidencing poorer educational outcomes for this group compared to cisgender peers. Yet, a systematic review of the literature, including positive, affirming experiences is yet to be conducted. Further key gaps within the literature include a paucity of research exploring the impact of intersectionality for this group, whilst the role played by educational psychologists (EPs) in supporting CYP with intersecting gender and neurodiversity remains unexplored.

Paper 1, a systematic literature review (SLR) provides an overview of the research relating to the lived high school experiences of gender-diverse young people. Web and database searches identified 12 studies representing direct, first-hand experiences of high school. Data were analysed using thematic synthesis. The findings indicate that gender-diverse youth experience a range of negative and affirming experiences throughout high school linked to key themes including cisnormativity, language, identity, relationships and transphobia. Findings are discussed in relation to inclusive schooling practices as well as offering implications for professional practice.

Paper 2, an empirical investigation, explores the experiences and practices of five EPs with applied knowledge of working with autistic, gender-diverse CYP. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and a reflexive thematic analysis carried out to develop themes. Findings highlight distinct areas of practice and challenges faced by EPs including the uncertainty and complexity of work in this emerging area. The nature of direct work with CYP and support for inclusive schooling practices are also explored. Implications for research and practice are discussed including the development of resources and guidance within educational psychology services to support practitioners in their work in this area.

Paper 3 provides a discussion of the concept of evidence-based practice in relation to the role of the EP alongside consideration of effective methods for research dissemination. The implications of the research presented in Paper 1 and Paper 2 are also identified and a dissemination strategy for sharing findings with key stakeholders is outlined.

### **Declaration Statement**

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.



### **Copyright Statement**

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Alice. Without you I would be completely lost. And Cooper, for forcing me to be present.

Without you both holding me together, I would have split into a thousand tiny pieces.

This is for you.

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## Introduction

### Aims of the study

The purpose of this section is to outline the overall strategy for this thesis including its aims and research questions. This section will introduce the researcher's professional background, rationale for engagement and axiological position. A consideration of the positioning for data access and the ontological and epistemological stances adopted within this research will also be made.

The overarching aim of the research presented in this thesis was to explore the experiences of gender-diverse children and young people both with and without intersecting neurodiversity as they navigate their education. Originally, this research was commissioned by a local authority educational psychology service (EPS) in the North of England as part of the commissioning model established within the Doctorate of Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Manchester. The rationale for the commission was in response to a growing recognition within the local authority of a possible trend amongst children and young people on the autism diagnostic pathway presenting with diverse gender identities. Initially, through discussions between the researcher and commissioners, it was agreed that an empirical study collecting the views and experiences of autistic, gender-diverse high school students would be conducted. As a means of comparison, it was also agreed that a systematic literature review gathering the experiences of neurotypical gender-diverse youth during high school would also be carried out.

Unfortunately, difficulties with participant recruitment, due to restrictions relating to the COVID-19 global pandemic, led to a change in focus within Paper 2. An initial pilot study, previously completed by the researcher, indicated perceived gaps within professional practice amongst educational psychologists (EPs) in regards to supporting autistic, gender-diverse CYP. Following these findings, it was agreed by the researchers and commissioners that an amended empirical study, which built upon the pilot study, with a focus upon the role of EPs would be a valuable contribution to knowledge in this area. It was also anticipated that Paper 2 would link to the rationale for Paper 1 by extending the focus on gender-diverse young people to include those with intersecting neurodiversity as well as offering further insight into the role played by professionals to support this group of young people. The foci for Papers 1 and Paper 2 would enable Paper 3 to focus on disseminating

findings and insight amongst educational and psychological professionals. This would continue to meet the research needs of the commissioning EPS as well as supporting young people indirectly through an examination of the impact of professional practice. The revised plan allowed for continued collaborations between researchers and commissioners as well as fostering independence of the research.

The focus of Paper 1 remained the same and, as such, the aim of the first paper in this thesis was to gather the underlying experiences of gender-diverse youth during their secondary education. The research question, therefore, employed within the systematic literature review was: *what are the educational experiences of gender-diverse young people?* The revised focus of Paper 2 – now concerned with exploring the role of EPs working to support CYP at the intersection of gender and neurodiversity – was driven by the research question: *what are educational psychologists' experiences and practices of working with autistic, gender diverse children and young people?* Findings from both of these papers yielded important implications for educational professionals and school systems when supporting gender and neurodiverse youth, including specific implications for the EP role. Paper 3 explores the dissemination of evidence to a range of key stakeholders, including EPs and school staff.

### **Researcher's professional background and relevant experience**

Prior to beginning their training as an EP, the researcher worked in a range of school settings as a member of support staff within special educational needs and disability (SEND) departments. The researcher has also worked as a youth worker and an assistant educational psychologist. Through these roles, the researcher has supported a number of autistic CYP, as well as working as a mentor for CYP with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) challenges. It was through these roles that the researcher encountered young people experiencing difficulties throughout their education and relationships, in part, due to responses to their neurodiversity or their diverse sexual and gender expressions. This, first-hand, observation of the challenges faced by individuals and groups pertaining to their respective diversity, difference or difficulties attuned the researcher to the ways in which marginalised groups within schools can be positioned by people and systems. This has led to an ongoing professional interest for the researcher in relation to identity, diversity and inclusion. This thesis is, therefore, in response to and resulting from the researcher's

professional exposure to the effects of schooling experiences upon CYP with divergent identities.

### **Positioning for Data Access**

As part of the original commissioning team for the research pitched within Paper 2, there were two high schools from the commissioning local authority. Representatives from these schools had tentatively highlighted a number of possible participants within the schools who met the criteria for having a diagnosis of autism as well as presenting with diverse gender identities. Within the original research plan for Paper 2, the researcher would have sought to recruit participants from the two joint commissioning high schools. However, following changes to the research focus, the researcher extended the research positioning to include EPs from across the UK in order to obtain a variety of experiences from a range of contexts.

### **Axiology**

Axiology relates to how an individual's values influence perceptions, decisions and actions (Maxwell, 2012). The researcher's axiological position is reflected upon here including its impact upon the research.

The researcher recognises their position as a cisgender, neurotypical male within this research. It is from this position of privilege that the researcher's interest in the lived experiences of individuals and groups with diverse backgrounds originates. Throughout their professional career, the researcher has engaged with, supported and advocated for young people from diverse backgrounds with wide-ranging needs and difficulties associated with their identities. As such, the researcher has developed an approach which is founded upon equity, equality and inclusivity. It is from this standpoint which the researcher has approached this research with a curiosity about lived experience and a purpose of advocacy for the voices of young people.

The original research plan for Paper 2 was driven by the researcher's determination to reach and represent the voices of autistic, gender-diverse young people. Given the lack of representation of this group within the literature (Strang et al., 2018), the researcher felt it was essential, not only to offer a platform for young people to express their voice and be heard but also to advocate for this group and avoid victim tropes which pervade current research (Kean, 2020). Given the change in focus for the revised research plan in Paper 2,

the researcher continued from their stance of representation within Paper 1 through a focus upon the lived experiences and direct voices of gender-diverse young people. The researcher's standpoint of advocacy and inclusion can also be seen to influence the analysis and findings of Paper 1 and paper 2 with a clear focus upon the rights of these young people, the necessity for inclusion and a balanced reflection of their needs as well as their strengths.

### **Ontology and Epistemology**

Ontology is concerned with realities, and how these are constructed. Epistemology is concerned with what constitutes knowledge, and how it is obtained (Scotland, 2012). The researcher's stance is that of critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978). Maxwell (2012) elucidates critical realism as combining a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology. That is to say that critical realism offers a balance between a realist positioning of reality as existing independently of our constructions, yet knowledge of the world is inevitably our own construction. It states that the nature of reality (ontology) is not reducible to our knowledge of reality (epistemology) – human knowledge is only able to capture and represent a small part of a much wider reality which is unknowable (Fletcher, 2017).

This position fits well with the current research given that a critical realist approach acknowledges, on the one hand, that key concepts within the research, including gender and identity, are socially and individually constructed yet, the ways in which these concepts are experienced by individuals and groups is governed and constrained by underlying mechanisms. In Paper 1, the review sought to gather and analyse the views and experiences of gender-diverse youth throughout their education. And yet, whilst this process seeks to find commonalities and shared experiences upon which to make some generalisable observations, there is also an acknowledgement that these experiences are bound by individual contexts and their underlying systems and structures. An example of this is within the recognition that cisnormativity is pervasive, having a considerable impact upon the ways in which individuals and groups experience their gender. Yet cisnormativity, whilst existing outside of our individual constructions, is experienced in novel ways by individuals depending on the context of their epistemologies.

Equally, in Paper 2, whilst EPs may have some shared experiences in regards to supporting this group of young people, the varying contexts of their experiences will render

their experiences individual. Therefore, Paper 2 cannot make claims about the nature of EP work (ontology) with this group, only commenting on the commonality of experiences presented by participants (epistemology). The principles of a critical realist methodology are present within Paper 1 through the use of systematic approaches to review and analysis with the acceptance that there is a reality to be systematically observed. Yet with a focus upon the individually constructed experiences of young people, Paper 1 leans towards the social constructivist end of the critical realism scale.

This perspective fits with the exploratory nature of Papers 1 and 2 which are nestled within emerging areas of research. Paper 1 is an investigative review (Gough et al., 2013) which seeks not to solve a problem or puzzle but to offer insight and some clarification through an interpretive and discursive approach to the data for the purpose of advancing theoretical understanding (Greenhalgh et al., 2018). By offering critical reflection upon the possible underlying causality, in which particular mechanisms (for example, cisnormativity) produce particular outcomes (for example, school avoidance) within complex and individual contexts.

The investigative review in Paper 1 is both systematic (through its methodology and quality assessment) and narrative (through the privileging of critical reflection and thoughtful engagement with underlying ideas). The rationale for this was to offer an evidence-informed approach which builds upon previous scoping reviews (McBride, 2021). The review in Paper 1 sought to identify a reliable data set through a rigorous and systematic search methodology whilst providing an interpretive understanding of the data. Given the emerging nature of the field, it was felt important by the researcher to engage critically and reflectively with the diverse epistemologies inherent within the data in order to offer clarity and insight into the lived experiences of gender-diverse young people.

### **Specific Ethical Issues**

A specific aspect of ethical approval which the researcher was particularly mindful of was maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in Paper 2. As the research in Paper 2 was conducted within an emerging field within educational psychology, it is natural that a relatively small number of EPs may have begun to develop this expertise, some of whom may be identifiable. The researcher was also considerate of ensuring the anonymity of casework in order to avoid the possible exposure of participants. As a trainee



educational psychologist working towards being a Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered practitioner, the researcher was also aware of their responsibilities regarding any disclosures of inappropriate or unethical practice in regards to work within this area.

### **Wider Issues and Positioning of the Research**

It is acknowledged by the researcher that this research is set within a broader social, cultural, political and research context. It is claimed that the debate regarding transgender and gender-diverse identities is firmly placed within the cultural zeitgeist in many places around the world (Fiani & Han, 2018). Recent years has seen a proliferation of high-profile members of popular western culture publicly identify as gender-diverse including Caitlyn Jenner (Bissinger, 2015), Miley Cyrus (Nichols, 2016) and Ruby Rose (Gray, 2015). Such high-profile social transitions have undoubtedly led to increased scrutiny and debate around the topic of gender-diversity. Whilst, gender-diversity is seen to be given celebrity status and the focus of much media attention and broadening the discussion, there is also a separate movement which has seen public demonstrations of opposition to gender-diverse lives including the recent legal battle which judged in favour of gender-critical views (the belief that people cannot be a different gender to their natal sex) being protected as philosophical beliefs under the Equality Act (2010) in the UK (Siddique, 2021a).

With the Reform of the Gender Recognition Act: Government Consultation (2018) catalysing a heated debate regarding trans rights and inclusion in the UK (Zanghellini, 2020), the greater visibility and protections afforded gender-diverse individuals has created a backlash (Hines, 2018). Whilst the backlash is seen within areas of the broader population, it has also found voice amongst gender-critical feminists who advocate for the reservation of women's spaces for cisgendered women as a means of protecting their own rights (Zanghellini, 2020). This has led to what some describe as a fraught, polarised and toxic debate in which LGBT organisations such as Stonewall have become centralised (Siddique, 2021b). Whilst the researcher recognises the polarisation of the current debate around the inclusivity of gender-diverse lives and identities, the following research is positioned as supportive of the CYP who are at the heart of the debate. The researcher seeks to position the study as an intervention into the recognition that neurotypical and neurodiverse CYP with diverse gender identities face challenges in their schooling lives which typically lead to negative outcomes for their education and broader wellbeing. This research is sensitive to

the passionate perspectives of all positions within the debate but recognises that without support for their inclusion within educational practices, those CYP will continue to face significant challenges in their lives.

A further aspect of the complexity and sensitivity of the research which the researcher wishes to address is the heterogeneity of the population of CYP discussed within this research. Whilst the researcher discusses the primary (in Paper 1) and secondary (in Paper 2) participants within the research as a population of CYP who are gender-diverse, it is recognised by the researcher that such a diverse and heterogeneous group of people cannot be assumed to form one single group to which all findings can be generalised. Indeed, one of the defining features of such a population is the recognition and celebration of their individual and group diversity as a source of uniqueness. The representation of autism as forming a spectrum of identity is well-founded (Happé & Frith, 2020). There is also a growing theorisation of gender as forming a number of fluid spectrums of identity and expression (Killermann, 2017). The researcher acknowledges that the breadth and fluidity of the gender spectrum and its interaction with the spectrum of autistic identities is representative of a diverse population of CYP who are characterised by the creativity and expansiveness of their dual identities, as termed the double-helix rainbow kids (Ehrensaft, 2018).

Whilst the visibility of gender-diverse identities has increased within public consciousness and debates continue to rage within sociocultural, political and educational fields, it is within the medical field where the vast majority of research proliferates. Recent years have seen a growing clinical interest in the overlap of ASD and gender diversity and research within clinical psychology and psychiatry has flourished. This has seen an increase in research highlighting the prevalence rates of autistic young people who are seeking support from gender identity clinics due to gender dysphoria (Schumer et al., 2016). Gender dysphoria is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as the distress related to an incongruence between an individual's assigned gender and their experienced gender with which they self-identify (APA, 2013). Alongside research demonstrating incidence rates of ASD amongst gender-dysphoric young people, the reverse pattern has also been reported with elevated gender diversity amongst autistic individuals (Van der Miesen et al., 2016). Conclusions drawn within recent reviews also suggest there is a higher prevalence of ASD

amongst those young people experiencing gender dysphoria than that found within the general population (Glidden et al., 2016; Van der Miesen et al., 2016).

A cautious and critical approach to interpreting the results of studies which demonstrate the overlap of gender-diversity and ASD has been suggested due to inconsistent conceptualisations of gender diversity (van Schalkwyk et al., 2015) and poor ASD diagnostics (Turban & van Schalkwyk, 2018). Whilst there are examples of studies illustrating the prevalence of ASD diagnoses amongst gender diverse young people (de Vries et al., 2010), the majority of research examines the presence of ASD-type traits amongst gender diverse samples. Studies within this field are heterogeneous with a range of criteria used for both ASD and gender diversity adopting various sample sizes. It is also the case that much of the research conducted in this field is clinic-based with an emphasis on gender dysphoria. This narrow approach may overlook the large number of non-clinic-based cohorts of gender-diverse, autistic people who do not present with gender dysphoria (Warrier et al., 2020). In order to offer further clarity as to whether gender-diverse individuals have elevated rates of autism diagnoses or traits related to autism compared with cisgender counterparts, Warrier et al., (2020) conducted a large scale (641,860 individuals), exploratory study into non-clinic-based cohorts which seeks to address some of the recurring methodological considerations within the field. Results demonstrate that, compared to cisgender individuals, gender-diverse people were 3.03 to 6.36 times as likely to be autistic and significantly more likely to present with autistic traits such as systematizing and sensory sensitivity (Warrier et al., 2020).

The conceptualisation of an underlying link between autism and gender diversity has led to attempts to account for this association through theories of autism development. The extreme male brain theory (Baron-Cohen, 2002) was proposed as a means of accounting for the characteristically 'male' cognitive profile of autistic individuals as expressed by superior systematising rather than empathising skills. Given the complexity and fluidity of gender within trans theories of gender-diversity, an extreme male brain theory approach to accounting for autistic traits has been seen as problematic, particularly given the implications of this theory for the ways in which autistic trans individuals may think about, feel about and identify their gender (Cooper et al., 2018). The extreme male brain theory suggestion that autism is an extreme variant of male intelligence has also been challenged to suggest that autistic females display several masculinised characteristics whilst autistic

males display feminised features leading to autism being theorised as a gender defiant condition (Bejerot et al., 2012). In addition, whilst the extreme male brain theory may highlight neurological factors related to autism which could impact gender development in gender-diverse, autistic individuals, Cooper et al., (2018) found that, although gender incongruence was more prevalent in autistic females, this was more likely to lead to fluid, non-binary gender identities rather than the identification as trans males. This led Cooper et al., (2018) to suggest that autistic natal females had lower social identification with and more negative feelings about a gender group as well as lower gender self-esteem. Cooper et al., (2018) argue that gender identity within autistic individuals, rather than just being a cognitive concern, is linked to social aspects of gender identity development suggesting that gender diversity is associated with non-identification with a gender group for autistic individuals. As yet, there remains no definitive account for the proposed increased prevalence between autism and gender diversity, yet it may be the case that neurological and social factors, play a part within the interaction of these dual identities.

Given the complexities, sensitivities and enduring questions within the debates and contrasting theories currently within the field of transgender studies, including those which incorporate intersecting neurodiversity, it is the intention of the researcher to position this thesis neutrally within these debates. The purpose of this thesis, and its position, is to reflect upon and support the educational experiences of gender-diverse CYP, including those with intersecting neurodiversity. Whilst the researcher acknowledges the positions within these debates and wider theorising about gender diversity and autism, it is not the intention of the researcher or the research to add to these debates. Rather, the researcher hopes to cut through some of the polemic positioning in this field to offer a supportive intervention within the difficulties faced by CYP as a result of their diverse identities.

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**Paper 1: How do gender-diverse young people experience high school? A systematic literature review**

Prepared for in accordance with the author guidelines for submission to the Sexuality and Psychology Journal (Appendix A.1)

## Abstract

The current review provides an overview of the research relating to the lived high school experiences of gender-diverse young people. Web and database searches were conducted between October 2019 and January 2020 to identify 12 studies which included direct, first-hand testimonial experiences relating to high school. Data were analysed using thematic synthesis. The findings indicate that gender-diverse youth experience a range of negative and affirming experiences throughout high school linked to key themes including cisnormativity, language, identity, relationships and transphobia. Findings are discussed in relation to inclusive practices which schools may adopt to support their gender-diverse students as well as offering implications for professional practice.

*Keywords: gender diversity, transgender, school experiences, cisnormativity, transphobia*

## Introduction

Historically gender has been positioned as a binary construct inextricably tied to a person's sex assigned at birth (Richards et al., 2016). The congruence between sexed anatomy at birth, affirmed gender identity and the normative societal expectations about gender roles, identity and expression is termed cisgender. However, the deconstruction of a hitherto presumed binary conceptualisation of gender by poststructural feminist, queer and trans theorists has led to the 'undoing' of gender, facilitating greater recognition of gender diversity (see Nagoshi & Brzuzy (2010) for discussion of transgender theory). Hines (2010) defines gender diversity as:

A range of gender experiences, subjectivities and presentations that fall across, between or beyond stable categories of 'man' and 'woman'...a diversity of genders that call into question an assumed relationship between gender identity and presentation and the 'sexed' body (p.1)

The term gender diversity is used to capture the broad and fluid spectrum of gender identities including, but not limited to, transgender, gender variant, genderqueer, gender fluid and agender (see Appendix B.1 for glossary of terms).

Gender identity development, including the development of identities which are divergent from a person's perceived gender collective, is theorised to be formed around a range of cognitive, affective and social processes (Perry et al., 2019). Whilst gender identity begins development early in life, adolescence is thought to be a crucial time for the development of a diverse gender identity, particularly given the biological, physical and social changes prevalent during this period (Steensma et al., 2013). Research into the experiences of gender-diverse youth evidence a complex picture of mental health difficulties (Connelly et al., 2016) and victimisation (Grossman et al., 2011) with elevated levels of self-harm, feelings of hopelessness and suicide (Rimes et al., 2017). Alongside this alarming trend, research also identifies areas of resilience and wellbeing that help mitigate the challenges faced by gender diverse young people and lead to positive outcomes (Watson & Veale, 2018; Zeeman et al., 2017).

## **Gender diversity and education**

With the increased visibility of gender-diverse young people within educational settings (Meyer & Leonardi, 2018), research has consistently evidenced the hostility of school environments towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth (Kosciw et al., 2017; Ullman, 2015). In the UK, it was reported that 64 percent of gender diverse pupils are bullied at school with almost half of those students ‘frequently’ or ‘often’ hearing transphobic language whilst at school (Bradlow et al., 2017). The same report found that 84 percent of gender-diverse students have reported self-harm (Bradlow et al., 2017). The increased prevalence of poor psychological and educational outcomes for gender-diverse youth provides encouragement for schools to consider and implement policies and practices inclusive of diverse identities (McGuire et al., 2010). School climate can facilitate a protective and supportive environment for the wellbeing of gender-diverse students (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017). However, policies alone may not be sufficient to overturn cisnormative structures and systems (Meyer & Keenan, 2018) which privilege cisgender people, subsequently marginalising and stigmatising diverse gender identities (McBride, 2021). Recent school initiatives aiming to disrupt normativities within education, such as the *No Outsiders* project within UK primary schools, demonstrate the ongoing need to tackle latent homophobic and transphobic attitudes within silent, cisnormative institutional systems (Atkinson, 2020).

In their scoping review of the international literature, McBride (2021) highlights the educational inequalities created by institutional cisnormativity, in the form of macro- and microaggressions and violence upon the educational experiences of gender-diverse youth. Whilst previous reviews (Horton, 2020; McBride, 2021) offer comprehensive overviews of the factors affecting young people, the coherence of the voice of gender-diverse youth is lost through the breadth of approach. In contrast, this review applied a targeted, systematic process to capture the direct, first-hand accounts of gender-diverse individuals, focussing on empirical research which clearly communicates the distinct voices of gender-diverse young people themselves rather than LGBT voices more broadly or views of the wider community, including parents and school staff. This review also extends McBride’s (2021) paper to address issues of agency and resistance within affirmative school experiences of gender-diverse youth (Leonard, 2019). Through the voices of gender-diverse students, this review

aims to offer schools guidance into how they can utilise their inclusive practices and broaden their promotion of diversity to better include this marginalised group. An approach which is much needed given the paucity of guidance for schools to address issues facing many gender-diverse youth (Horton, 2020). Adopting a broad definition of school experiences to include relationships, wellbeing, identity and policies, this review presents contemporary, international school experiences of gender-diverse young people to address the question: what are the high school experiences of gender-diverse young people?

## **Methodology**

### **Review process**

Between October 2019 and January 2020, systematic searches of the following databases were undertaken; Psych Info, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) and Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts (ASSIA). This approach proved unproductive and further searches were made using Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis Online database, the British Library e-theses online service (ETHOS) and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. The key search terms employed with Boolean OR/AND connectors were: (trans\* OR gender nonconformity OR TGNC or gender divers\* OR gender variance) AND (school OR education) AND (experience OR perceptions). Search terms were generated through consultation with a recognised expert within the field. See Ansara & Hegarty (2012) for discussion of terminology. Reference harvesting, grey literature and hand searches ensured a rigorous search process was employed. Studies were included if they met all of the following six inclusion criteria: 1. the first hand experiences of gender-diverse young people (either current or retrospective); 2. high school age range (11-16); 3. general educational experiences; 4. empirical research using qualitative, mixed or quantitative methods with a qualitative component; 5. conducted since 2010; 6. published in peer-reviewed journals or doctoral level theses (see Appendix B.2 for excluded studies and B.2.1 for Figure of SLR flow diagram).

Table 1. *Characteristics of included studies*

Author(s) & Location	Focus	Participants/ Recruitment Method	Study Method/ Design	Summary of Findings	WoE A
Evans & Rawlings (2019) Australia	Exploration of gender diverse students' positive experiences of schooling	3 gender-diverse participants aged 17-26 Snowball sampling from existing contacts	Semi structured interviews Thematic analysis	3 themes emerged as relevant to participants: 'significant people', 'relationships and dialogue' and 'groups and materials'	Medium
Freedman (2019) UK	Exploration of the experiences of transgender young people and their parents	4 transgender young people aged 13-15 and their mothers Recruitment through EPs, charities and snowball sampling	Semi structured interviews IPA	4 superordinate themes reflecting young people's lived experiences: 'Understanding Gender', 'Complexities of Transitioning', 'School Related Experiences' and 'Support Networks'	High
Hillier et al., (2019) USA	Situated agency to understand how risk and resilience	22 young people aged 16-21 who identify other than cisgender	Semi structured interviews Thematic analysis	Strategies of resilience and resistance were identified; 'Avoiding people or situation', 'Ignoring Conflicts', 'Sharing Selectively',	Medium

	characterize the high school experiences of trans youth	Recruitment through personal networks, social media, high schools and LGBTQ youth groups		'Teaching adults and advocating for themselves', 'Arguing and Fighting', 'Seeking Support' and 'Making Changes'	
Ingram (2018) USA	Understanding of how intersections of transgender and disability impact high school experiences	9 high school age (16-22) transgender young people with disabilities recruited through local LGBT organisations Purposive sampling	Semi-structured interviews Transcendental phenomenological analysis	6 key themes were identified: 'Gender as Fluid', 'Society and Identity', 'Conflation of Identities', 'Mental Health', 'Changes in School', 'Difference as Strength'	High
Johnson et al., (2014) USA	Exploration of transgender, queer and questioning (TQQ) youth high school experiences	9 TQQ youth aged 18-22 Purposeful sampling Recruitment through 3 local universities	Collective memory as participatory action research Participant discourse and thematic analyses	Three central themes: "It's complicated", "You should be able to be safe", "This is what action looks like"	High

Jones & Hillier (2013) Australia	Comparison of experiences of trans-spectrum youth and cisgender peers	Online survey 91 trans-spectrum youth aged 14-21 3,043 cisgender youth aged 14-21 Recruitment through media, advertising and youth service providers	Quantitative – survey with closed and open-ended questions Chi-Square analysis	Trans-spectrum youth more likely to: experience rejection from school staff and peers, face physical and emotional violence, engage in self-harm, face school disruption, engage positively in school activism	Medium
Jones et al., (2016) Australia	Exploration of the school experiences of Australian transgender students	189 transgender students aged 14-25 Recruitment through networks, LGBTI organisations, community youth services and media	Online survey with closed and open-ended questions. Online instant messenger interviews with 16 participants Grounded analysis of interview data	Transgender students use activism for positive outcomes Supportive classmates are a protective factor against abuse Lack of teacher support leads to poorer outcomes Segregated environments deemed inappropriate by transgender students	Medium



Leonard (2019) UK	Positive school experiences of transgender students	3 transgender young people aged 16-18 Recruitment through LGBT youth group Purposive sampling	Semi-structured interviews informed by initial focus group IPA	5 superordinate themes emerged: The importance of language, Individual teacher support, whole-school approaches, the importance of community, my own best friend	High
Lewis (2017) USA	Understanding gender diverse individuals' retrospective accounts school experiences	8 gender non-binary adults aged 19-24 Recruitment through transgender student organisation Purposeful sampling	Semi-structured interviews Thematic analysis	Participants felt little sense of belonging and safety at school Additional themes include: conforming and hiding, silenced topics and gendering of structures, policies and practices	High
Mcbride & Schubotz (2017) UK	Investigating the educational experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) youth	10 TGNC participants aged 16 - survey 5 TGNC participants aged 12-23 – interviews Interview participants recruited through youth groups, snowballing and	Quantitative – survey data binary analysis between TGNC and cisgender respondents	TGNC respondents more likely to experience transphobic abuse, more frequently than cisgender counterparts TGNC youth experiences of transphobia connected to heteronormative structures, ethos, curriculum and policies	Medium

		referrals from adolescent service providers	Qualitative – semi-structured interviews Thematic analysis		
McGlashan & Fitzpatrick (2018) NZ	Exploration of how LGBTQ students actively negotiate their identities in school	6 gender diverse student members of an LGBTQ school group recruited through the host school	Critical ethnographic study with semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observations Thematic analysis	3 main themes; Pronouns: intelligibility and power; Pronouns: unintelligibility and resistance; Performativity and cultural intelligibility	Medium
Yutzy (2019) USA	Retrospective examination of the lived experiences of transgender	5 Transgender participants aged 18-24 Purposeful snowball sampling from the caseloads of licensed psychotherapists	Semi-structured interviews Narrative analysis	Findings suggest the need for individuals to have the support of family, friends and institutions and to find spaces to belong	Medium

people during  
high school

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### **Evaluative frameworks**

The 12 papers were assessed for methodological quality using Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence A (WoE A) criteria in order to highlight what good quality research in this emerging area may look like. Qualitative and quantitative research designs were assessed for methodological quality using Woods et al., (2011) frameworks (see appendix B.3).

Qualitative designs were measured against 12 criteria considering aspects of the research including the appropriateness of design, sampling, data collection and analysis. Quantitative papers were assessed in similar fashion using a quantitative framework measuring appropriateness of data gathering, analysis and interpretation. Mixed method studies were judged using both qualitative and quantitative frameworks with the higher score accepted by the review. Inter-rater agreement was obtained with the researcher's supervisor for 25% of the final papers via separate analysis using the Woods et al., (2011) framework and follow-up discussion to ensure a consensus was achieved on the final rating (see Appendix B.4 for ratings and inter-rater agreement). Papers were categorised into high, medium and low quality (see Appendix B.5 for grade boundaries). WoE A assessment indicated that all studies scored medium or high for methodological quality, reflecting positively upon the work conducted in this area.

### **Data synthesis and extraction**

The review followed a thematic synthesis approach to data analysis adhering to the three stages outlined by Thomas & Harden (2008). During stage one, the first reviewer conducted line by line analysis of the findings of each study including participant primary data and researcher secondary analysis providing a coding system for each line of data (see Appendix B.6). Once all findings were coded, the reviewer then synthesised codes into initial themes (see Appendix B.7) before developing into descriptive themes (see Appendix B.7). Finally, descriptive themes were further analysed to develop a number of analytical themes based on the first reviewer's interpretation of original findings (see Appendix B.8). In order to ensure rigour in developing analytical themes, these themes were discussed in-depth by both reviewers in an iterative process of analysis.

## **Findings**

### **Overview of the included studies**

12 studies were included in the review, all published between 2013 and 2019. 10 of the papers were published within the last five years and five studies were doctoral theses. This reflects the emerging nature of the field and the growing interest in gender diversity research within academia. Three studies were conducted in the UK, five in the USA, three in Australia and one in New Zealand. Nine of the studies had a qualitative design, two were mixed method studies and one took a quantitative approach. Sample sizes ranged from three to 189 with participant ages between 12 and 26 years old. Whilst all focussed on high school experiences, two studies considered only positive experiences (Evans & Rawlings, 2019; Leonard, 2019), one focussed upon risk and resilience within an educational context (Hillier et al., 2019), and one analysed the intersection of gender and disability within education (Ingram, 2018). Please see Table 2 for illustrative examples of participant data linked to themes.

## **Themes**

### **Language as a powerful tool for marginalising minority gender identities**

Language was highlighted within the majority of the papers and encapsulated a range of different experiences faced by gender-diverse YP. A central tenet of this theme relates to the negative experiences within the use and misuse of names and pronouns including the persistent deadnaming of individuals (Jones et al., 2016; Hillier et al., 2019), as well as the prevalence of transphobic language by peers and adults in the classroom and school environment (McBride & Schubotz, 2017). Whilst language was often represented as a negative and repressive aspect of high school experiences, there were also examples of the positive impact of language including validation and acceptance through the use of chosen names, pronouns and gendered language as a means of affirming the identities of YP (Leonard, 2019; Evans and Rawlings, 2019; Jones et al., 2016). Language was also found to impact the experiences of YP more broadly through the gendered language and messaging about gender roles and identities which pervades school life and reinforces the binary positioning of gender (Lewis, 2017). What became clear within this theme, through the

diversity of experiences, was the complexity, fluidity, tension and power of language to control, represent or reflect diverse identities (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018).

### **Forced choice, conflict and empowerment in the management of trans identity in school**

Identity pervaded many of the studies, suggesting that it is a key aspect of YP's experiences in high school. Diverse gender identities are complex for YP to navigate, understand and communicate (Jones et al., 2016) and can involve intersecting identities which create tension for YP and how they understand themselves (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018). Fluid identities were deemed incongruent with binary, gendered school systems which left YP feeling 'other' (Freedman, 2019; Lewis, 2018). YP reported feeling made to identify in certain ways at school which 'silences' identities and legitimises normative gender identities (Lewis, 2017; McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018).

YP reported needing to 'lock' themselves away (McBride & Schubotz, 2017) by misgendering themselves to hide in plain sight as a means of survival and self-preservation (Hillier et al., 2019; Lewis, 2017). Without recognition or validation of their diverse gender identities, YP reported feeling trapped (Jones et al., 2016), minimised (Johnson et al., 2014) and powerless (Hillier et al., 2019) in a climate of fear and isolation (Lewis, 2017). When given space to do so, other YP reported enjoying their queer identities and using their identity as resistance and a performative way to disrupt cisgender norms and binary thinking (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018). Some YP felt empowered by their diversity to help and educate others and seek strength and acceptance within groups, clubs and through activism (Leonard, 2019). Having role models and engaging in activism in school enabled YP to be more resilient, feel part of a community and have a voice (Jones et al., 2016).

### **The powerful role of relationships in the social construction of gender identity**

The roles that other people play in the positioning of YP and the construction of their identities is a key experience felt by gender-diverse students in school. The attitudes of staff, including teachers, headteachers and support staff was central to the framing of gender narratives. Negative staff attitudes towards gender-diverse YP (McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Jones et al., 2016) impacted on individuals' sense of identity, belonging and educational outcomes. Staff were reported to be unsupportive of the difficulties faced by YP (Jones et al., 2016), mis- and uninformed about the complexities of gender identity, often

conflating gender with sexuality (Hillier et al., 2019; Lewis, 2017) and victimising YP for their gender presentations (Freedman, 2019; Yutzy, 2019). YP reported the constant battle to teach and reframe the ways in which their gender was constructed by staff (Hillier et al., 2019). Positive relationships were characterised by staff recognising and validating YP and their experiences (Evans & Rawling, 2019; Leonard, 2019) including facilitating change within the school, advocating for trans rights, challenging systemic issues and providing unconditional support (Leonard, 2019). The visibility of LGBT staff within school also fostered inclusivity and helped encourage YP to express their identities more freely.

The role of friends as allies who can help to challenge the dominant gender narratives in school was also highlighted (Jones et al., 2016; Hillier et al., 2019). Supportive classmates were seen as a protective factor, helping YP to reclaim their identities and speak out against prejudice from peers (Jones et al., 2016). Friendships were spaces in which diverse identities are affirmed (Hillier et al., 2019), enabling YP to express and perform their gender more freely (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018). Friends advocated for the rights of diverse identities by challenging misgendering and educating others (Evans & Rawlings, 2019). In some instances, the acceptance of friends was the only way that YP felt they could survive their high school experiences (Freedman, 2019; Yutzy, 2019). Without the support of peers and friends, some YP reported feeling no sense of belonging in school; disconnected from people and systems (Lewis, 2017).

### **Systemic factors perpetuating cisnormativity within schools**

In a number of studies, schools were presented as rigid, gendered environments driven by cisnormative policies and practices (McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Lewis, 2018). Dress codes and school uniforms caused significant distress to gender-diverse YP who were often required to wear clothing which misgendered and suppressed their identities (McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Lewis, 2017). Gendered bathrooms and changing facilities also cemented the cisnormativity of school environments by silencing diversity (Jones et al., 2016) positioning YP as intruders (Hillier et al., 2019) and denying them a sense of belonging (Ingram, 2018). Bathrooms were also perceived as dangerous and frightening spaces in which YP were often victimised, bullied and harassed (Johnson et al., 2014; Jones & Hillier, 2013). Cisnormative, gendering practices were also identified within the classroom curriculum and throughout extra-curricular activities (McBride & Schubotz, 2017) including

sport and physical education (Jones et al., 2016; Lewis, 2017) and sex and health education (Ingram, 2018). In contrast, the inclusion of diverse identities within the curriculum, helped to demystify gender-diversity and foster belonging (Evans & Rawlings, 2019), tackle prejudice and open dialogue around trans topics (Leonard, 2019).

### **The pervasive nature and legitimisation of transphobia**

Transphobia was reported in many of the studies with YP feeling scared and attacked on a daily basis with little support or protection from school (McBride & Schubotz, 2017). Direct transphobia was reported through transphobic language used by teachers (McBride & Schubotz, 2017) as well as indirect transphobia by using deadnames and pronouns, thereby encouraging transphobia and bullying by other students (Jones et al., 2016). Gender-diverse YP were also subjected to daily microaggressions and conflicts (Hillier et al., 2019) leaving YP to fight to defend themselves or avoid conflict and school completely in order to feel safe (Hillier et al., 2019). Bullying is thought to lead to greater levels of school avoidance and disruption for gender-diverse students as well as increased risk of actual or ideational self-harm (Jones & Hillier, 2013).

Table 2: *Participant data linked to themes*

Theme	Study	Participant Data
Language as a powerful tool for marginalising minority gender identities	Lewis (2017). Page 161	“Boys will be boys. That’s not ladylike. Girls aren’t supposed to do that. You’re not supposed to do that; you’re a boy. You run like a girl. Why are you being a sissy? Man up. That’s not gentlemanly.”
	McGlashan and Fitzpatrick (2018). Page 248	“It’s a good idea to say which pronoun you prefer. Just so that you’re on the same page or level as everyone else when it comes to your gender. And with that being said, it actually is helpful to be able to voice your preferred pronoun.”



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<p>Forced choice, conflict and empowerment in the management of trans identity in school</p>	<p>Johnson et al., (2014). Page 425</p>	<p>“Trying to explain that gender and sexuality are completely separate things. I don’t know, it’s complicated and that’s the problem...the boxes that I’m trying to describe don’t really exist to me, so it’s really hard.”</p>
	<p>Lewis (2017). Page 157</p>	<p>“I just realized I needed to fall into the binary of male and being unemotional and acting tough.”</p>
<p>The powerful role of relationships in the social construction of gender identity</p>	<p>Jones et al., (2016). Page 165</p>	<p>“The school principal said he will never call me a male or use male pronouns until I have my gender reassignment therapy done, which will never happen until I [have] left school. (...) It makes me depressed so much that a lot of the time I can’t focus at school. Sometimes I really hate myself for this, and I want to die, or to hit myself so hard so that I could faint.”</p>
	<p>Leonard (2019). Page 64</p>	<p>“one of the teachers... just constantly, constantly called me “he” and it was like, oh gosh, and every time I heard it I was just like, “Yes miss!”...and just calling me Nightcrawler and stuff, and ... I think I was like, reading to the class ... someone started talking over me, and she went, “No, he’s talking now” and I was like, [inhales] “Yes! Yes! He is!” [laughs], but she was a great teacher, her name was Miss Pryde, she was fantastic”</p>
<p>Systemic factors perpetuating</p>	<p>McBride &amp; Schubotz (2017).</p>	<p>“I was pushing the uniform rules and cutting my hair shorter and shorter. Wearing a girl’s uniform was like going to school in drag every</p>

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cisnormativity within schools	Page 299	day in the worst possible way. I just constantly felt this wasn't the right thing for me. I just never felt comfortable in it at all. It didn't even look right on me."
	Hillier et al., (2019). Page 8	"I'd feel so uncomfortable going into the women's changing room, and I always separated myself immediately. So I'm like—I feel like it's invasive. It's the same bodies, I guess, but it's not—I feel like I'm intruding onto something that—in a space that's not necessarily mine, and I'm just sharing it because I kinda look like it, you know?"
The pervasive nature and legitimisation of transphobia	Hillier et al., (2019). Page 9	"I wasn't hiding it, but I wasn't telling people either because there were a lot of mixed reactions...So I just changed and adapted based on whether or not I could trust that you weren't going to be transphobic."
	McBride & Schubotz (2017). Page 299	"I was getting bullied, getting "tranny" and "queer" shouted at me. Younger students were shouting abuse. It was consistent but I felt that it wasn't enough to go to a teacher about it or that they wouldn't believe me. It was mostly verbal. Very low-level, but it was constant. It happened so often, I didn't know what would happen when I went into corridor."

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## Discussion

This review sought to provide a systematic, critical evaluation of empirical research which captures the high school experiences of gender-diverse youth. Through an analysis of their discrete voices and salient experiences of high school, this systematic literature review contributes to the scholarship by highlighting the distinct challenges and priorities identified by gender-diverse young people. These views will be discussed in light of possible changes schools can make to support their diverse young students.

Educational research has highlighted the systemic cisnormativity which pervades schooling structures and systems (McBride, 2021). Gender-diverse youth identified how cisnormative structures act to silence or erase diverse identities within the classroom and more broadly across the school systems and culture. As this review and others have shown (Horton, 2020; McBride, 2021), the cisnormative erasure of trans identities creates a perilous positioning of gender-diverse YP within our schools (Martino et al., 2020). The intelligibility of gender-diverse lives and rights within the school system depends upon the visibility of individual students placing them at significant risk of violence and marginalisation (Meyer et al., 2016). When schools seek to resolve trans inclusivity through an approach of accommodation, it masks the powerful processes of cisnormativity operating within schools (Omercalic & Martino, 2020) and risks pathologising diversity (Formby, 2015) at the expense of full inclusivity of all gender and other diversities (Martino et al., 2020). Instead, schools should engage in institutional change (Meyer & Keenen, 2018) by restructuring their systems (Omercalic & Martino, 2020).

For schools to restructure their systems and adopt an expansive approach to inclusion and equity, then whole school measures should be implemented and embedded prior to individual trans identities emerging within the school (Omercalic & Martino, 2020). This may provide a safe, inclusive pathway for gender-diverse YP to express themselves which is not predicated on the need for trans identities to be knowable, visible or performed (Martino et al., 2020). This may be possible through the implementation of a rights-based approach which builds upon the broad principles of existing United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) frameworks (Cornu, 2016) to include specific measures to address the rights of gender-diverse young people (UNCRC, Concluding Observations, 2016). Teaching and supporting the human rights of children to children through a rights education programme encourages children to practice, protect and

promote the rights of others (Dunhill, 2018). Moving forward, specific mention of LGBT also needs to be included in policies to ensure these are effective (Kull et al., 2016).

By focussing on the positive experiences of gender-diverse YP, this study also seeks to move beyond deficit mindsets and victim tropes common in scholarship (Kean, 2020) and recognise the potential for schools to affirm diverse identities. Through the creation of spaces in which gender diversity is celebrated, YP within the dataset were empowered to express themselves and disrupt cisnormativities (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2018). The presence of supportive societies, as part of a broader school culture and policies, can reduce inequalities and transphobia and enhance the positioning of diverse identities in schools (Day et al., 2020). Schools should consider the ways in which they provide spaces for gender and all diversities to maintain self-determination over their identities without the requirement for individual students to either be visible or invisible.

Language plays a critical role in the positioning and marginalising of young people by not 'hearing' or actively ignoring their voices, young people across the dataset were rendered unintelligible by adults and peers. The findings of this review mirror others in recognising the significance of inclusive language as a means of creating affirming spaces for gender-diverse young people in schools (Wyrick, 2021) promoting self-determined diverse identities and perhaps mitigating the negative effects of exclusionary language used elsewhere (Tordoff et al., 2021).

Previous research has highlighted how educator silence regarding gender diversity and inaction against transphobia can perpetuate institutional silence and ultimately be interpreted as school-sanctioned transphobia (Atkinson, 2020). Although transphobia was clearly represented within the studies, research suggests that explicit LGBT-inclusive approaches in UK schools can challenge the acceptability of homo- and transphobia (Atkinson, 2020).

This review has also highlighted the transformative impact that inclusive educator practices and relationships can have on the high school experiences of gender diverse YP (Leonard, 2019) through affirming language and positive relationships. This can lead to increased sense of belonging and improved school outcomes (Ullman, 2017). However, barriers to educators working to create inclusive learning environments (Meyer et al., 2016) include educator knowledge and understanding of gender diversity, requiring YP to find teachable moments to educate the educators. This highlights the imperative for teachers to

receive training to enable them to teach in gender complex ways (Rands, 2009). Yet, as illustrated in this review, the onus is on individual educators to create learning environments which are supportive of gender-diversity which overlooks the institutional role within creating gender-inclusive schools. In order to resist cisgenderism and trans marginalisation within the education system, there is a need to create gender-affirming spaces, including within the curriculum (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018). The inclusion of diverse voices and identities through a gender-inclusive curriculum (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2016) can be effective in challenging cisgendered structures (Carlile, 2020). Such broadening of the curriculum will support critical thinking about gender and inclusion (Ryan et al., 2013) and facilitate positive experiences of gender-diverse YP throughout their education (Greytak et al., 2013).

### **Implications for practice**

The implications of this paper are to demonstrate that good practice requires an approach which is rights-respecting and inclusive of diversity not simply accommodating of individual identities. Schools must begin to pay close attention to the impact that their policies and practices are having upon the wellbeing of visible and invisible gender diversity and pave the way for whole-school, systemic pathways for gender diversity to be accepted.

Transphobia is perpetrated through individuals and systems; through action and inaction and can become embedded in schools through language, relationships and cisnormativity. Schools must become aware of their explicit and implicit role in reinforcing some of these structures which are both exclusionary and harmful for their gender-diverse students. The studies included within this review were of a good standard and provide an in-depth and consistent picture of the experiences of gender-diverse young people in high school. An important next step within the scholarship may be to develop collaborative research with gender-diverse YP, school staff and school leaders to help co-develop policies and practices and resources which are inclusive of gender diversity and transferable for a range of school settings.

### **Limitations**

A robust and systematic process was developed to identify relevant and specific literature which captures the voices of gender-diverse individuals relating to their high school

experiences. Given the variability in terminology the systematic scoping of databases proved unfruitful, so a process of hand searching and references harvesting was undertaken, using terms agreed with an expert in the field. Although the identified literature concurs with previous reviews in this area, there is the possibility that, not all relevant literature may have been captured through this process.

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**Paper 2: What are the experiences and practices of educational psychologists when working with and supporting autistic, gender-diverse children and young people?**

Prepared for in accordance with the author guidelines for submission to the Educational Psychology in Practice Journal (Appendix A.2)

## Abstract

Research into the nature of educational psychologist (EP) practice when supporting autistic, gender-diverse children and young people (CYP) is within its infancy. This study explores the experiences and practices of five EPs with applied knowledge of work in this emerging area. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and a reflexive thematic analysis carried out to develop themes. Findings highlight distinct areas of practice and challenges faced by participants. In particular, this study highlights the uncertainty and complexity of work in this area with a specific focus upon the intersectionality of autism and gender diversity. The nature of direct work with CYP and support for inclusive schooling practices are also explored. Implications for research and practice are discussed including the development of resources and guidance within educational psychology services to support practitioners in their work in this area.

*Keywords: gender diversity, autism spectrum disorder, educational psychologist, EP practice, school experiences*

## Introduction

There is a growing body of evidence within clinical scholarship highlighting a proposed link between autism and gender diversity. By contrast, within educational psychology there is an established knowledge base for supporting autistic CYP and an emerging awareness of the experiences of gender-diverse youth within schools but no current research relating to supporting autistic gender diverse CYP within education. This study aims to offer an exploration of the experiences of EPs with applied experience of casework in this area.

### ***Autism and gender diversity***

Autism is a pervasive developmental disorder which is characterised by difficulties with social communication and interaction alongside repetitive, restricted behaviours, interests or activities as outlined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5<sup>th</sup> edition (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2013). Autism is reported within around 1% of the general population and is said to affect a disproportionately higher number of natal males than females (Baird et al., 2006). For a comprehensive discussion see Happé & Frith (2020).

Gender has historically been considered indistinguishable from a person's sex determined at birth as designated by their biological characteristics. This perspective has led gender to be firmly dichotomised by two opposing forms – male (masculine) and female (feminine). The term cisgender is used to define those whose gender, gender identity and gender expression correlate with their sex characteristics and the sex which they were assigned at birth. The biological essentialism of this approach, however, has been questioned and gender has increasingly become conceptualised as a diverse spectrum of identities (Fiani & Han, 2018). The term transgender is used to broadly describe those individuals whose gender identity is not aligned with that assigned at birth (APA, 2015). However, the term transgender may be conceived of as being rooted in binarism and inadequate as a means of representing the vast spectrum of gender identities (Fiani & Han, 2018). Gender diversity is adopted, here, as an umbrella term which encapsulates the diverse identities and expressions which individuals may embody to represent their gender. It acknowledges their felt difference to the sex they were assigned at birth and embraces



the presence, absence and fluidity of their gender both outside and inside the gender binary system.

Recent years have seen a growing clinical interest in the overlap of autism and gender diversity with recent reviews suggesting there is a higher prevalence of autism amongst those young people experiencing gender dysphoria than that found within the general population (Glidden et al., 2016). Whilst research into the intersection of gender diversity and autism continue, the findings to date highlight the need for improved access to tailored support for this under-served population (Warrier et al., 2020).

### **Meeting the needs of autistic and gender-diverse CYP in schools**

There is currently a paucity of research which supports schools to meet the needs of autistic, gender-diverse CYP. There is a well-established body of educational research highlighting the specific needs of autistic (Humphrey et al., 2015) CYP and an emerging evidence-base for the experiences of gender-diverse CYP (McBride, 2021). However, resources and guidance which recognise the intersectionality of these discreet areas of development are lacking. Research into the school experiences of autism (Humphrey et al., 2015) and gender-diverse (McBride & Schubutz, 2017) CYP highlight some common experiences including the raised levels of mental health difficulties, school avoidance or exclusion and difficulties with peer relationships. Research has also evidenced a shared experience relating to the challenges of inclusion for CYP within these populations (Humphrey & Symes, 2013; Horton, 2020). Key systemic factors affecting the inclusion of autistic CYP are thought to include school culture, environment and staff perceptions (Humphrey & Symes, 2013) whilst gender-diverse CYP also face a range of structural inequalities through cisnormative school practices and exclusionary interactions with staff and peers (McBride, 2021). The importance of staff awareness of needs facilitated through whole-school training for autism (Ravet, 2011) and gender-diversity (Horton, 2020) is also recognised.

### ***Role of the EP***

EPs are applied and academic practitioners with core functions of consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training at distinct levels around the CYP including individual, group and systems level (SEED, 2002). Within their practice, EPs utilise a range of

psychological frameworks to bring to bear their psychological knowledge and understanding of multiple interacting factors as a means of supporting CYP, their families and schools (Miller & Frederickson, 2006). EPs are also ideally placed within school and social settings to utilise evidence-based practice to inform their work whilst contributing to the practice-based knowledge derived from their work (Fallon et al., 2010). Despite their skill base, the fragmented nature of the literature relating to autism and gender identity presents challenges for EPs and may be an area where EPs perceive themselves to lack skills or knowledge (Allen-Biddell, 2019).

Hillier et al., (2017) identified that framing the needs of this group simply through the lens of autism can be harmful. Through the gathering of gender-diverse, autistic voices, Hillier et al., (2020) highlight the importance of professionals recognising the complexity of the intersectionality of identities for these young people and their psychological and health needs. With distress and reduced self-esteem linked to identity development for this group, Hillier et al., (2020) suggest that validation of CYP's identities and support for their understanding of themselves is a critical area for intervention of those professionals seeking to offer support. Parents (Kovalanka et al., 2018) and adults working with this group of young people may also require support and training to better endorse their identity development.

### ***Rationale***

Given the increased attention upon the possible interaction of autism characteristics and gender diversity within the clinical professions, it seems essential that research within educational psychology should begin to focus its attention on supporting this group of CYP. To date, there are no known studies which explore the role of the EP in supporting autistic, gender-diverse CYP within UK schools. Given the known difficulties faced separately by the autistic and gender diverse populations and the likelihood of poorer educational outcomes, the absence of research within this area appears at odds with the level of presenting need within the population. This study aims to begin the task of understanding how this group of CYP are supported in their education by answering the following research question:

What are educational psychologists' experiences and practices of working with autistic, gender diverse children and young people?

## **Methodology**

### ***Design***

This study applied a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews to collect data from UK EPs with experience of working with this group.

### ***Participants and sampling***

A non-probability, opportunity sampling method was employed in this study to directly target specific EPs. Recruitment information was posted on EPNET (a professional forum site for EPs across the UK) (see Appendix C.1). Four EPs responded who met the eligibility criteria (trainee or qualified EPs with direct, applied experience of casework involving autistic, gender diverse CYP). In addition, the author directly contacted a number of EPs with known experience of working with gender diverse CYP. From these enquiries, one further EP responded who met the same eligibility criteria and was also included within the study. Names of all participants have been removed and replaced with a participant number and all identifiable data has been anonymised.

### ***Data gathering***

One individual semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant via Zoom. Participants were asked six questions with associated prompts (see Appendix C.2) focusing on aspects of their direct casework including what they found helpful and any other additional skills needed. Participants were also asked what they saw as the role of the EP more broadly when supporting this group of CYP and the perceived gaps within the profession. The interview schedule was developed to reflect a range of topics initially raised by participants within a pilot focus group of EPs conducted by the researcher. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and anonymised (see Appendix C.3 for participant information sheets and C.4 for participant consent form).

### ***Ethics***

Ethical approval was granted by The University of Manchester Environment, Education and Development School Panel for postgraduate researchers on 11th June 2020 (see Appendix C.5 for confirmation of ethical approval).

## Analysis

A reflexive thematic analysis was conducted following the process elucidated by Braun & Clarke (2020). Themes were identified at the semantic level, focusing on the interviewee's experiences and perspectives and inductively derived from a process of initial coding conducted by the researcher (see Appendix C.6 for initial coding). The interview transcripts were individually coded using NVivo analysis software (QSR, 2015). Initial codes were developed into themes by the researcher through an iterative process of reading, re-reading and reflection which acknowledges and embraces the researcher's subjectivity (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Through discussion, the researchers agreed themes and reconceptualised these until underlying patterns of shared meaning were developed (see Appendix C.7 for theme development).

## Findings

Four main themes with related sub-themes were identified, shown in Figure 1. Themes presented constitute group level themes. Themes at the individual participant level were not developed.

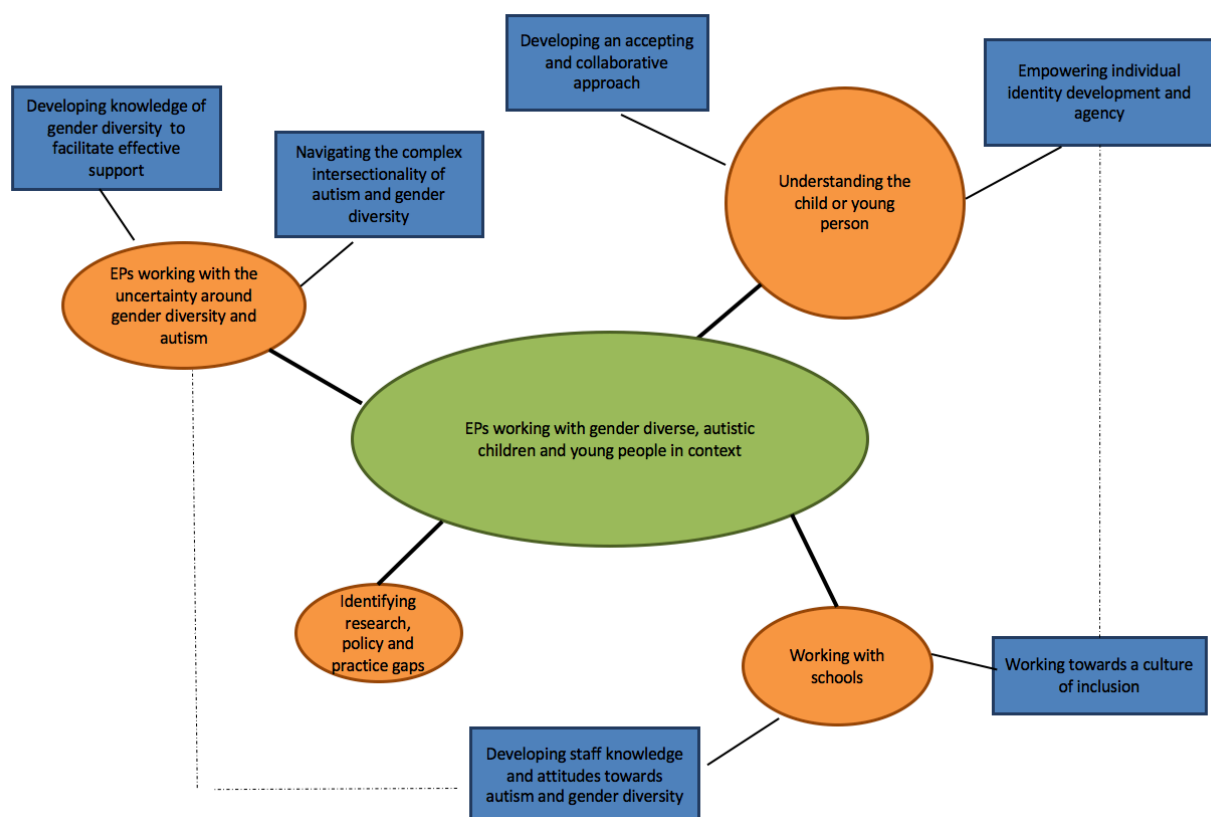


Figure 1: Thematic Map

## **1. EPs working with the uncertainty around gender diversity and autism**

### ***Developing knowledge of gender diversity to facilitate effective support***

The EPs in this study sought to develop and utilise their knowledge of gender-diversity as a foundation for their work in this area. In particular, whilst participants were keen to avoid positioning themselves in the role of experts, the benefit of holding knowledge of some of the underlying concepts and terminology around gender diversity aided effective support. Participant 2 is succinct as to why EP knowledge is important for effective support of this population:

*“it’s not just about having the right words but understanding why those words are there...how trans identities have been constructed historically and why it is a particular issue.”*

Participants had varying degrees of experience in supporting this group of CYP. However, having some understanding of the underlying concepts of gender diversity enabled EPs to support CYP directly, through acceptance and validation, and indirectly through their challenge and education of others. As well as bringing their own knowledge of gender diversity to bear, the EPs also utilised the CYP’s own expertise as a means of co-constructing knowledge and understanding:

*“they’re very, very well-informed because they’ve made themselves very informed and they’re asking really relevant questions which are often much too far advanced for school staff to be able to answer!”* (Participant 3)

### ***Navigating the complex intersectionality of autism and gender diversity***

The researchers identified a shared understanding between participants regarding the complexity of work due to the underlying intersectionality. Within the participant reflections, it appeared that the challenge of the casework was compounded by the lack of clarity and shared consensus around each aspect of diversity:

*“people don’t agree on what being trans is, people don’t agree on what being autistic is.”*  
(Participant 2)

In many cases, the uncertainty within the intersectionality of autism and gender-diversity formed a particular challenge for the EPs:

*“I felt like I was on the boundary of my knowledge the whole time...I’d read about the link...there does appear to be a link but the reason why seems to be very elusive...putting that knowledge together and putting it into an applied psychologist’s remit was really challenging.”* (Participant 2)

In particular, there appeared to be various formulations constructed by the participants regarding the possible interaction between the CYP’s neuro- and gender-diversities. Given the ideographic nature of participants’ formulations around autism and gender diversity, it appears that EPs are grappling with the complexity of intersectionality without pre-existing frameworks. Participants relied upon their established knowledge of autism and their emerging understanding of gender diversity as a lens through which to frame their work. Participants engaged in active sense-making as a way of working within the uncertainty created by intersectionality.

*“it was very much like looking at them as two separate issues and trying to merge them together, that’s how I felt”. (Participant 5)*

## **2. Understanding the child or young person**

### ***Developing an accepting and collaborative approach***

Using their conceptualisations of gender diversity and autism as a starting point, EPs in this study were able to work closely with the CYP by first acknowledging, accepting and validating their identities and expressions. This was seen as central to successful communication and collaboration with the CYP. Participant 1 clearly displays the importance of acceptance to their work with the CYP in the following passage:

*“the breakthrough initially was conveying or communicating explicitly to them that I accepted who they were...to accept that they exist and whatever their thinking and conceptualisation of their gender identity is valid”* (Participant 1)

A number of participants reported that, often, they were one of only a few people in the CYP's life who were able to offer acceptance of their identity and validation of who they are. This was seen as a powerful tool in their building of a relationship with the CYP. As well as accepting and validating their diversity, the EP had a role in collaboratively working with the CYP to help facilitate communication with those around them, including staff, parents and peers:

*“myself and the young person agreed, that...during the feedback to the school, we openly talked about it [gender diversity]...with her permission”*. (Participant 1)

### ***Empowering individual identity development and agency***

There was a sense within the data that a key role of the EP was in supporting the CYP to make sense of their own identities. Participants were able to bring their psychological knowledge to bear in looking at the discreet factors at play within an individual's identity development:

*“it felt like there was some sort of internal discomfort that she couldn't quite pinpoint and I suppose if we've given her an explanation as to why parts of it may occur...it became more apparent to her that actually she didn't fit within those gendered norms.”* (Participant 5)

The degree to which CYP were able to occupy their preferred identity varied within each piece of casework. As such, participants identified a role for EPs in working alongside the CYP to make sense of their diverse identities. This is particularly challenging given CYP's dual diversities, where their neurodiversity may be impacting self-awareness of their gender diversity. There was also a role for EPs in advocacy of identity and empowering CYP to develop a sense of agency when navigating and communicating their identities, particularly in the context of peer and family relationships. EPs empowered CYP people in their

“knowing that gender identity is okay to explore, to occupy different identities” (participant 4) and “giving them the passport, if you like, to say, ‘do you know what? You are who you are...and it’s OK for you to tell the world who you are.’” (participant 1). Participants also reported their role in facilitating fluid identity development and self-awareness, ensuring that CYP understood that identity was not fixed and that CYP were able to change their minds about their identity or expression.

A range of positive and negative responses to the CYP’s identity were displayed by families and peers which impacted on the CYP’s sense of agency. Whilst EPs worked directly with parents to facilitate understanding of the CYP’s identity, the EP role in respect to peers seemed mediated through the CYP themselves. For CYP, developing their identity within a school context was seen as challenging given the lack of understanding from staff and peers. CYP were presented as exploring their identities in, at times, hostile and unsupportive environments, leading to feelings of isolation and marginalisation. EPs had a role to play in highlighting the systemic influences on CYP’s identity development such as transphobic actions and language of staff and peers. Transphobia was seen to have a significant negative impact on the wellbeing of CYP, which was amplified when schools were perceived to be inactive in tackling the problem.

### **3. Working with schools**

#### ***Developing staff knowledge and attitudes towards autism and gender diversity***

Alongside their direct work to support CYP, EPs used their knowledge and skills to support schools and staff. The education of staff formed a key aspect within the EP’s systemic role. In particular, participants recognised the need to tackle some of the implicit prejudices held by staff members:

*“the head teacher, it was one of those situations where they knew what they had to do on paper, but hearts and minds were not there. So...all of that kind of implicit... prejudice was seeping out throughout the conversations we were having.”* (Participant 3)

Some of the underlying attitudes held by adults around the CYP were thought to be based on a lack of understanding of the nature of gender diversity and how it might interact



with autism. For some participants, a lack of understanding of autism and gender diversity amongst school staff led to a fear of approaching this topic or offering support:

*“I think for some schools, it’s more of a fear factor, not knowing how to manage those needs.”* (Participant 5)

In contrast, participants also highlighted positive, inclusive staff attitudes towards this group of CYP:

*“what I was impressed with is the head of year that was in that conversation was considering different options in terms of access to toilets, in terms of PE...about changing rooms, thinking about areas in which sensitivities could be managed. So, they were quite accommodating in thinking about what this school could do.”* (Participant 4)

### ***Working towards a culture of inclusion***

Alongside the education of key people around the CYP, there was also a need for EPs to shift perspectives and develop a broader inclusive school culture.

*“One of our roles is around training and educating people...whole school education is important...rather than it just being dealt with by a few adults...if everyone can have that understanding, it – as well as developing a more inclusive culture – also helps...that young person.”* (Participant 5)

Participants identified a social justice aspect to supporting this group of CYP whereby gender and neurodiversity should be acknowledged by schools as part of a broader equality, inclusion and diversity agenda:

*“even if it’s within another issue, you know, even if it’s an issue to do with racism or an issue to do with disability discrimination...that’s the thing that schools need to see...you can’t look at this thing in a box, it’s about children’s rights and it’s about respect and it’s about a sense of belonging and inclusion.”* (Participant 3)

EPs also focused on normalising difference within school by addressing school systems and cultures through an inclusive approach to legislation, policy and curricula:

*“we do a twilight session with them, after school, using their own data around about equality, diversity and children’s rights. So, we would talk a bit about the legislation, but more it’s the hearts and minds type stuff, so we’d do a bit about policy, a bit about curriculum, a bit about mental health and wellbeing and support...so that’s the kind of start of their journey if you like.”* (Participant 3)

#### **4. Identifying research, policy and practice gaps**

One area for development which came through clearly within the data was the need for research into the intersectionality of autism and gender diversity. Participants spoke of the need for evidence-based practice and empirical evidence within the research which could support their work in this area and offer them the confidence and reassurance as well as the knowledge to support this group of CYP:

*“there isn’t a strong enough empirical knowledge base...there’s so many open questions around what the best way to support these young people is...EPs are the people, the interlocutors between the research and practice, we should be the people feeding that research into practice and supporting schools in implementing it”.* (Participant 2)

Resources available to EPs to support their work with CYP, schools and families was a further gap. In particular, resources to inform people’s understanding of intersectionality and the importance of this to CYP’s identity and experience. It was also acknowledged that there is a lack of resources to support EPs in their work, particularly regarding assessment and intervention. Participants used their skills of consultation to elicit information about gender and autism, which was effective and appropriate, however, there was a recognition that more recognised assessment tools may help to build EP confidence in this area. Equally, it was noted that there is a current lack of interventions within this area which EPs could utilise to support the CYP to explore their intersecting identities.

Guidance was a further gap which EPs felt their educational psychology services could develop. Although some EPSs had updated LGBT guidance, there was a consensus that

guidance with specific focus upon intersectionality is extremely limited. This appears to be an acute and urgent need for EP practice in this area:

*“there seemed to be a general lack of guidance, you know, just in terms of looking at how the two interact and, you know, how prevalent it is and, you know, the things to be aware of.”* (Participant 5)

## Discussion

The nature of EP work with young people at the intersection of gender and neurodiversity is underexplored within the research base. This study offers an entry point for further exploration of the possible distinctiveness of work in this area and the implications for EP practice. Qualitative interviews have drawn out a number of underlying skills deployed by EPs. It is acknowledged in this study that EPs bring to bear a number of core skills within their psychological 'toolkit' on a daily basis throughout their casework across a breadth of challenging areas. In this regard, the work conducted by the participants within this study mirrors that of 'typical' work conducted to support CYP with a range of complex needs. This study, however, argues that, based on the data gathered from applied EPs, work conducted in this area has some underlying challenges which require consideration.

### ***EPs working with the uncertainty around gender diversity and autism***

Hillier et al. (2020) claim that educational professionals are 'at a loss' regarding the appropriate support, guidance and interventions needed to support autistic, gender-diverse populations. Previous work to elucidate the role of EPs within under-researched areas of practice, including autism and sex differences, highlights the need for EPs to apply their psychological training and knowledge of child development to work flexibly within complex areas with inconclusive outcomes (O'Hagan & Bond, 2019). EPs in this study mirrored this process by relying on their core psychological skills as scientist-practitioners (Lane & Corrie, 2006) to navigate the complexities of the casework. EPs employed skilful, psychologically-grounded formulation, consultation and respectful practice as a basis from which to engage with the challenges presented by casework (Fallon et al., 2010). Throughout the dataset, there was a sense that EPs are using their prior knowledge of psychological dimensions (autism, gender-diversity, child development) and identity development as a means of framing understanding for themselves and for others around the CYP. Given the uncertainty within the literature regarding the proposed link between autism and gender diversity, EPs require frameworks to guide their practice (Miller & Frederickson, 2006), in particular, focusing on the intersectionality of autism with gender-diversity.

Research is beginning to recognise the complexity of intersecting identities for gender-diverse (McBride, 2021) and autistic CYP (Happé & Frith, 2020). Through

intersectionality, psychologists have a role to play in recognising the multiple, adverse consequences of interpersonal and structural oppressions felt by individuals at the border of intersectionality and promoting their inclusion and equity (Rosenthal, 2016). In order to support schools, and others, with the inclusivity of gender-diverse, autistic CYP, EPs applied their psychological knowledge of intersectionality (Bowleg, 2017) to facilitate change and contribute to improved outcomes of this diverse group.

### ***Understanding the child or young person***

EP practice was in part characterised by direct work with the CYP which centred around identity. When working directly with CYP, EPs appeared to look beyond diagnostic labelling of autism and gender diversity to accept, validate and facilitate their identities. The utility of diagnostic labelling as a way for EPs to support themselves and others to make sense of developmental trajectories has been discussed elsewhere (Norman, 2017). Whilst EPs recognise diagnostic criteria and work with others' understandings of these (Norman, 2017), prioritising individual, intersecting identities was identified as helpful. Recognising and utilising the CYP's experiential knowledge about their gender and neurodiversity is key when supporting this group (Strang et al., 2018) especially given the potential complexity, fluidity and individuality of intersecting gender and neuro diversities (Miller, 2018).

Autistic, gender-diverse adults have reported the challenge of expressing the intersectionality of their identities due to not having the vocabulary and being faced with stereotypical views of autism within wider sociocultural communities (Hillier et al., 2020). This can be particularly acute for autistic CYP, especially in relation to peer groups and relationships (Sala *et al.*, 2020) and was evident in this research. In many participant experiences, the CYP's identity was invisible or illegible within multiple social contexts, including school, home and within peer groups. Previous research into the lived experiences of gender-diverse, autistic CYP confirms the significance of identity for this group and the need to feel affirmed in their identity (Strang et al., 2018). Yet, gender-diverse (Kean, 2020) and autistic CYP (Vine Foggo & Webster, 2017) often 'mask' their identity to fit social expectations. This study suggests EPs are well-placed to directly empower CYP to embrace their identity and activate their agency across multiple social contexts over time. Supporting the adults around the CYP to create support systems for the CYP and normalise their experiences is part of a holistic EP role.

### ***Working with schools***

EPs, with their knowledge of educational systems, are ideally positioned to support gender-diverse (Yavuz, 2016) and autistic CYP (O'Hagan & Bond, 2019) at the organisational level. At this level, gender becomes manifest through policies and practices which reinforce cisnormativity (McBride, 2021). Understanding the ways in which gender (McBride 2021) and neurodiversity (Ravet, 2011) are regulated and restricted at the level of the organisation is a key aspect of EP work in this area. EPs have a well-established role in promoting inclusion for the rights and needs of young people with SEND, including autism and neurodiversities (Humphrey & Symes, 2013) and more broadly within a social justice framework (Schultze et al., 2019). EPs are also well-placed to support gender-diverse CYP through transformative systemic change within educational contexts (Yavuz, 2016). Placing CYP at the centre of inclusive, rights-respecting practice is essential to tackle the underlying structural inequalities faced by a range of groups (Schultze et al., 2019). Inclusive frameworks, such as the rights-respecting schools agenda can enable schools to create more inclusive cultures and environments (Dunhill, 2018). By reframing the thinking of those around the CYP and drawing upon the underlying concepts which lead gender-diverse and autistic youth to experience poorer outcomes, EPs can offer distinctive support in this area (McBride, 2021).

### ***Identifying research, policy and practice gaps***

Given the similarities of this area of practice with the wider remit of EP work (O'Hagan & Bond, 2019), it is clear that EP's require broad frameworks to support their general practice (Miller & Frederickson, 2006) whilst also accounting for the complex intersectionality which characterises this population. Previous work conducted in this area by the researchers suggests that EPs without prior experience of working with gender-diverse CYP and those with intersecting diversity may be reticent to engage with the language and terminology which distinguishes work with this population (Allen-Biddell, 2019). Although broader guidelines are in place for psychologists supporting 'mental distress' within gender, sexuality and relationship diversity (BPS, 2019), this study illustrates the pressing need for specific educational psychology guidance relating to the general and specific needs of gender-diverse individuals with neurodiversity. It is hoped this study may offer initial insight into the

requirement of such guidance to support CYP at the individual level as well as tackling the systemic inequalities at an organisational level through cisnormative practices and staff understanding. Mirroring previous research into autism and sex differences (O'Hagan & Bond, 2019), this study also recognises the need for further practical resources to supplement the work of EPs and support CYP, their parents, peers and school staff.

This paper supports calls for further research into autism and intersectionality (Happé & Frith, 2020) as well as highlighting the need for further practice-based research into the lived experiences of autistic, gender-diverse youth in our schools (Strang et al., 2018). Given the trajectory into adulthood (Hillier et al., 2020) and reliance on clinical models of support for autistic, gender-diverse individuals (Strang et al., 2020), it appears necessary that EPs take a leading role in addressing the social inequalities experienced by dual identity youth, through individual support, transformative systemic change and psychoeducation within broader social contexts.

### ***Limitations***

Given the aim of this study to provide an exploratory entry point into the practices of EPs working with this population of young people, the researcher did not aim for representativeness. Therefore, subjective participant experiences cannot be assumed to reflect those of all EPs with applied knowledge in this area. Participants spanned a breadth of localities with a wide range of experience which, it is hoped, will help to inform EP practice as this field continues to develop. However, information regarding each local authority that participants were practicing within was not gathered which limits the generalisability of the findings as no insight can be drawn into the possible differences between localities i.e. urban or rural settings. In addition, given the broad spectrums upon which autistic, gender-diverse YP may present, knowledge of working with such a heterogeneous population cannot be generalised from this study.

Furthermore, the researcher excluded EPs without direct, applied knowledge of working with autistic, gender-diverse YP so as to ensure that data were specifically linked to work in this area. However, it could be argued that EPs without applied knowledge in this area are more representative of the current, wider EP profession and may have offered further, relevant insight into the current state of EP practice in this field. Finally, it should be acknowledged that one of the participants was a practicing EP within the researcher's host

EPS, which may have some ethical implications for the autonomy of their opinions and could have led to possible biases in the information shared with the researcher at the data gathering stage.



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### **Paper 3: The Dissemination of Evidence to Professional Practice**

This paper will provide an overview of the concepts of evidence-based practice and practice-based research, including their role within educational psychology. In addition, a discussion of dissemination and reflection upon effective dissemination strategies will be provided. Finally, the implications for practice and a strategy for disseminating the findings of Papers 1 and 2 will be outlined.

## **Section A: Evidence-based Practice and Related Issues**

### **Evidence-based practice**

Evidence-based practice (EBP) first originated as a clinical model within the medical field as a means of optimising decision-making through the careful consideration and integration of professional knowledge and experience, client preferences and weighting of evidence to improve patient outcomes (Sackett et al., 1996). EBP is used to inform professional judgement regarding the suitability and effectiveness of interventions through identification of outcomes linked to intervention success (Biesta, 2007). The guiding purpose of EBP is to provide professionals with a framework for selecting appropriate interventions which have a reliable evidence base for producing desirable outcomes (Lilienfeld et al., 2012). It is conceived that practice guided by the most relevant weighting of empirical findings within that field enhances the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of practice and promotes transparency and standardisation (Gambrill, 2007). Subsequently, EBP has become more popular across a range of fields within the social sciences including educational psychology (APA, 2006).

The EBP framework is based upon a hierarchy of research methodologies, ranked in relation to the rigor of scientific evidence (see Figure 2) and used to define what constitutes quality research within medical fields (Fox, 2003). This model posits evidence gathered through the use of several systematic reviews of randomised control trials (RCTs) as the 'gold standard' for rigorous scientific evidence upon which findings can be based. Qualitative methodologies including expert opinion and case studies are conceived of as producing less scientifically robust forms of evidence (Fox, 2003). The use of an evidence hierarchy is not without its difficulties, particularly when translating clinical judgements of value into more social and educational fields, often characterised by 'messy, ill-structured real-world problems' (Miller & Frederickson, 2006).

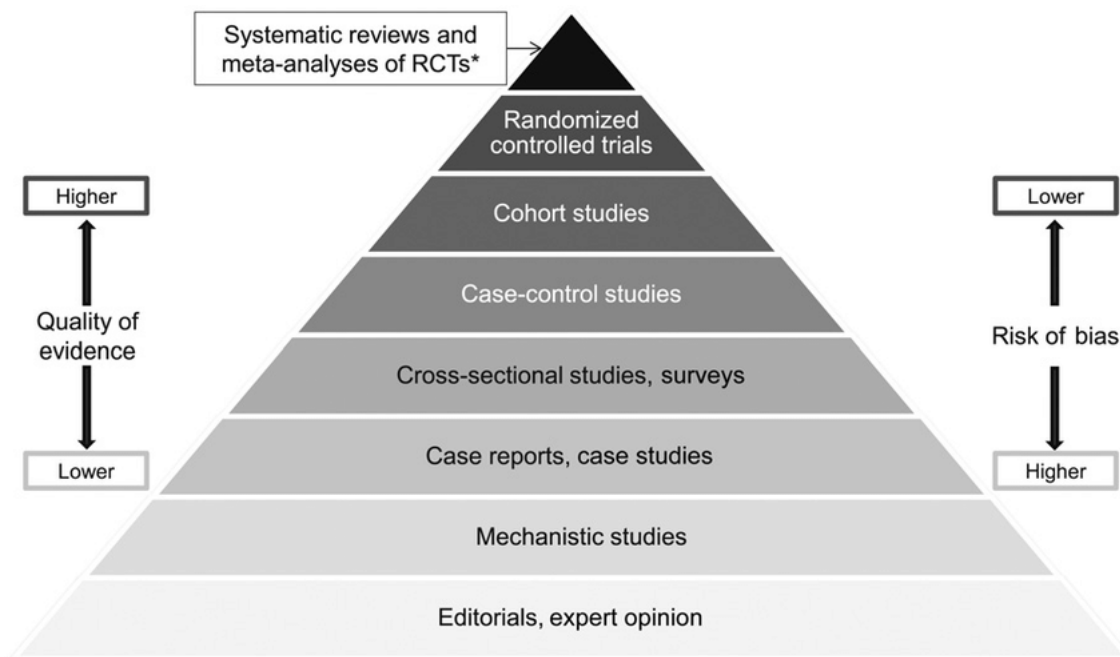


Figure 2: *EBP hierarchy of evidence*

### **Evidence-based practice, evidence-informed practice and practice-based evidence**

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), the purpose of EBP is to “promote effective psychological practice and enhance public health by applying empirically supported principles of psychological assessment, case formulation, therapeutic relationship and intervention” (APA, 2006, p.280). With the research-to-practice gap within education well documented (Burns & Ysseldyke, 2009), bridging this gap within complex, real-world educational casework is a key role for EPs (Miller & Frederickson, 2006). Key aspects of the research-to-practice gap within education are thought to relate to research findings being largely inaccessible and not applicable for practitioners (Greenwood & Abbott, 2001). This gap was also evidenced within the field of psychological practice, leading to recent conceptualisations of the EP as scientist practitioner which forms the basis for EP training courses (Fallon et al., 2010). In their discussion of the developing role of the EP, Fallon et al., (2010, p.14) argue it is clear that, “EPs are fundamentally scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of children and young people (CYP), psychological skills, knowledge and understanding.” The positioning of EPs as scientist practitioners has also been made clear within the Health Care and Professions Council, Standards of Proficiency (HCPC, 2015), by



which all qualified EPs are governed, which state the requirement for EPs to demonstrate the use of “professional and research skills in work with service users based on a scientist-practitioner and reflective-practitioner model” (Standard of Proficiency 14.30).

Lane & Corrie (2007, p.3) conceptualise the skills needed for the EP to function as scientist practitioners as:

- *The ability to think effectively.*
- *The ability to weave information into formulation.*
- *The ability to act effectively.*
- *The ability to critique our work in systematic ways.*

Lane & Corrie (2007) offer these skills as the underlying principles which help EPs to respond effectively to the current demands which they face as modern, psychological practitioners within challenging, real world settings. Lane & Corrie (2007) propose that EPs work skilfully, creatively and systematically to develop a practice and identity which is individual to them, based upon the foundations of effective thinking, formulation, intervention and evaluation. With EPs operating as scientist practitioners, they are ideally placed to bridge the gap between high quality research and its appropriateness and applicability within individual educational and psychological casework (Fallon et al., 2010).

Despite the prevalence of EBP within clinical fields and the subsequent adoption of this model within the social sciences, some have questioned the utility and appropriateness of a research hierarchy within EP practice. Fox (2002), provides a number of challenges to the use of an evidence hierarchy within EP practice, including the unsuitability of quantitative research methodologies within a person-centred, experiential EP approach. Underlying much of Fox’s (2002) objections is, what they deem as, the fundamental contrast between a constructivist EP epistemology which values knowledge as being socially constructed against a positivist, objectifiable creation of knowledge which is valued by ‘gold standard’ RCT research methodologies. Fox’s (2002) delineation of a dichotomous relationship between experiential EP practice and experimental research methodologies may be viewed as narrow and speculative (Burnham, 2013). Yet the underlying contrast highlighted by Fox

(2002) and others (Fallon et al., 2010) poses questions for the efficacy of research-based interventions and assessment within real-world EP practice (Miller & Frederickson, 2006).

Others within the social sciences have stated that, rather than research evidence forming the basis of practice, a more helpful conceptualisation would be for practice to be informed by evidence (Nevo & Slonim-Nevo, 2011). Although EBP aims to balance evidence with client preferences, evidence-informed practice (EIP) extends this by valuing client relationships within this dynamic. EIP is discussed by Nevo & Slonim-Nevo (2011) as valuing the constructive and imaginative judgement and knowledge of practitioners within their interactions with clients. As such, research findings should not override practitioner experience or client's wishes. Nevo & Slonim-Nevo, (2011, p.1178) call for EIP which utilises a "wide range of information sources, empirical findings, clinical narratives and experiences to be used in a creative and discriminating way throughout the intervention process". Epstein (2009, p.9) describes EIP as the process in which practice is 'enriched by prior research but not limited to it'. The current researcher proposes that the model of EIP links clearly and compatibly with Lane & Corrie's (2006) conceptualisation of EPs as scientist-practitioners who are creative, flexible practitioners operating systematically and with a critical lens. This approach is reflected in the findings of Paper 2 whereby EPs used their skills as practitioners in order to support their practice in emerging areas with little direct evidence drawn from pre-existing research. Rather than basing their practice on the empirical evidence, the researcher suggests that EPs instead engage in practice which is informed by evidence and integrates information and methods drawn from a range of sources and contexts in a person-centred, rather than evidence-centred approach (Nevo & Slonim-Nevo, 2011).

Further research into the epistemological positioning of EPs found that EPs are becoming ambivalent to the scientific basis for their work and hold greater value for the experience derived from their professional practice (Burnham, 2013). Burnham's (2013) study reported that EPs preferred to adopt an approach which valued 'relevance' over 'rigor' which is epistemologically flexible and serves to facilitate solutions to practical problems. This, again, can be seen in Paper 2 through the ways in which EPs are able to utilise skills as applied practitioners to work through 'messy' real-world casework. Burnham (2013) also suggests that the scientist practitioner model may be impacting EPs' beliefs about the value, validity and reliability of their work without causal and generalisable

findings (Burnham, 2013). EPs in Paper 2 also highlighted that a strong and relevant evidence base would support EPs to feel confident in their work in complex areas such as gender-diversity and intersectionality. Yet, any use of research to guide practice would need to be applied critically with consideration of the individual context. An EBP approach, might be conceived as reductionist in its focus on the effects of research without identifying the relevant contextual variables and mechanisms that contribute to the success or failure of an intervention with variable implementation (Gulliford, 2015). Some within the field have advocated for an approach which can evaluate and monitor the efficacy of interventions when applied within real world settings (Dunsmuir et al., 2009).

In line with this perspective, some authors have called for an approach of practice-based evidence (PBE) which may be more appropriate for applied psychological practitioners (Frederickson, 2002). PBE is an approach which holds more ecological validity than EBP given that it is evidence which is situated within the context of the practitioners applied experiences (Barkham & Mellor-Clark, 2003). Whilst there remains a preference for systematic literature reviews and RCTs within the psychological literature, work within the field of implementation science also recognises the essential role that implementation plays within the efficacy of evidence-based research programs within real world settings (Lendrum & Humphrey, 2012). Indeed, given the pace in which the field of educational psychology moves, there are examples in the literature which indicate that applied practice is moving faster than the search for evidence (Gulliford, 2015). Gulliford (2015) offers the example of Bond et al., (2013), who, in a systematic review of solution-focussed brief therapy, found relatively low levels of evidence of positive outcomes and call for further practice-based evidence from practitioners through single-case examples.

This is mirrored by the implications for practice developed within Paper 2. Given that EPs are working in emerging areas, such as gender diversity and intersectionality, it is essential that their applied work is disseminated in order to inform and influence future research and practice. Kratochwill et al., (2012) also propose that PBE is a useful mechanism for improving EBP through the bidirectional sharing of knowledge. Kratochwill et al., (2012) identify that PBE can be utilised by the wider research base as a means of increasing efficacy through tailored implementation and dissemination of research within broader educational and psychological contexts. As such, PBE is a model of creating, adapting and disseminating knowledge which can account for the specific needs of individual contexts. When working in

areas in which the empirical research is limited, such as that presented in Paper 2, EPs can utilise their PBE as a means of progressing the knowledge base in an inductive, bottom-up process.

## **Section B: Effective Dissemination of Research and Notions of Research Impact**

Alongside the increased emphasis on EBP within psychological and educational practice, there has also been a growing focus on the transfer of research knowledge into professional practice (Wilson et al., 2010). The process of transferring research to practice has been discussed using a wide range of terminology such as dissemination, diffusion and knowledge transfer, however, the underlying concepts are interrelated and concern the availability and effective translation of knowledge to an actively engaged audience (Wilson et al., 2010).

Wilson et al., (2010) define dissemination as:

*“a planned process that involves consideration of target audiences and the settings in which research findings are to be received and, where appropriate, communicating and interacting with wider policy and health service audiences in ways that will facilitate research uptake in decision-making processes and practice”.* (p.2)

This definition and terminology will be adopted here to refer to the process of transferring knowledge from research into applied practice. Research dissemination has typically been viewed as a unidirectional process which relies upon peer-reviewed articles, scientific conferences and other actions aimed towards specialised audiences (Marín-González et al., 2016). Communication of research has been defined as the multidirectional, interactive process of interpreting or translating research findings into non-expert language and formats (Marín-González et al., 2016).

In order to provide theoretically informed insight into the underlying processes of effective dissemination, Wilson et al., (2010) conducted a systematic literature review to explore the organising frameworks used by researchers to guide their dissemination practice. Of the thirty-three frameworks included within the study, twenty-eight were underpinned by one or more of three different underlying theoretical approaches: persuasive communication, diffusion of innovations theory and social marketing. Whilst

broad in its aims, Wilson et al's., (2010) scoping review lacks specificity within its methodology and more targeted reviews would be beneficial for understanding the precise mechanisms for dissemination within specific practice areas. However, the review offers insight into some of the general aspects of dissemination planning and activity.

Schillinger (2010) identifies elements of the scientific process that present as barriers to dissemination and implementation as including the intervention itself, the target setting and the research design or an interaction of all these elements. Schillinger (2010) highlights that these barriers are often associated with research's common preoccupation with internal validity at the expense of external validity – a hallmark of efficacy rather than effectiveness.

Oliver & Cairney (2019) in their systematic review of how academics can influence policymaking, suggest that, as well as conducting high quality research which accounts for dissemination and knowledge-transfer within the design, researchers should consider their active roles within policymaking through research synthesis, co-production and policy (as well as scientific) advice and recommendation giving. Oliver & Cairney (2019) identify the need for researchers to understand the policy processes which they seek to affect and the implications for the use of their evidence within these. As such, researchers must be actors within the dissemination and impact of their findings, not passive within its diffusion. Oliver & Cairney (2019) also point to the utility of media, including social media as effective tools for communicating and mobilising research evidence. Huang et al., (2018) also support the use of social media as an effective tool for research dissemination, including through the use of infographics as a means of targeting non-academic audiences through visual representations of research findings. Huang et al., (2018) argue that using infographic abstracts is more effective and well-suited for dissemination through social media leading to increased readership. Additional research by Thoma et al., (2017) also found the increased social media engagement and readership through infographic and podcast dissemination. However, the impact of social media dissemination was also cautioned against given that findings suggest increases relate specifically to abstract views which does not always translate into increased full article views (Thoma et al., 2017).

Research into the fundamental role of dissemination within successful research highlights that dissemination and communication are integral for increasing the visibility of research outputs, public engagement and confidence in findings (Marín-González et al.,

2016). Marín-González et al., (2016) recommend the strong use of online communication, including social media platforms, informative videos, partnerships with civil organisations and events can help to increase wider social, political and policy engagement with research findings.

## **Section C: Implications of the Current Research**

### **Summary of research findings**

Findings of the systematic literature review in Paper 1 indicate that gender-diverse youth perceived a range of factors impacting on their high school experiences. Themes developed within this paper highlight that cisnormative policies and practices, staff relationships and use of language and terminology as well as transphobia impacted on students' identity expression and overall school experience.

Paper 2 was an empirical study which qualitatively captured the experiences and practices of EPs working to support autistic, gender-diverse CYP. Analysis revealed that EPs are currently grappling with the complexity and uncertainty of work at the intersectionality of neuro and gender diversity, without access to a well-founded evidence base. EPs targeted their practice to working directly with CYP to support their identity as well as working at the school level to promote inclusive practices.

### **Research site level**

Within this study, there are no clearly defined implications at the research site as participants were recruited from a range of local authorities around the UK.

### **Organisational level**

At the level of the organisation, both papers have implications for practice based on the findings. Paper 1 has important implications for school practice because the findings offer specific insight into some of the latent factors which gender-diverse youth, themselves, have highlighted as impacting their educational experiences, often negatively but also in affirming ways. Typically, school guidance on the rights of gender-diverse CYP focus upon the impact of transphobic bullying practices in schools, perpetrated by peers. However, the value of Paper 1 is to highlight that, whilst integral to their experiences to

date, transphobia is by no means the only factor affecting the high school experiences of gender-diverse youth. Indeed, Paper 1 highlights the significant role played by individual staff, through their language, actions (or inaction) and relationships with gender-diverse CYP upon the experiences, both negative and affirming for this group. At the organisational level, therefore, Paper 1 has implications for the ways in which school staff engage, interact and communicate with gender-diverse students whilst raising awareness of the significance of their interactions upon the identity, wellbeing and experiences of students.

In addition, Paper 1 has implications for the ways in which schools, not only support their gender-diverse students, but also recognise the role they play, as organisations, in promoting unequal and unhelpful systems and policies which negatively impact the experiences of gender-diverse students. It is well documented that cisnormative practices in schools position gender-diverse youth as 'other' (McBride, 2021), often pathologising their diversity (Formby, 2015). Paper 1 offers ways in which schools can redress these unequal practices to promote the inclusion of gender diversity from a rights-based agenda. Paper 1, in line with other reviews (Horton, 2020), advocates for a holistic approach to inclusion of diverse gender identities which avoids accommodation of individuals and seeks to promote trans-inclusive policies, practices, curricula and provision.

Paper 2 also offers implications at the organisational level for schools by highlighting the need for inclusive practices as a means of supporting autistic, gender-diverse CYP. At the school level, Paper 2 highlights the need for EPs to offer support through training and education around the challenges faced by gender-diverse, autistic CYP. EPs also have a role to play in supporting schools to think about their systems and how these can be adapted to become more inclusive of diversity and social justice more broadly.

In addition, Paper 2 raises implications for educational psychology services by highlighting the current gap at this level in regards to the guidance offered by psychology services around gender-diversity including at the intersection of neurodiversity. EPs have previously shown that they may lack the confidence to engage in work with this cohort of CYP due to the uncertainty around language and terminology in particular. Paper 2 demonstrates that those EPs with applied experience of supporting autistic, gender-diverse CYP have grappled with the challenges of intersectionality and the uncertainty due to limited empirical and anecdotal research in this area. Paper 2 supports EPs and EP services through consideration that, despite current uncertainties, work with this group can be

effective through direct work with the CYP and more broadly through systemic work with schools.

### **Professional level**

The UK government Department for Education (DfE) (2020) recently legislated that every primary and secondary school in England should offer teaching on LGBT relationships within its curriculum, suggesting that this should be included within the new relationships, sex and health curriculum (RSE). The new RSE curriculum is a statutory requirement for all schools, yet schools are given the flexibility to create their own curriculum around these topics. The inclusion of this new curriculum within English schools will, hopefully, prove a positive step forward for the inclusion and rights of gender-diverse CYP. Whilst it is also the case that the DfE Equality Act (2010) provides statutory protection for the rights of individuals experiencing or considering gender reassignment, gender diversity is more complex and fluid than this suggests. As such, those identifying outside of the gender binary, including gender-diverse youth with fluid identities and expressions, may not be offered the same protections within legislation. Indeed, it has been suggested that the UK education system is ill-equipped to support gender-diverse young people and requires fundamental, systemic restructuring (Bower-Brown et al., 2021).

Paper 1 has implications for policy and practice at the professional level by indicating that full gender-inclusive practice requires policies which move beyond teaching about LGBT relationships. It is likely that, to achieve full gender-inclusivity will require the enactment of policies which account for the rights of all diverse gender identities across the gender spectrum and the adoption of gender-inclusive frameworks (Kean, 2020) that embed the identities of gender-diverse youth throughout all aspects of the school environment, including curriculum, facilities and provision. It has also been argued that the visibility of LGBT staff in schools will also aid the broader inclusion of gender rights and identities (Kean, 2020).

Paper 2 raises a number of implications at the professional level for EPs through highlighting the current gaps within practice, policy and research at the professional level. Paper 2 indicates that EPs are currently grappling with the complexity of work at the intersection of gender and neuro diversity, in part, due to the lack of an established



evidence-base within the research literature. EPs are relying upon their core skills in order to develop practice-based knowledge and experience of working with this group of CYP. Whilst there is a growing body of evidence within medical fields relating to this group, Paper 2 highlights the need for more research and practice-based examples of work within educational and psychosocial fields as a means of supporting this population throughout their education. Paper 2 also raises the suggestion that, as a profession, this is currently an emerging area of practice which requires more consideration, engagement and collaboration between EPs and with wider services. In addition, as noted in Paper 2, whilst the BPS has recently offered some guidance for psychologists working in the area of gender diversity – with some recognition of the impact of intersectionality – more tailored guidance and support may be needed in order to offer EPs the confidence they need to engage with the challenges offered by work with this population of CYP.

#### **Section D: Promoting and Evaluating the Research Dissemination**

Using the dissemination research base as a guide to best practice, the researcher developed the following dissemination strategy as a means of impacting practice across the organisational level and at the professional level both nationally and internationally.

##### **Research site level**

Within this study, there is no clearly defined research site for dissemination as participants were recruited from a range of local authorities around the UK.

##### **Organisational level**

Paper 2 gathered the experiences and practices of EPs with applied knowledge in this area. As part of this process, a number of gaps and future directions were highlighted which have implications at the organisational level within EPSs. In particular, it was raised that there is currently little guidance within EPSs which can support EPs in their practice in this area. At the level of the organisation, the researcher will disseminate findings by delivering a presentation for the commissioning EPS as well as an internal training session within the researcher's host EPS with a focus upon the findings and implications from Papers 1 and 2. As part of the dissemination at this level, it is hoped that the researcher can support the

commissioning EPS to develop their service-level guidance and working practices regarding gender diversity and intersecting identities. Within their host EPS, the researcher hopes to affect service level change through internal training and support with guidance development. The researcher also plans to create an internal working group within the host EPS focused on developing and promoting best practice within schools to meet the needs of gender-diverse CYP.

Paper 1 and Paper 2 also have relevant implications for practice at the organisational level for schools through gender-inclusive practices and knowledge sharing. The researcher is currently in discussions to contribute an article to highlight this research within the Manchester Institute of Education blog targeting schools and educational practitioners. The findings and implications of the research will also be shared directly through the researcher's work within schools as a practitioner EP and indirectly through EP colleagues sharing information within their commissioned schools.

### **Professional level**

In order to impact practice at the professional level, the researcher hopes to develop a working party of relevant stakeholders, including the original participants from Paper 2 alongside members from other key groups including autistic and neurotypical gender-diverse YP, parents of YP within this population and school staff with experience of supporting gender-diverse and dual identity youth. It is hoped that such a working party will build upon the findings from Paper 1 and Paper 2 to begin creating closer links between stakeholders and provide guidance for supporting YP. The researcher has also held discussions relating to the possibility of commissioning further research to evaluate such guidance, through the doctoral training programme.

Papers 1 and 2 will be submitted to international academic journals with a readership base suitable for each paper. Paper 1 will be submitted to the *Psychology and Sexuality* journal. This is an international journal with high quality scholarship with a focus upon advancing knowledge and understanding of LGBT issues within psychology (see appendix A.1 for aims). The scope of this journal is thought sufficiently broad by the researchers to have a wide-ranging readership with vested interest in the findings of Paper 1. As this is a journal with a broader focus on LGBT concerns, rather than specific interest

within transgender studies, it is expected that the findings will reach a more diverse, yet relevant readership to maximise scope and impact.

Paper 2 will be submitted to the Educational Psychology in Practice journal. This is a journal dedicated to research relevant to the working practices of EPs in the UK (see appendix A.2 for aims). As such, this is the specific target audience for the research findings of Paper 2. Whilst the area of practice is within gender and neurodiversity, the focus of Paper 2 is the practices and experiences of EPs. The aims, therefore, are to provide an insight into EP practice in this area with the hope of engaging the profession within an emerging area of practice and research. A ResearchGate profile will also be created by the researcher in order to monitor the interest in the papers and request for full-text articles.

In addition, the researcher has made a successful application for a seminar slot at a regional educational psychology conference which offers continued professional development for EPs within the North West of England. Anecdotal evidence gathered by the researcher through conversations with EP colleagues, suggests there is a growing interest within the EP community for research and insights into supporting gender-diverse CYP and it is hoped that by delivering a seminar at a regional conference, it may lead to further opportunities for collaboration and joint working across the region within this area of practice.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A.1: Psychology and Sexuality Journal Aims, Scope and Author Guidelines

# Aims and scope

*Psychology & Sexuality* is an international journal which publishes high quality quantitative and qualitative psychological research on sexualities. The journal aims to advance knowledge and understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, heterosexual and queer issues in psychology and allied disciplines. *Psychology & Sexuality* is progressive and radical with regard to current debates in critical psychology, whilst also drawing from work traditionally seen as outside the remit of psychology to inform understanding and debate.

The content is predominantly empirical and theoretical articles from both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and registered reports are encouraged. Review articles, brief research reports and essays are also welcome, along with book reviews. Special features and issues are welcome along with articles that address user engagement and activism. Occasional interview pieces are included along with historical articles on key figures in the field. Please contact either of the editors if you wish to discuss a special feature/issue or other non-standard article submission.

Topics covered include (though note this list is not exclusive):

- Sexual identities and practices
- Relationships
- Families
- LGBTQ studies
- Queer theory
- Counselling/psychotherapy with gender and sexually diverse clients
- Attitudes, prejudice and discrimination
- Health, including HIV/AIDS and other STIs
- Violence
- Intergroup relations
- The intersection of sexualities and other important demographic characteristics/lines of power (e.g. sex, gender, class, disability, race/ethnicity, age, geographical location, religion)

Submissions addressing these topics and others from a variety of approaches and methodologies – qualitative and quantitative – are most welcome.

## **Editorial policy**

Our editorial policy is progressive in that a strongly non-pathological stance will be taken whilst remaining inclusive of the variety of positions in the field and encouraging vigorous debate. To this end, controversial articles are acceptable, subject to the usual peer-review criteria, and debate within the journal – replies and rebuttals – are encouraged. A broad position is taken with respect to the scope of psychological work that is acceptable. Work outside and on the boundaries of the discipline is acceptable provided it addresses contemporary issues in research and writing on sexualities. Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary work is actively encouraged.

Work that treats sexualities or genders, of any kind, as pathology in need of treatment and cure is not acceptable. Neither is work that does not directly address issues in contemporary human sexualities research or practice. Comparative work is treated cautiously due to the inherent difficulties in research and writing of this kind but is not automatically excluded. Research and writing that is only about the biology of sexualities and/or that which seeks to identify the 'causes' of sexualities or genders is also not within the remit of this journal.

All manuscript submissions are subject to initial appraisal by an editor, and, if thought suitable for further consideration, to peer review by at least two independent expert referees.

All peer review is double-blind and submission is online via ScholarOne Manuscripts.

# **Instructions for authors**

## **COVID-19 impact on peer review**

As a result of the significant disruption that is being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic we understand that many authors and peer reviewers will be making adjustments to their professional and personal lives. As a result they may have difficulty in meeting the timelines associated with our peer review process. Please let the journal editorial office know if you need additional time. Our systems will continue to remind you of the original timelines but we intend to be flexible.

Thank you for choosing to submit your paper to us. These instructions will ensure we have everything required so your paper can move through peer review, production and publication smoothly. Please take the time to read and

follow them as closely as possible, as doing so will ensure your paper matches the journal's requirements.

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## Appendix B.1: Glossary of Terminology

Term	Definition
Affirmed gender	The gender identity which a person is recognised socially
Agender	Identity which does not define itself as gendered
Cisgender	Gender identity that matches gender assigned at birth
Cisnormativity	The assumption that cisgender is the norm and privileges this over other forms of gender identity
Deadnaming	The act of referring to individuals by their non-affirmed names or names given to them at birth
Gender diverse	Gender identification which is not cisgender
Gender dysphoria	Feelings of discomfort at incongruence between gender identity and gender assigned at birth
Gender expression	The ways in which individuals express their gender outwardly in the context of societal expectations
Gender fluid	A gender identity which changes or moves between different genders
Gender identity	A person's innate sense of their own gender
Genderqueer	An umbrella term to reflect someone with a diverse gender identity and to denote someone who does transgresses mainstream distinctions of gender
Gender variance	Gender identity which does not conform to typical masculine or feminine gender norms
Intersectionality	The interaction of different aspects of identity

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT)	The term used to refer to individuals with diverse genders and sexualities
Misgendering	The act of referring to someone as a gender other than their affirmed gender
Transgender	Gender identity that does not match an individual's gender assigned at birth within male/ female binary
Transphobia	The fear or dislike of someone based on their transgender identity, including denying their gender diversity

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## Appendix B.2: Excluded Studies Following Screening for Eligibility

Author	Title	Journal	Focus	Exclusionary Criteria
Atteberry-Ash, Kattari, Speer, Guz & Kattari, 2019	School safety experiences of high school youth across sexual orientation and gender identity	Children and Youth Services Review	Survey (11986) comparing LGB and transgender students' experiences of school safety.	No qualitative data
Baros, 2019	Ignore the Textbook: A Phenomenological Investigation of Transgender Including Nonbinary Student Experiences in Spanish Language Courses	Dissertation	Adult experiences of language courses	Focus on adult courses
Budge, Dominguez & Goldberg, 2019	Minority Stress in Nonbinary Students in Higher Education: The Role of Campus Climate and Belongingness	Journal of Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity	Sample of 380 non-binary higher education students (18-55) who completed a survey about minority stress and belonging on campus	No qualitative data
Capous-Desyllas & Barron, 2016	Identifying and Navigating Social and Institutional Challenges of Transgender Children and Families	Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal	Focus on the voices of parents of transgender children	Focus on parent voice

Caudwell, 2012	[Transgender] young men: gendered subjectivities and the physically active body	Sport, Education and Society	Interviews with two UK transgender males about their experiences of sports at school.	Focus on sports
Cochran, 2019	Transgender in Higher Ed: Understanding the Experiences of Transgender and Nonbinary College Students	Dissertation	Higher education qualitative study	College data
Craig, Austin, Rashidi & Adams, 2017	Fighting for survival: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students in religious colleges and universities	Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services	Online data gathering of LGBT experiences	College data
Daniels, 2019	Rural school experiences of south African gay and transgender youth	Journal of LGBT Youth	FGs with 35 gay men and drag queens	Lack of transgender data
Day, Loverno & Russell, 2019	Safe and supportive schools for LGBT youth: addressing educational inequalities through inclusive policies and practices	Journal of school psychology	Quantitative study focused on inclusion	No qualitative data

Day, Perez-Brumer & Russell, 2018	Safe Schools? Transgender Youth's School Experiences and Perceptions of School Climate	Journal of youth and adolescence	Survey data of transgender perceptions of school	No qualitative data
Devis-Devis et al., 2018	Looking back into transgender persons' experiences in heteronormative secondary physical education contexts	Physical education and sport pedagogy	Interviews with 9 transgender adults (23-62) about their experiences in secondary P.E.	Focus on PE
Earnshaw et al., 2019	LGBTQ bullying: a qualitative investigation of student and school health professional perspectives	Journal of LGBT Youth	Online focus groups of 28 LGBT students focusing on bullying in school.	Focus on bullying
Finger, 2010	Beyond the binary: Serving the transgender student, improving the college experience	Dissertation	Qualitative look at higher educational experiences of transgender students	College data
Formby, 2014	(Transgender)gender identity awareness and support in Rotherham	Sheffield centre for education and inclusion research	Mixed methods survey and group discussion/interviews of young people, parents and practitioners.	school experiences not main focus and difficult to distinguish if referring to high school experiences



Formby, 2015	Limitations of focussing on homophobic, biphobic and transphobic 'bullying' to understand and address LGBT young people's experiences with and beyond school	Sex Education	Qualitative data from interviews from 2 UK studies with LGBT youth and parents/professionals.	Main focus not educational experiences
Graham, 2014	Navigating Community Institutions: Black Transgender Women's Experiences in Schools, the Criminal Justice System, and Churches	Sexuality research and social policy	Voices of three women age 18-24 about different institutions including education.	Education not main focus
Goldberg, Kuvalanka & Dickey, 2019	Transgender Graduate Students' Experiences in Higher Education: A Mixed-Methods Exploratory Study	Journal of Diversity in Higher Education	Mixed method survey with college students	College data
Goldberg, Smith & Beemyn, 2019	Transgender activism and advocacy among transgender students in higher education: a mixed methods study	Journal of diversity in higher education	Explanations about why students are involved in advocacy	College data

Goodrich, 2002	Lived experiences of college-age transsexual individuals	Journal of College Counselling	Grounded theory, Interviews of 4 college students age 18-22	College data
Greenspan, 2019	LGBTQ+ and ally youth's school athletics perspectives: a mixed method analysis	Journal of LGBT Youth	Survey and focus group data about sports	Focus on sports
Greytak, Kosciw & Boesen, 2013	Putting the 'T' in resource: The benefit of LGBT related school resources for transgender youth	Journal of LGBT Youth	Quantitative study using survey to examine the availability of resources to support transgender youth in school.	No qualitative data
Greytak, Kosciw & Diaz, 2009	Harsh Realities: The experiences of Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools	Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)	Survey method study to find out transgender youth experiences of negative school climate	Non-peer reviews
Grossman, Haney, Edwards, Alessi, Ardon & Howell, 2009	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Talk about Experiencing and Coping with School Violence: A Qualitative Study	Journal of LGBT Youth	Focus groups of various group demographics, one of which was a transgender FG of 5 high school students (15-19) students	Results and discussion do not seem to differentiate the transgender voice. Focus on school violence
Gutierrez, 2004	Revisiting Fragmentation	Journal of Gay & Lesbian	Interviews with 4 transgender students of colour under age of 21 at an alternative school for LGBT.	College data

		Social Services		
Heck et al., 2013	To Join or Not to Join: Gay-Straight Student Alliances and the High School Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youths	Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services	Open ended survey retrospective study of LGBT college students of their high school experiences of GSA	Focus on GSA
Hoxmeier & Madlem, 2018	Discrimination and interpersonal violence: Reported experiences of transgender undergraduate students	Violence and Gender	Quantitative study of undergraduate students	No qualitative data
Hutton, 2014	Understanding school climate and interventions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students	Dissertation	LGBT high school experiences aged 14-17.	No transgender data
Ingvar Kjaran & Kristinsdóttir, 2015	Schooling sexualities and gendered bodies. Experiences of LGBT students in Icelandic upper secondary schools	International journal of inclusive education	Semi-structured interviews and testimonials of LGBT students	the main focus is on sexuality and the transgender voice does not refer to wider educational experiences

Johnston, 2016	'Until that magical day...no campus is safe': reflections on how transgender students experience gender and stigma on campus	Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives	Interview data of 2 transgender university students	University data
Kennedy, 2018	A qualitative inquiry into the experiences of transgender youth on high school sports teams	Dissertation	Phenomenological case study of 6 (18-55) adults about their experiences of sports teams at high school	Focus on sports
Kennedy & Hellen, 2010	Transgender children: more than a theoretical challenge	Graduate Journal of Social Science	Mixed method research from survey data of adults which looks at what point they felt transgender.	College data
Kersey, 2018	Refracting gender: Experiences of transgender students in postsecondary STEM education.	Doctoral Dissertation	Narrative study of 3 transgender people (21-27) about their post-secondary (university) STEM experiences	College data
Klugman, 2014	An exploratory study of the experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming students at Rutgers University	Dissertation	Qualitative study of 10 university transgender students	University data

Kosciw, Palmer & Kull, 2015	Reflecting resiliency: openness about sexual orientation and or gender identity and relationship to wellbeing and educational outcomes for LGBT	American Journal of Community Psychology	Uses National School Climate Survey	No qualitative data
Lloyd, 2012	The High School Experiences of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Students: A Phenomenological Study	Dissertation	Open ended survey	No transgender data
Loomis-Davern, 2018	Experiences of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth in Connecticut Public Schools Under an Act Concerning Discrimination	Dissertation	Interviews with 10 graduates from high school 18-21	Focus too narrow
Mackenzie & Talbott, 2018	Gender justice/gender through the eyes of children: a Photovoice project with elementary school gender expansive and LGBTQ-parented children and their allies	Sex Education	Photovoice project which includes the views of transgender and gender expansive children and children from LGBT families. 14 children aged 5-11	Age-group too young

Marzetti, 2017	Proudly proactive: celebrating and supporting LGBT students in Scotland	Teaching in Higher Education	Interviews of LGBT experiences of university in Scotland	University data
McCormack, 2012	The Positive Experiences of Openly Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Students in a Christian Sixth Form College	Sociological research online	UK study of positive LGBT experiences of college. Ethnography research	College data
McCormick, 2016	Bullying Experiences and Resilience in LGBTQ Youth	Dissertation	Testimonial about school experiences of bullying	Focussed on bullying
McCormick, 2019	What Experiences Do Transgender* Students Have During Their Time in College?	Dissertation	Interviews of 4 transgender college students aged 19-25	College data
McCoy, 2018	Where is My Place?: Queer and Transgender Students of Colour Experiences in Cultural Centers at a Predominantly White University	Dissertation	LGBTQ students of colour experiences of campus at university	University data

McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2010	School climate for transgender youth: A mixed method investigation of student experiences and school responses	Journal of Youth and Adolescence	Mixed method study (focus group and survey) of the issues faced by transgender youth at school	Data gathered over 10 years ago
Mckinney, 2005	On the margins: A study of the experiences of transgender college students	Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education	Qualitative phenomenological analysis of a survey questionnaire to college undergraduate students and graduate students after studying	College data
Mintz, 2012	Gender Variance On Campus: A Critical Analysis of Transgender Voices	Dissertation	Case study and interviews of university student's perceptions of life on campus	University data
Munoz-Plaza et al., 2002	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Students: Perceived Social Support in the High School Environment	The high school journal	12 participants aged 18-21 interviews	No transgender data
Nichols, 2013	Rie's Story, Ryan's Journey: Music in the Life of a Transgender Student	Journal of Research in Music education	Narrative account of one transgender student about experiences in public school.	Focus on music
Norris & Orchowski, 2019	Peer victimization of sexual minority and	Psychology of violence	Quantitative study of victimization	No qualitative data

	transgender youth: a cross sectional study of high school students			
O'Flynn, 2016	Oh yeah – is she a he-she?' Female to male transgendered pupils in the formal and informal cultures of an English secondary school	Pedagogy, Culture & Society	Ethnographic study of 2 secondary school girls from UK all-girl school.	Data gathered over 10 years ago
Palkki, 2016	"MY VOICE SPEAKS FOR ITSELF": THE EXPERIENCES OF THREE TRANSGENDER STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL CHORAL PROGRAMS	Dissertation	3 narrative voices, mainly about choral programs	Focus on choral programs
Palkki & Caldwell, 2018	"We are often invisible": A survey on safe space for LGBTQ students in secondary school choral programs.	Research Studies in Music Education	Survey (1123) of LGBTQ college students reflecting on their middle and high school experiences in choral music	No qualitative data
Pizomony-levy & Kosciw, 2016	School climate and the experience of LGBT students: A comparison of the United States and Israel	Journal of LGBT Youth	Survey data of LGBT student experiences	No qualitative data



Pryor, 2015	Out in the Classroom: Transgender student experiences at a large public university	Journal of College Student Development	Small qualitative study of 5 students' lived experience in the classroom at a university	University data
Richeson, 2011	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning students: A qualitative study of the perceived effects of bullying in schools	Dissertation	Qualitative study with 2 transgender people looking back at school experiences	Focus on bullying
Roop, 2014	Transgender students in higher education: An IPA study of experiences and access of transgender students	Dissertation	IPA of university transgender students	University data
Samoff, 2018	Transgender Community College Students' Perceptions of Campus Climate and Inclusiveness	Dissertation	Interviews and FG of 8 transgender college/university students 18-22	College data
Sausa, 2005	Translating research into practice: Transgender Youth recommendations for improving school systems	Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education	Qualitative study of 24 transgender youth 16-21 in Philadelphia and provide recommendations for school improvements	Data gathered over 10 years ago

Schimmel-Bristow et al., 2018	Youth and caregiver experiences of gender identity transition: a qualitative study	Psychology of sexual orientation and gender diversity	15 transgender youth (14-22). FG or interviews.	Main focus on social transitioning experiences of transgender youth and their caregivers
Stewart, 2015	The Experiences of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Students at the University of South Florida, Tampa Campus Using Aspects of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire	Dissertation	Quantitative Survey of LGBT student experiences	No qualitative data
Storrie & Rohleder, 2018	'I think if I had turned up sporting a beard and a dress then you get in trouble': experiences of transgender students at UK universities	Psychology and Sexuality	6 UK university transgender students participated in semi-structured interviews.	University data
Sullivan, 2009	Hiding in the open: Navigating education at the gender poles. A study of transgender children in early childhood	Doctoral Dissertation	10 transsexual adults interviewed about their educational experiences of schooling from 3-8 years old	Not high school data
Tarasi, 2016	An exploration of the experiences of LGBTQ	Dissertation	Mixed methods. Interview includes 1 transgender person.	University data

international students:  
The case of the University  
of Pittsburgh

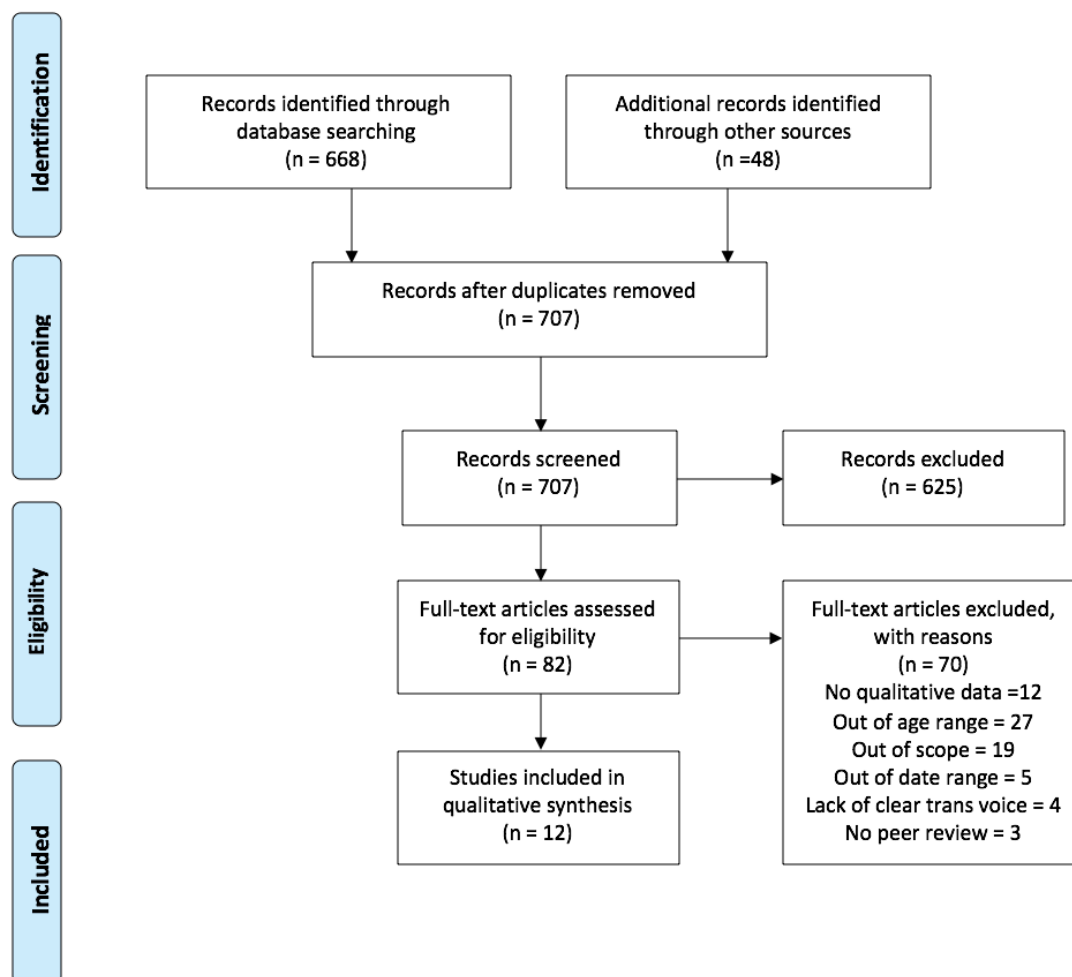
Thompson, Shortreed, Moore & Carey-Butler, 2019	Gender diverse college students' perceptions of climate and discriminatory experiences	Journal of LGBT Youth	Survey of 1848 university students about climate and discrimination	No qualitative data
Tsfati & Nadan, 2019	"The best period of my life": The academy as a Safe Haven for Israeli transgender students	Journal of Gender Studies	Israeli study of 20 transgender adults aged 20- 30 of their educational experiences at university.	University data
Ullman, 2015	Free2Be? Exploring the schooling experiences of Australia's sexuality and gender diverse secondary school students	Western Sydney University Report	Report of a nationwide survey looking at school climate and wellbeing and educational outcomes.	Report rather than peer-reviewed research paper
Ullman, 2017	Teacher positivity towards gender diversity: exploring relationships and school outcomes for transgender and gender diverse students	Sex Education Sexuality, Society and Learning	Using the Free2Be? Data this study looks at student reports of teacher positivity	No qualitative data. Too narrow focus
Whittle, Turner, Al-Alami, Rundall & Thom, 2007	Engendered Penalties: Transgender and Transsexual People's	The Equalities Review	Report Survey of transgender people about bullying and discrimination in various sectors	Focus on bullying, report rather than peer-reviewed

Experiences of Inequality  
and Discrimination

Wolff, Stueland, Himes & Alquijay, 2017	Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Student Experiences in Christian Higher Education: A Qualitative Exploration	Christian Higher Education	7 Semi-structured interviews with Christian college students or alumni (age 18+)	College data
Wyss, 2004	This was my hell: the violence experienced by gender non-conforming youth in US high schools	International journal of qualitative studies in Education	Qualitative paper exploring experiences of harassment and violence in US high schools.	Data gathered over 10 years ago

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## Appendix B.2.1 SLR Flow Diagram



### Appendix B.3: Weight of Evidence Rating Frameworks

D.Ed.Ch.Psychol. 2018

Review framework for qualitative evaluation/ investigation research

Author(s):

Title:

Journal Reference:

Criterion	Score	R1	R2	Agree %	R1	R2	Agree %	Comment
Appropriateness of the research design <i>e.g. rationale vis-à-vis aims, links to previous approaches, limitations</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Clear sampling rationale <i>e.g. description, justification; attrition evaluated</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Well executed data collection <i>e.g. clear details of who, what, how; effect of methods on data quality</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Analysis close to the data, <i>e.g. researcher can evaluate fit between categories/ themes and data.</i>	<b>2 1 0</b>							
Evidence of explicit reflexivity <i>e.g. impact of researcher, limitations, data validation (e.g. inter-coder validation), researcher philosophy/ stance evaluated.</i>	<b>2 1 0</b>							

Comprehensiveness of documentation <i>e.g. schedules, transcripts, thematic maps, paper trail for external audit</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Negative case analysis, <i>e.g. e.g. contrasts/ contradictions/ outliers within data; categories/ themes as dimensional; diversity of perspectives.</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Clarity and coherence of the reporting <i>e.g. clear structure, clear account linked to aims, key points highlighted</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Evidence of researcher-participant negotiation of meanings, <i>e.g. member checking, empower participants.</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Emergent theory related to the problem, <i>e.g. abstraction from categories/ themes to model/ explanation.</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Valid and transferable conclusions <i>e.g. contextualised findings; limitations of scope identified.</i>	<b>1 0</b>							

Evidence of attention to ethical issues <i>e.g. presentation, sensitivity, minimising harm, feedback</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
<b>Total</b>	<i>Max 14</i>			Mean % agree			Mean % agree	

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**D.Ed.Ch.Psychol. 2017**  
**Review framework for quantitative investigation research**

Author(s):

Title:

Journal Reference:

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>R1</b>	<b>R2</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>R1</b>	<b>R2</b>	<b>Agree %</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Data gathering</b>								
Clear research question or hypothesis <i>e.g. well-defined, measurable constituent elements</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Appropriate participant sampling <i>e.g. fit to research question, representativeness.</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Appropriate measurement instrumentation. <i>e.g. sensitivity; specificity</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Comprehensive data gathering <i>e.g. multiple measures used; context of measurement recorded (e.g. when at school vs at home)</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Appropriate data gathering method used <i>e.g. soundness of administration</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Reduction of bias within participant recruitment/instrumentation/administration <i>e.g. harder-to-reach facilitation; accessibility of instrumentation</i>	<b>1 0</b>							

Response rate/ completion maximised <i>e.g. response rate specified; piloting; access options</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Population subgroup data collected <i>e.g. participant gender; age; location</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
<b>Data analysis</b>								
Missing data analysis <i>e.g. Level and treatment specified</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Time trends identified <i>e.g. year on year changes</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Geographic considerations <i>e.g. regional or subgroup analyses</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Appropriate statistical analyses (descriptive or inferential) <i>e.g. coherent approach specified; sample size justification.</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Multi-level or inter- group analyses present <i>e.g. comparison between participant groups by <u>relevant</u> location or characteristics</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
<b>Data interpretation</b>								
Clear criteria for rating of findings <i>e.g. benchmarked/ justified evaluation of found quantitative facts</i>	<b>1 0</b>							
Limitations of the research considered in relation to initial aims <i>e.g. critique of method; generalizability estimate</i>	<b>1 0</b>							

Implications of findings linked to rationale of research question <i>e.g. implications for theory, practice or future research</i>	<b>1 0</b>						
<b>Total</b>	<i>Max 16</i>			Mean % agree			Mean % agree

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#### Appendix B.4: Weight of Evidence A Ratings

Author(s)/year	WoE A Rating (Qualitative – max 14)	WoE A Rating (Quantitative – max 16)	Inter-rater Agreement
Evans & Rawlings (2019)	8		100%
Freedman (2019)	10.5		
Hillier et al., (2020)	8.75		91.7%
Ingram (2018)	11.5		
Johnson et al., (2014)	10.5		
Jones & Hillier (2013)		6	
Jones et al., (2016)	8.5	5	
Leonard (2019)	12.5		
Lewis (2017)	12		
Mcbride & Schubotz (2017)	6.25	3.5	95.8%
McGlashan & Fitzpatrick (2018)	9.25		89.6%
Yutzy (2019)	9.5		

#### Appendix B.5: Weight of Evidence A Grade Boundaries

Boundary	Qualitative			Quantitative		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Score	10-14	5.25-9.75	0-5	11-16	5.25-10.75	0-5

## Appendix B.6: Initial Coding of individual papers

Author	Initial Codes	Refined Codes
Evans & Rawlings, 2019	<p>Well informed, supportive staff can make all the difference</p> <p>Staff can be a link between support networks</p> <p>Staff can create a safe space</p> <p>Support staff can support transgender identities</p> <p>Relational work between students, teachers and broader school community</p> <p>Using the correct pronouns and name is key to a supportive learning environment</p> <p>Encourage other students to correct misgendering can share the burden of education</p> <p>Supportive classmates can help to educate staff</p> <p>Confidentiality is key to staff trust</p> <p>Dialogue between staff and students is key for positive environments</p> <p>Dialogue can empower students</p> <p>Choosing uniform can allow greater self-determination</p> <p>Transgender issues in the curriculum help to demystify it</p> <p>Transgender identities in the curriculum help to foster belonging</p> <p>Transgender clubs create collaboration</p>	<p>Well informed, supportive staff</p> <p>Safe space</p> <p>Whole school support</p> <p>Name and pronouns as key</p> <p>Supportive classmates</p> <p>Teaching others</p> <p>Dialogue can empower transgender students</p> <p>Uniform as self-determination</p> <p>Transgender identities in the curriculum</p> <p>Transgender clubs create collaboration</p>
Freedman, 2019	<p>Being permanently excluded from school</p> <p>Lack of understanding from staff</p> <p>Missing out on your education</p> <p>Feeling very uncomfortable at playing at gender</p> <p>Single sex schools complicate matters</p> <p>Being singled out as other</p> <p>Feeling victimised due to gender</p> <p>Supportive friends can get you through</p> <p>Staff to talk to makes things seems positive</p> <p>Need to be heard without judgement</p> <p>Need a safe space to express yourself</p>	<p>Exclusion from school</p> <p>Lack of staff understanding</p> <p>Missing your education</p> <p>Uncomfortable playing gender</p> <p>Single sex school</p> <p>Singled out as other</p> <p>Feeling victimised</p> <p>Friends as supportive</p> <p>Supportive staff</p> <p>Need to be heard without judgement</p> <p>Safe space</p>

<p>Hillier et al., 2019</p>	<p>Using strategies to self-preserve and self-advocate  Constantly making choices within conflict  Lack of power affects ability to respond  Trade off within decisions to  Multiple strategies employed at once  Avoidance to stay safe  Avoiding teachers who misgender and deadname  Explaining gender as waste of breath  Avoiding gendered situations  Tired of explaining gender to others  School avoidance to recover from daily situations  Microaggressions affecting relationships  Transferring schools or school avoidance the only option  Avoidance strategies as self-care  Avoidance affecting daily life and routines  Bathrooms posing problems  Feeling like an intruder in spaces/bathrooms  Being ground down by conflicts  Making compromises in order to get it to work  Trying to blend into the background  Misgendering yourself in order to survive  Balancing the cost of sharing your identity  Adjusting to the context  Lack of self-expression effects self esteem  Sharing selectively  Being more yourself outside of school  Finding it hard to explain yourself all the time  Feeling more comfortable over time  Turning conflict into teachable moments  Needing to teach adults about gender  Finding ways to teach others  Experiencing an absence of teacher-led discussion about gender  Young people as teachers and self-advocates  Adult not meeting the needs of young people  Teachers unaware of gender policies  Young people having to fight to defend themselves  Feeling protected by friends  Friends as affirming  Getting a sense of belonging from others</p>	<p>Always making choices within conflict  Feeling powerless  Using strategies to self-preserve and self-advocate  Teachers misgendering and deadnaming  Needing to teach others about gender  School avoidance  Microaggressions  Gendered bathrooms are problematic  Feeling like an intruder  Hiding yourself behind gender/misgendering yourself  Always adjusting your identity to the context – sharing selectively  Absence of teacher awareness  Friends as protective/affirming  Resisting cisgenderism  School as survival</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role models show how to be successfully queer</li> <li>Resisting cisgenderism</li> <li>Engaging in daily acts of resistance</li> <li>Gender expression as resistance</li> <li>Opportunities for queering your environment</li> <li>Insisting on being seen</li> <li>Refusing to be misgendered</li> <li>Demanding the basics of respect</li> <li>Existence as resistance</li> <li>Demonstrating agency through strategies</li> <li>Choices have consequences and limitations for transgender YP</li> <li>Prioritising safety in decisions</li> <li>Needing a survival strategy for school</li> <li>Not the time or place to be you</li> </ul>	
Ingram, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sex and health education in non-inclusive</li> <li>Transgender identities become lost with disability</li> <li>Gendered bathrooms create a sense of not belonging</li> <li>Language is key to understanding yourself</li> <li>Need for inclusive resources and curriculum</li> <li>Bullying leads to isolation</li> <li>Friends create acceptance</li> <li>Difference creates empathy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-inclusive sex and health education</li> <li>Transgender identity lost in intersection of identities</li> <li>Gendered bathrooms create no belonging</li> <li>Language key to identity</li> <li>Need inclusive resources and curriculum</li> <li>Bullying and violence</li> <li>Isolation</li> <li>Friends as validation</li> <li>Difference</li> </ul>
Johnson, Singh & Gonzalez, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being transgender in school is a complex experience to navigate</li> <li>Concerns that their experiences be minimised as a fad</li> <li>Identities as unique but not abnormal</li> <li>Shifting of gender expression over time and place</li> <li>Gender diversity is not gender confusion</li> <li>Exclusion from heteronormative and LGB communities</li> <li>Other communities as not understanding or accepting</li> <li>Schools seen as rigid gendered spaces – binary</li> <li>Nobody to speak too</li> <li>School avoidance</li> <li>Hostile school environments</li> <li>Physical violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transgender is complex</li> <li>Minimising of your experience</li> <li>Unique identities</li> <li>Exclusion from heteronormative communities</li> <li>School is a rigid gendered space</li> <li>Isolation</li> <li>School avoidance</li> <li>Hostile school environments</li> <li>Transphobia and violence</li> <li>Bathrooms as frightening and dangerous spaces</li> <li>Need for gender neutral facilities</li> </ul>

Jones & Hillier, 2013	<p>Vulnerable to bullying and violence</p> <p>Bathrooms as frightening and dangerous places</p> <p>Bathroom avoidance</p> <p>Critical need for gender neutral toilets</p> <p>Willing to share identities in safety</p> <p>Over-coming rejection through resilience</p> <p>Bullying leads to school avoidance</p> <p>Toilets and changing rooms as dangerous spaces</p> <p>Hiding in school</p> <p>Teachers need teaching</p> <p>Activism can help to make change</p> <p>Wanting to help others like them</p>	<p>Sharing identity in safety</p> <p>Using resilience</p> <p>Bullying</p> <p>School avoidance</p> <p>Gendered facilities as dangerous</p> <p>Hiding yourself at school</p> <p>Teachers need teaching</p> <p>Activism helps</p> <p>Helping others</p>
Jones et al., 2016	<p>Being transgender is not straightforward</p> <p>Questioning your gender is complex and might not end</p> <p>PE is split into boys and girls</p> <p>No neutral toilets</p> <p>Avoiding the toilet whilst at school</p> <p>Gender segregated facilities silences diversity</p> <p>Mixed classes help me to feel comfortable</p> <p>Uniform affects wellbeing</p> <p>Teachers use of deadnames and pronouns increases bullying</p> <p>Teacher use of correct names has positive impact on experience and learning</p> <p>Lack of recognition leads to feeling trapped</p> <p>Supportive classmates can be a protective factor</p> <p>Supportive peers help you to speak out against bullying</p> <p>Other children trying to shame you</p> <p>Activism can be life saving</p> <p>Having a voice gives you value</p> <p>It's either activism or stealth</p> <p>Activism requires disclosure</p>	<p>Complexity of being transgender</p> <p>P.E. is gendered</p> <p>No neutral toilets</p> <p>Segregated facilities</p> <p>silence diversity</p> <p>Uniform affects wellbeing</p> <p>Lack of recognition leaves you feeling trapped</p> <p>Supportive classmates as protective factor</p> <p>Transphobia</p> <p>Activism is life saving</p> <p>Teacher's use of language/pronouns/names</p>



Leonard, 2019	<p>The importance of language</p> <p>Name is key to identity</p> <p>Using my chosen name is a clear sign of respect and acceptance</p> <p>Deadname tied to birth identity</p> <p>Pronouns and gendered language central to confirmation of identity</p> <p>Language as positive affirmation of identity</p> <p>Acceptance if teacher uses name</p> <p>Holistic change in attitude denotes sincerity and respect</p> <p>Asking permission to use your name</p> <p>The importance of individual teacher support</p> <p>Individual teachers distinguished from whole school approach</p> <p>Staff actively looking out for your needs</p> <p>Staff should do their research on transgender issues</p> <p>Feeling like staff are on your side</p> <p>Staff who demonstrate desire to facilitate change</p> <p>Staff facilitating a safe space</p> <p>Availability of staff is key</p> <p>Building lasting relationships with teachers</p> <p>Unconditional and un-timed support shows reliability</p> <p>Staff challenging systemic issues in school</p> <p>The benefit of LGBT staff</p> <p>A shared perspective and joint desire to facilitate change</p> <p>Teachers coming out indicates an inclusive school</p> <p>School clubs to advocate for rights and provide a voice</p> <p>School clubs can educate the school</p> <p>Clubs as safe spaces</p> <p>Uniform as validation</p> <p>Gender appropriate Bathrooms and changing rooms make a big difference</p> <p>Need for positive and affirmative whole school action</p> <p>Whole school training on transgender issues shows desire to support</p> <p>Learning from the wider transgender community</p> <p>Exploration of self through role models</p> <p>Friends as allies</p>	<p>Importance of language</p> <p>Naming is central to identity</p> <p>Importance of teacher support</p> <p>Staff knowledge of transgender issues</p> <p>Safe spaces</p> <p>Staff facilitating change</p> <p>Clubs advocating for transgender voices and rights</p> <p>Uniform as validation</p> <p>Importance of gender appropriate facilities</p> <p>Affirmative whole school action – policies, practices, training</p> <p>Role models</p> <p>Friends as protective and affirming</p> <p>Parental acceptance helps school acceptance</p> <p>Personal strengths and avenues of support</p> <p>Humour as coping</p> <p>Self-advocacy as empowerment</p> <p>Helping others</p>
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	Friends as a source of acceptance	
	Parental acceptance can help school to accept	
	Need for personal strength and avenues of support	
	Humour helps to downplay the negative	
	Humour as a coping mechanism	
	Humour helps with the difficulties and barriers	
	Being transgender in school can be a long journey	
	Self-advocacy as empowerment	
	Sense of futility leading to self-advocacy	
	Using your identity to help others	
Lewis, 2017	Everything is gendered	Everything is gendered
	Feeling disconnected from the people and systems	Feeling disconnected from people and systems
	Being made to fit into a box	Feeling dysphoric
	Give up trying to connect	Feeling different/other
	Feeling distant and other	Hiding yourself to fit in
	Feeling dysphoric	No belonging
	Hiding yourself to fit in and make friends	Feeling out of place and unsafe
	No sense of belonging	Following the norm to feel safe
	Feeling out of place and unsafe	Feeling trapped
	Hiding and avoiding	Gender is silenced topic
	Need to follow the norm to be safe	Lack of understanding of gender
	Not coming out in order to stay safe	School as gendered and binary
	Feeling trapped in school	Oppressive uniform
	Needing to play masculine or feminine	Gendered activities
	Gender is a silenced topic	P.E. is gendered
	Gender and sex being mistaken by others	Gendered language
	School as a gendered system (it's very she/he, pink/blue)	Teacher attitudes and language
	Schools ordered in binary gender categories	Pressure to conform
	Dress codes are oppressive	
	Gender rules pervade extra-curricular activities	
	Gendering of PE	
	Sex education gendered and binary	
	Gendered language and messaging (boys will be boys, that's not ladylike)	
	Teachers speaking soft to girls and hard to boys	
	Receiving gendered messages about what a boy/girl is	
	Only coming out after high school	
	Pressure to conform	

<p>Mcbride &amp; Schubotz, 2017</p>	<p>Negative school experiences due to heteronormativity on policies and practices  Single sex schools  Difference is outcast  Uniform causing difficulties  Uniform as drag  Not feeling comfortable in the uniform  Mistaken identity  Uniform as a site of resistance  Suppressing identity at school  Hiding who you are  Just trying to get thorigh the day  School as an endurance  Fearing reprisals  Experiencing transphobia when living in preferred gender identity  Constant verbal abuse and bullying even at primary school  Being treated like shit in high school  School doing nothing to support or Transgender/homophobic language by teachers  Impact of religious schools on transgender identity – erasing transgender identities  Dealing with things alone  Locking yourself away  Being the only transgender person you know  Being told transgender is a sin  Feeling scared to be transgender  Feeling different and weird  Having your name/identity erased  School acting to stop bullying  School engaging proactively</p>	<p>Heteronormative policies and practices  Uniform  Identity  School as survival  Transphobia  School lack of action/support  Teacher attitudes  Language  Isolation  Fear  Feeling other  School support</p>
<p>McGlashan &amp; Fitzpatrick, 2018</p>	<p>Using pronouns as a way of celebrating diversity  Student identities in tension  Messy identities – intersecting identities  Using pronouns is contested even amongst transgender YP  Feeling uncomfortable with identifying in certain ways  Need to feel yourself  Having to identify in ways which don't make sense to you</p>	<p>Pronouns as validating and non-inclusive  Identities in tension  Complex, intersecting identities  Not feeling safe  Fluid identities don't fit  Queer identity as disruptive of cisgenderism  Groups as affirming and celebratory</p>

<p>Not feeling safe to be non-binary          Fluid identities don't always fit with pronouns          Pronouns can be viewed as non-inclusive          Pronouns can be a power play between stable and fluid identities          Pronouns are categorical names          Identity as unintelligible without pronouns          Transgender YP may be uncomfortable with naming stable gender identity          Stability as power          Legitimise normative gender identities          Pronouns as disruption of binary thinking          Enjoying having a queer identity          Queer as unintelligible and disrupting of cisgender norms          Pronouns uncomfortable if not feeling congruent within the binary          Positive effects of physical changes to body          Positive to have space to choose preferred pronoun          Groups as spaces to affirm and celebrate identities          Helpful to hear other transgender stories          Normality through common experiences          Finding collective power and solidarity amongst other transgender people          Feeling valued within a transgender group          Gender expression as central to gender identity          Language between transgender people as affirming          Gender performance as a means of legitimising yourself</p>	<p>Language as affirming          Gender performance as legitimising</p>
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<p>Yutzy, 2019</p>	<p>High school as struggle          Struggle to understand themselves          Struggle to build and keep friendships          Struggle to find spaces to exist          Violence for appearance          An emotional kicking          High school as survival          Becoming a wallflower to avoid harassment          Hiding yourself can create bigger problems with mental health          School outing you creates mistrust</p>	<p>School as struggle/survival          Struggle to exist          No safe spaces          No friendships          Violence          Hiding yourself/identity          Identity suppression leads to bigger problems          Mistrusting school          Blame and judgement from school</p>
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Receiving blame and judgment from school administration  
Schools make it impossible to thrive  
School can be a journey of self-understanding  
Friends can be a positive or negative impact  
Role models can help lead the way to transition  
Fighting to convince people you are real  
GSA provides a community and a voice  
Needing humour to process the difficulties  
Having a strong group of friends can get you through

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Impossible to thrive in school  
Friends as protective  
Role models  
Fighting for your identity  
Clubs give you a voice  
Humour as protective

## Appendix B.7: Theme Development Across Papers

Initial Themes	Corresponding Refined Codes
Adult Involvement	Teacher attitudes, Lack of teacher support, Lack of understanding, Singling people out, Individual teacher support, Staff making a positive difference, Relational work, Staff to talk to
Language	Gendered language and messaging, Using previous names and pronouns, Pronouns as non-inclusive, Pronouns reinforce binaries, Variety of terms, Respecting pronouns and names, Ongoing dialogue
Policies and Practices	Changes in school, Record keeping – changing names or not, Gendering of structures, policies and practices, General gendering, Gendering extracurricular activities, Proactive engagement by school, Whole school approaches, Staff training, Clubs/ provisions, Resources/ materials
Identity	Suppression of identity, Not feeling accepted, Struggle to understand self, Conflation of identities, No sense of belonging, Conforming and hiding, Gender as fluid, Difference as strength
Spaces and Facilities	Hostile environment, Gendered environment, No space to exist, Bathrooms as dangerous places, Changing rooms/toilets, Dangerous spaces, Safe spaces
Transphobia	Bullying, Verbal/ physical abuse, Not feeling safe, Feeling victimised, Violence, Silenced topics, Supportive classmate, Less harassment and discrimination, Less social exclusion, Supportive friendships
Learning	Curriculum, Sex education, Poorer educational outcomes, Difficult to succeed, School avoidance
Empowerment	Activism, Feeling part of a community, Self-preservation and self-advocacy, Teachable moments, Seeking support, Resisting cisgenderism, Advocating for change, GSA, Gender as performance and expression, Collective power and solidarity, Disrupting binary thinking, Groups/collectives, Supporting others, Maintain self-worth, Humour as resilience, Avoiding situations, Ignoring conflict, Sharing selectively, Consequence and limitations of choice

### Appendix B.8.1: Analytical Theme Development

Descriptive Themes	Analytical Themes
Language and constructions of gender	Language as a powerful tool for marginalising minority gender identities
Forging a divergent identity or navigating gender identity	Forced choice, conflict and empowerment in the management of transgender identity in school
The role of school staff in pupil enactment of gender identity	The powerful role of relationships in the social construction of gender identity
The framing of gender in policies and practices	Systemic factors perpetuating cisnormativity within schools
Friendships as a resource for authenticity	The pervasive nature and legitimisation of transphobia
The pervasive nature of transphobia	
Gendering of spaces and facilities	
Thrive or survive	

### Appendix B.8.2 Illustrative Example of Analytical Theme Development

As an illustrative example of the iterative process of theme development undertaken by the researchers, the theme *Language as a powerful tool for marginalising minority gender identities* will be briefly discussed. The concept of language ran throughout the data and stretched across many of the initial themes including relationships, identity, policies and practices, transphobia. The overlap of language within these initial themes, highlighted to the researchers the pervasiveness of language within the experiences of gender-diverse young people and its centrality as a theme. Language was initially conceived as the act of communication through interactions and dialogue with others and messaging within systems. However, as the theme developed, the researchers identified the ways in which language, through communication, was a way for individuals, others and systems to construct gender and define a person's identity – including through transphobic language. Through further analysis of this concept, the researchers began to acknowledge that language, as an act of defining and constructing a person's identity, was used as a means of marginalising identities and positioning diversity as 'other'. Language then, was conceived as a tool which people and systems could use to marginalise others. Finally, this tool was seen as a powerful and effective way for others and systems to silence gender-diverse identities. Whilst language pervades all of the other analytical themes through cisnormativity, relationships, identity and transphobia, it is only one aspect of these themes and links them together as a key aspect of gender-diverse experience in high school.

## Appendix C.1: EPNET Recruitment Advert

Dear colleagues

My name is Dean Allen-Biddell and I am a second-year trainee educational psychologist on the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Manchester.

I am currently conducting research into the experiences and practices of educational psychologists when working with and supporting autistic, gender diverse children and young people. I am seeking to gain an insight into the positive aspects and specific challenges of casework with this cohort of children and young people as well as broader views about the role of the EP in this area.

I am recruiting up to 5 educational psychologists to participate in phase 1 of my research which will involve an individual interview to be held via Zoom at a point most convenient to the participant. I will also invite participants to take part in phase 2 of the research which will be a follow up focus group including the 5 participants and 3 research commissioners. The focus group will also be held via Zoom.

The following inclusionary criteria apply to all potential participants:

- To be a practicing educational psychologist (TEP, maingrade, senior or principal)
- Either currently or previously gained casework experience of working with children or young people with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder who also identify as being gender-diverse (including transgender and non-binary gender expressions)
- Are able to participate in an individual interview and a focus group of educational psychologists to discuss their experiences and practices with this group of young people

It is hoped that the research project will develop a tentative model of practice aimed at supporting future educational psychologist practice when working with autistic, gender-diverse young people.

Due to the limited scale and scope of this research, a maximum of 5 participants can be recruited and this will be done on a first come, first serve basis.

If you would like to participate within this study and meet the relevant inclusionary criteria, please contact me for more information on [dean.allen-biddell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:dean.allen-biddell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)

Best wishes

Dean



## Appendix C.2 Participant Interview Schedule

Question 1: Could you please tell me a little about the piece(s) of casework which you have experienced in which you worked with a child or young person who was both autistic and gender diverse?

Prompts:

- How was the research commissioned/referred into the service?
- What was the priority concern – did it relate more to autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or gender diversity (GD) first? How did this evolve during the course of your involvement?
- What did your involvement consist of?
- What was your conceptualisation/formulation within this work? particularly around ASD and GD
- How did you assess need?
- What resources did you use? Which did you find particularly helpful/unhelpful?
- What sources/research informed your work?
- What were the main challenges that you faced within this piece of work?
- What were the outcomes?
- What were the main barriers/facilitators to successful support within this casework?

Question 2: What did you find helpful during this work?

Prompts:

- Service level practice guidance?
- Speaking with colleagues
- Accessing the literature
- Support from agencies (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service etc)/charities
- 

Question 3: What would you have found helpful during your work with this CYP?

Prompts:

- Guidance for educational psychologists (EPs)
- Guidance for school staff/parents/
- Information for children and young people (CYP)
- Access to external agencies with knowledge in this area
- Resources for working with this cohort
- Resources to share with CYP, staff, parents
- Training

Question 4: Are there any areas of additional skills or knowledge that might have helped you during your work with this cohort of CYP? If so, what are these and why do you think that?

Question 5: What do you see as the EP's role when working with this cohort of children or young people?

Prompts:

- At what level do you see EP work – individual, group, systemic?
- What types of work – individual work with CYP, research, staff training, assessment, consultation?
- Supporting families?
- Liaising with other agencies
- Developing resources/guidance
- Supporting schools?
- Supporting gender transition
- Supporting transition to adulthood?
- Boundaries to the EP role?

Questions 6: Do you feel that there are any gaps within EP practice/knowledge more broadly relating to this group? If so, what are these and why do you think that?

## **Appendix C.3 Participant Information Sheet**

### **What are educational psychologists' experiences and practices of working with autistic, gender diverse children and young people**

#### **Participant Information Sheet (PIS)**

You are being invited to take part in a doctoral thesis research study for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Manchester. The aim of the study is to gather the experiences and practices of educational psychologists when working with autistic, gender diverse children and young people. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully before deciding whether to take part and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

#### **About the research**

##### **➤ Who will conduct the research?**

Dean Allen-Biddell, trainee educational psychologist, School of Environment, Education and Development, The University of Manchester.

##### **➤ What is the purpose of the research?**

The purpose of this research is to gather a range of current educational psychologists' experiences and practices of working with autistic, gender-diverse children and young people as a means of providing further support to educational psychologists when working with this cohort of young people. It is hoped that the research will be used to develop a model of working practices for educational psychologists to help provide guidance on their future work when supporting this population of children and young people. It is also hoped that the research will help to identify some of the areas for additional skills, knowledge and research needed within this area.

You have been asked to participate within this study through your capacity as an educational psychologist who has had current or previous direct experience of working with autistic, gender diverse children and young people and someone who may be able to offer an insight into the specifics of your work with this group including the facilitators, barriers and areas for development.

It is hoped that this study will recruit a maximum of five educational psychologists to take part within individual interviews and a maximum of eight educational psychologists to participate within a follow focus group, including the original interview participants and three additional research commissioners. The focus group will be conducted to discuss the outcomes of the original interview data.

➤ **Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

Details of this study will be included within the researcher's final thesis for the doctorate in educational and child psychology. It is anticipated that the results of the study will be written for publication in a relevant, peer-reviewed research journal or book chapter. It is also envisaged that the results will be disseminated via presentations to conferences and other events. Participants will be informed of any publication and any published research will be shared with participants.

➤ **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check**

The researcher has undergone an appropriate level of DBS check as determined by the School of Environment, Education and Development and obtained via The University of Manchester.

➤ **Who has reviewed the research project?**

This research project has been reviewed by The University of Manchester School of Environment, Education and Development research Ethics Committee.

➤ **Who is funding the research project?**

The research is being funded by the Department for Education as part of the researcher's professional Doctorate of Educational and Child Psychology.

### **What would my involvement be?**

#### **➤ What would I be asked to do if I took part?**

If you decided to participate within the study, you would be asked to participate within an interview lasting approximately 60 minutes with the researcher in which you will discuss your experiences regarding working with autistic, gender diverse children and young people. The interview will be held virtually, either over the telephone or via Zoom at a time convenient to you. The interview will be recorded. A further follow up interview may be required if you feel you have further experiences to share. You will have the opportunity to check the data in order to ensure you are happy that it accurately reflects your views and experiences.

Following the analysis of all participant interviews, the researcher will hope to develop a model of practice to help guide educational psychologists' work in this area.

You will then be invited to participate in a follow up focus group with the other participants, and research commissioners, in order to discuss the model of practice and offer further suggestions and recommendations as necessary. This focus group will also be held via Zoom and recorded. All focus group data will be anonymised and each participant provided with a pseudonym during the transcription process.

Your participation in this research will be recorded in Zoom and your personal data will be processed by Zoom. This may mean that your personal data is transferred to a country outside of the European Economic Area, some of which have not yet been determined by the European Commission to have an adequate level of data protection. Appropriate legal mechanisms to ensure these transfers are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation are in place. The recordings will be removed from the above third party platform and stored on University of Manchester managed file storage as soon as possible following the completion of data collection.

Further privacy information:

- [Zoom privacy policy](#)

➤ **Will I be compensated for taking part?**

There will be no payment of any kind for taking part in the study.

➤ **What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form before the interview and again before the focus group in order to confirm your willingness to participate in each method of data collection. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. However, it will not be possible to remove your interview data from the project once it has been anonymised and it will not be possible to remove your focus group data at any point as we will not be able to identify your specific data. This does not affect your data protection rights. If you decide not to take part you do not need to do anything further.

Audio/video recording of the interview and focus group is essential to your participation in the study, therefore, if you do not wish to be audio recorded then you will not be eligible to participate. All participants should be comfortable with the recording process at all times and you will be free to stop recording at any time if you feel uncomfortable.

**Data Protection and Confidentiality**

➤ **What information will you collect about me?**

In order to participate in this research project we will need to collect information that could identify you, called “personal identifiable information”. Specifically we will need to collect:

- Your name and signature on the consent forms

This will be the only piece of identifying information about you that we will collect.

The recordings will consist of audio if using the telephone or video if using Zoom. All recordings will be deleted following transcription.

➤ **Under what legal basis are you collecting this information?**

We are collecting and storing this personal identifiable information in accordance with data protection law which protect your rights. These state that we must have a legal basis (specific reason) for collecting your data. For this study, the specific reason is that it is “a public interest task” and “a process necessary for research purposes”.

➤ **What are my rights in relation to the information you will collect about me?**

You have a number of rights under data protection law regarding your personal information. For example you can request a copy of the information we hold about you, including audio recordings.

If you would like to know more about your different rights or the way we use your personal information to ensure we follow the law, please consult our [Privacy Notice for Research](#).

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=37095>

➤ **Will my participation in the study be confidential and my personal identifiable information be protected?**

In accordance with data protection law, The University of Manchester is the Data Controller for this project. This means that we are responsible for making sure your personal information is kept secure, confidential and used only in the way you have been told it will be used. All researchers are trained with this in mind, and your data will be looked after in the following way:

**Important note:** UoM requires identifiable data to be anonymised as soon as the objectives of the project allow. The standard retention period for data once anonymised is 5 years unless funders or regulators have specified longer retention requirements.

Your participation in the study will be kept confidential to the study team and those with access to your personal information as listed above. All personal information will be removed from the final transcript and, once transcribed, the recording will be deleted from the university encrypted drive.

Confidentiality will be ensured through de-identifying of the data and any links to the individual via an assigned participant ID only known to the researcher so that the data is

pseudonymised. This will ensure that the reporting of the data is done in such a way that individuals cannot be readily identified.

The audio recordings will be obtained during the interviews and focus group and will be transferred onto a secure computer with password protection then transcribed either by Dean Allen-Biddell or a University of Manchester approved supplier of transcription services. The anonymised transcriptions will be analysed by Dean Allen-Biddell. Once transferred, the original recordings will be deleted. The purpose of data analysis will be to look for themes within the data which describes the experiences of the participants. This will then be used to develop a model of practice to help guide educational psychologists' work in this area.

A second trainee educational psychologist will have access to some anonymised extracts from the written transcripts in order to provide inter-coder reliability checks on the data. All anonymous data and consent forms will be stored securely on an encrypted drive at the University of Manchester for 5 years. Data will be written up into a report which will form part of the researcher's doctoral research thesis and may be published. Data will not be shared outside of this research project.

**Potential disclosures:**

There may be circumstances which may lead to disclosure to relevant authorities for example:

- where there is a professional obligation to report misconduct/poor practice the researcher may need to inform an employer/professional body
- reporting of current/future illegal activities to the authorities
- reporting of any reported or suspected child protection issues to the school or relevant authorities

Please also note that individuals from The University of Manchester or regulatory authorities may need to look at the data collected for this study to make sure the project is being carried out as planned. This may involve looking at identifiable data. All individuals involved in auditing and monitoring the study will have a strict duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant.

**What if I have a complaint?**



➤ **Contact details for complaints**

If you have a complaint that you wish to direct to members of the research team, please contact: **Research supervisor: Professor Caroline Bond, Room A6.20, Manchester Institute of Education School of Environment, Education and Development, Ellen Wilkinson Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Rd Manchester, M13 9PL**

**Tel: 0161 2753686**

**Email: [caroline.bond@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:caroline.bond@manchester.ac.uk)**

**If you wish to make a formal complaint to someone independent of the research team or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact**

The Research Ethics Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing:

[research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk) or by telephoning 0161 275 2674.

If you wish to contact us about your data protection rights, please email

[dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk) or write to The Information Governance Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL at the University and we will guide you through the process of exercising your rights.

You also have a right to complain to the [Information Commissioner's Office about complaints relating to your personal identifiable information](#) Tel 0303 123 1113

<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

**Contact Details**

If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part then please contact the researcher(s)

**Dean Allen-Biddell, email: [dean.allen-biddell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk](mailto:dean.allen-biddell@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk)**

## Appendix C.4 Participant Consent Form

**What are educational psychologists' experiences and practices of working with autistic, gender diverse children and young people.**

### Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

	Activities	Initials
1	I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet (Version 2, Date 17/06/2020) for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.	
2	I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to myself. I understand that it will not be possible to remove my data from the project once it has been anonymised and forms part of the data set.  I agree to take part on this basis.	
3	I agree to the interviews being audio / video recorded.	
4	I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books, reports or journals.	
5	I understand that data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from The University of Manchester or regulatory authorities, where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data.	
6	I agree that the researchers may retain my contact details in order to provide me with a summary of the findings for this study.	
7	I understand that there may be instances where during the course of the interview information is revealed which means that the researchers will be obliged to break confidentiality and this has been explained in more detail in the information sheet.	
8	I agree to take part in this study.	

### Data Protection

The personal information we collect and use to conduct this research will be processed in accordance with data protection law as explained in the Participant Information Sheet and the [Privacy Notice for Research Participants](#).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant                      Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the person taking consent      Signature                      Date

[1 copy for the participant and 1 copy for the research team (original)]

## Appendix C.5 Confirmation of Ethical Approval



Environment, Education and Development School Panel PGR  
 School for Environment, Education and Development  
 Humanities Bridgeford Street 1.17  
 The University of Manchester  
 Manchester  
 M13 9PL  
 Email: PGR.ethics.seed@manchester.ac.uk

Ref: 2020-9526-15707

11/06/2020

Dear Mr Dean Allen-Biddell, , Prof Caroline Bond

**Study Title:** EP experiences of working with autistic, gender diverse young people

Environment, Education and Development School Panel PGR

I write to thank you for submitting the final version of your documents for your project to the Committee on 08/06/2020 12:49 . I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation as submitted and approved by the Committee.

### **COVID-19 Important Note**

If you are conducting research with a data collection methodology that involves face-to-face contact (i.e. interviews, focus groups, psychological experiments, tissue sampling, and any other research procedure requiring face-to-face contact) you must switch to data collection via Skype, telephone or an alternative digital platform.

Please note, you do not need to seek a formal amendment to your existing ethical approval to make these changes provided your consent procedures remain the same (i.e. if you are still obtaining written consent but the form is returned by post or email). If you are choosing an alternative consenting procedure, please submit a formal amendment to your ethical approval via the usual process.

If switching your data collection to digital or electronic means is not possible (i.e. human tissue studies) then you must suspend all research activity until further notice unless doing so will have critical impacts on research participants (i.e. affect their wellbeing or care).

Please also consider whether you need to submit an amendment to extend your dates of data collection, due to postponed fieldwork or other research activities. If you need to seek an extension, you must do so before the end date as listed on your approved ethics application/last approved amendment or within 3 months of this date.

Researchers who wish to continue with face-to-face data collection during this period will require specific approval from the Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity Team. Such approval will only be given if 1) the researcher is a member of staff or PGR, 2) the research is specifically related to the Covid-19 situation and data collection has to take place at the present time, or 2) there are exceptional reasons for the continuation of face-to-face data collection (i.e. critical impacts on the wellbeing or care of research participants).

Please see <https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/rbe/ethics-integrity/ethics/> for further details

Please see below for a table of the titles, version numbers and dates of all the final approved documents for your project:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Consent Form	Participant Consent Form Interview	30/04/2020	1
Consent Form	Participant Consent Form Focus Group	30/04/2020	1
Advertisement	EPNet Advert	01/05/2020	1
Additional docs	Interview Schedule and Focus Group Outline	01/05/2020	1
Data Management Plan	What_are_educational_psychologists'_experiences_of_working_with_autistic_gender_diverse_children_an	01/05/2020	1
Letters of Permission	Recruitment Email	28/05/2020	2
Participant Information Sheet	Participant Information Sheet	28/05/2020	2

This approval is effective for a period of five years and is on delegated authority of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) however please note that it is only valid for the specifications of the research project as outlined in the approved documentation set. If the project continues beyond the 5 year period or if you wish to propose any changes to the methodology or any other specifics within the project an application to seek an amendment must be submitted for review. Failure to do so could invalidate the insurance and constitute research misconduct.

You are reminded that, in accordance with University policy, any data carrying personal identifiers must be encrypted when not held on a secure university computer or kept securely as a hard copy in a location which is accessible only to those involved with the research.

For those undertaking research requiring a DBS Certificate: As you have now completed your ethical application if required a colleague at the University of Manchester will be in touch for you to undertake a DBS check. Please note that you do not have DBS approval until you have received a DBS Certificate completed by the University of Manchester, or you are an MA Teach First student who holds a DBS certificate for your current teaching role.

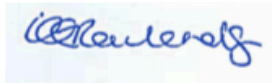
**Reporting Requirements:**

You are required to report to us the following:

1. [Amendments](#): Guidance on what constitutes an amendment
2. [Amendments](#): How to submit an amendment in the ERM system
3. [Ethics Breaches and adverse events](#)
4. [Data breaches](#)

We wish you every success with the research.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Kate Rowlands

Environment, Education and Development School Panel PGR

## Appendix C.6: Examples of Data Linking to Codes and Initial Coding Structure

### School Practices

#### Participant 1

"I've had a long-standing relationship with this school...the school was inclusive and they weren't kind of referring young people...just because...they've tried quite a lot of different things with this young person and there's still some sort of difficulties with...with their social communication as well as the behaviour, but mainly the behaviour against the school staff and against...this young person's peers."

#### Participant 2

"they certainly expressed in that meeting an openness towards changing the whole school approach towards trans people and that would have been great. But then when she left...it was kind of like, 'It'll still help! You don't have to not do it!'"

#### Participant 3

"I think the head teacher...it was one of those situations where...they knew what they had to do on paper, but hearts and minds were not there. So...you know, all of that kind of...implicit, kind of prejudice was seeping out throughout the conversations we were having and...there was concerns about, 'Oh, but we have some members of staff who are very religious and they...you know, their religious beliefs will not allow them to follow the procedure.'"

"they were a school who I would have...thought...would have done this really well. They had...they already had an equality committee set up by the young people, they'd done their bullying survey, they were looking up, you know, what could happen and how they can support young people"

"I didn't need to push anything. The school were saying, 'What else can we do? What else can we do?' You know, they were really trying very, very hard and they were saying, 'Oh, but we've got other trans kids in school that are totally fine. I don't understand what this is about.'"

"I wondered if it was that idea that that was the person that they were having most contact with, the pastoral care teacher, at that point and whether...you know, what was coming from the pastoral care teacher was...a sense of...uncertainty, it was almost like she panicking so...if she was panicking then how was a young person going to feel secure and supported and...you know, all of these things and I think this...that's what the situation was I think there...actually the things that that young person...you know, that...it showed that once that member of staff changed...that all of the things were there to support that young person because they were then able to engage with the things that were put in place."

#### Participant 4

“something that’s important to follow up on and I have done in that school previously is...is to think about how...trans rights are communicated or...I suppose what I was impressed with is the...head of year that was in that conversation...was considering different options in terms of access to toilets, in terms of...PE, which is an area that the young person didn’t enjoy – thinking about changing rooms...thinking about areas in which sensitivities could be managed. So they were quite accommodating in thinking about what this school could do. But they...I mean from memory they have a large kind of stone wall board...which certainly covers sort of sexuality issues and I don’t know to what extent has trans on that board”

#### **Participant 5**

“there was lots of support, I guess, within school...around...you know, managing those needs, supporting her transition to another school”

### **EPs Supporting Schools Systemically**

#### **Participant 1**

“when we’re formulating sort of...policies within the academy trust that I’m a governor in, there’s a little bit about sort of sexuality and sexual expression...expression of sort of gender identity, sorry...so perhaps...as an EP, we could have...a role in terms of...asking schools about...you know, does that exist in your policy? And what are your thoughts about...if you like, non-typical gender...non-male or non-female...gender...what are your rules about it? And then what are your conceptions and challenging conceptions about it.”

#### **Participant 2**

“it’s that kind of classic, the bridging...the individualised casework with the broader...you know, like often you’re referred and often it can be the assumption that you’re going to help this one child...but...\_\_\_\_\_ [01:12:06] goal is often to leverage information about that one child to help the whole school, do you know...and help other kids, like what I talked about with the other trans kids who were in the school, who would have benefitted from the recommendations being implemented as well”

#### **Participant 3**

“so what we would do then is that we would take that data and we go back to the school and we do a twilight session with them, after school, using their own data...around about equality, diversity and children’s rights. So...we would talk a bit about the legislation, but more it’s about the hearts and minds type stuff, so we’d do a bit about policy...a bit about curriculum, a bit about kind of mental health and wellbeing and support, so...so that’s the kind of start of their journey if you like”

“we had a fantastic group – equality, diversity and children’s rights group across the authority and we took eighteen picture books around about all different aspects of

children's rights to do with protected characteristics under the Equality Act...and...the teachers wrote fantastic lesson plans to go with each of the books and the lesson plans”

“all of those different sorts of books are within that, so for the teachers to start becoming familiar with those and start having those discussions with...children as well.”

**Participant 4**

“On the systems level, thinking about...yeah, school policy...advocacy...what sort of information is available and the school can make such an impact that kind of...you know, me knowing that there is that big sort of stone wall LGBT wall are the things that young people can refer to on there.”



## Initial Coding Structure

Name	Sources	References
▶ Z Initial Codes	0	0
▼ The Role of the EP	0	0
▼ EP role to educate others	1	1
EP supporting school staff to build capacity	1	1
whole school training is important	1	4
EP needing to shift school's perspective	3	11
▼ EP communicating with the YP	1	1
EP building relationship with YP	1	3
Beginning conversations with the YP	1	1
empowering YP to feel secure in their gen...	3	4
being openminded in your approach	1	1
EP using the correct pronouns	2	3
▼ EP accepting the YP's identity presentation	4	9
EP validating the YP	3	4
openly communicating with the YP and sc...	1	1
YP and EP working closely together with s...	3	3
EP exploring GD with the YP	2	3
YP disclosing to the EP	1	1
Using shared interests to open discussion	1	1
GD not initially discussed by the YP	2	2
▼ The impact EPs can have	1	2
EP acknowledging their position	1	1
The possibility of therapeutic support	1	1
EP supporting with transition	2	2
EPs must know the limits of their knowledge	3	4
supporting YP into post-16	2	3
EP advocating for the YP's identity to be a...	3	8
▼ EP able to spend time on the case	3	9
The challenge of traded services in cas...	1	1
▼ EPs working alongside other professionals	4	5
EP facilitating joint exploration	1	1
EP working with others to find strategies	2	2
EP attending meetings and consultations	1	1
needing links to other GD professionals	3	3
▼ EPs supporting schools systemically	4	6
Being clear with schools about their respo...	1	1
breaking down gender policing	1	2
school needing reassurance	1	2
▼ YP Knowledge and Understanding	0	0
▼ YP are well informed	1	1
▼ YP seeking information online	1	1
Benefit of online for ASD YP	1	1
YP has a good understanding of social rol...	3	4
The YP able to express themselves clearly	3	10
YP understanding their autism	2	2
▼ seeking support from colleagues	1	1

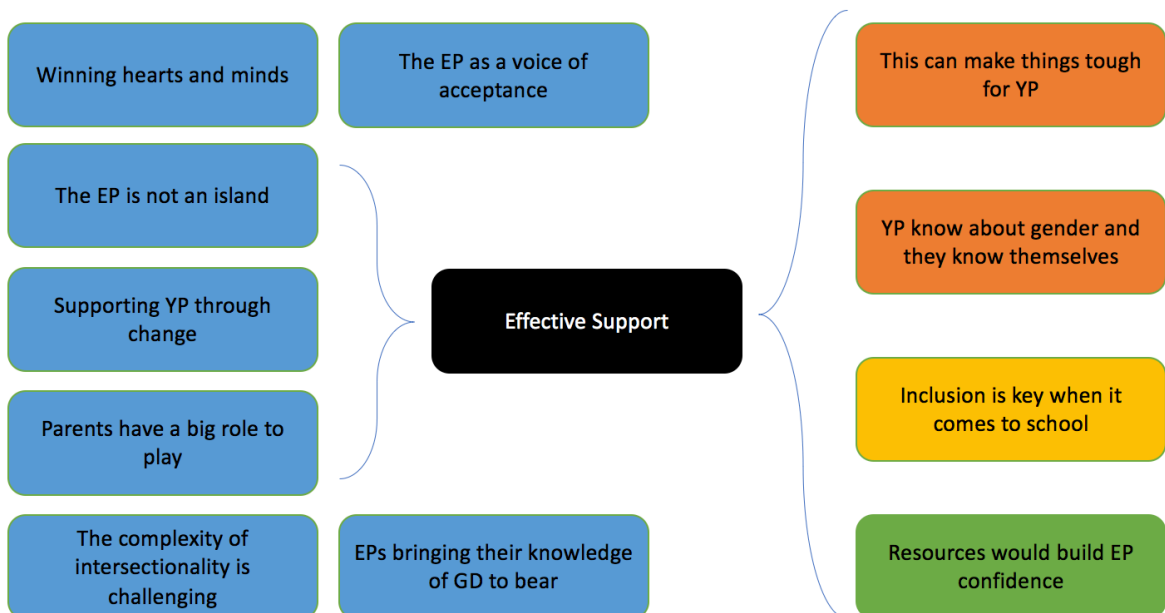
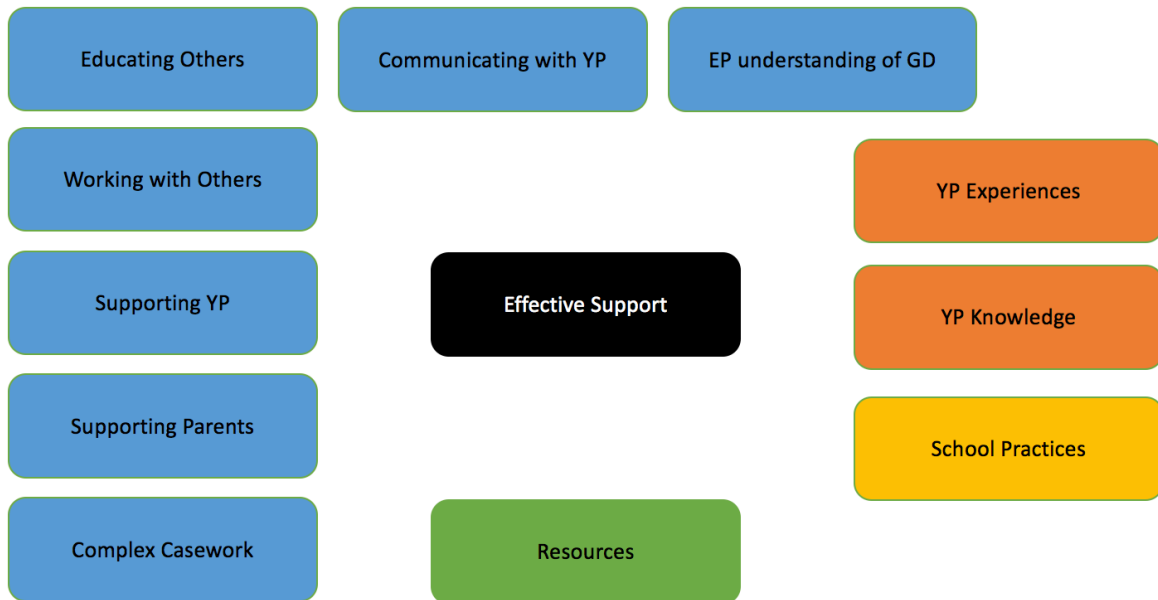
● The possibility of therapeutic support	1	1
● EP supporting with transition	2	2
● EPs must know the limits of their knowledge	3	4
● supporting YP into post-16	2	3
● EP advocating for the YP's identity to be a...	3	8
▼ ● EP able to spend time on the case	3	9
● The challenge of traded services in cas...	1	1
▼ ● EPs working alongside other professionals	4	5
● EP facilitating joint exploration	1	1
● EP working with others to find strategies	2	2
● EP attending meetings and consultations	1	1
● needing links to other GD professionals	3	3
▼ ● EPs supporting schools systemically	4	6
● Being clear with schools about their respo...	1	1
● breaking down gender policing	1	2
● school needing reassurance	1	2
▼ ● YP Knowledge and Understanding	0	0
▼ ● YP are well informed	1	1
▼ ● YP seeking information online	1	1
● Benefit of online for ASD YP	1	1
● YP has a good understanding of social rol...	3	4
● The YP able to express themself clearly	3	10
● YP understanding their autism	2	2
▼ ● seeking support from colleagues	1	1
● lack of common experiences with EP colleag...	1	1
● supervision as support	2	3
● Feeling like you're working alone	1	1
▼ ● EP understanding of GD	2	6
● lack of understanding about GD	3	8
▼ ● The complexity of the case proved challenging	2	4
● EP using formulation to unpick difficulties	1	1
● GD work mirrors typical EP work	1	1
▼ ● confusion about initial concerns	1	1
● GD not the reason for initial involvement	2	2
● initial hypotheses relating to ASD	4	4
● initial concerns relating to behaviour and S...	3	5
● EP using models to support conceptualisation	1	1
▼ ● the complexity of intersectionality	4	12
● EP recognising GD as underlying other diff...	1	1
● EP not gaining closure with the case	2	3
● are EPs missing GD in their hypotheses	1	1
● Physical transitioning is a complex topic for E...	2	2
● How the YP's ASD could impact the case out...	2	2
● no clear link between ASD and GD presentati...	4	5
● using a narrative approach to understand the...	1	1
● using consultation to assess GD	2	3
● change of school ending EP involvement	1	1
● using cognitive assessments to develop hypo...	3	3

▼ ● Recognising the rights of the child	2	6
● gender within the broader diversity and inclu...	1	3
● Capturing the voice of the child	4	7
● There's a social justice angle to this	3	4
▼ ● YP facing difficulties because of their gender id...	1	1
▼ ● YP seeking acceptance	1	3
● YP seeking validation	2	2
● YP finding school difficult	1	1
● YP feeling unsafe	1	1
● YP anxiety around transitioning	2	6
● YP being delegitimised by others	2	2
● YP social transitioning	1	2
● YP struggling with self-expression	2	2
▼ ● the mental health risks for YP	2	3
● GD impacting SEMH needs	1	1
● YP's views about themselves as a bad per...	1	1
▼ ● YP Friendships	1	1
● ASD might be impacting on friendships	2	2
▼ ● difficulties in developing friendships for th...	3	3
● It's a challenge navigating peer relation...	1	3
● lack of friendships	1	1
▼ ● difficulties with identity formation	3	10
● YP developing a fluid gender identity	1	1
● No sense of belonging for the YP	3	5
● YP not conforming to the rules	2	2
▼ ● access to GD adults	2	3
● finding role models for GD YP	4	4
▼ ● struggling to find helpful resources	3	3
● Lack of guidance for interaction of ASD and...	1	2
▼ ● EP finding research helpful	1	1
● need for more training on the doctorate	1	2
● EPs need to keep up to date with GD know...	1	1
● need for more research	1	1
● Needing the knowledge to tackle complex...	1	1
▼ ● LA guidance offers reassurance	1	3
● using government guidance to inform the...	2	2
● The need for evidence-based practice	3	3
● identifying specific interventions	1	1
● a need for policy within the EPS	4	5
● EPs want to be able to signpost	3	3
● EP wanting resources to support the YP	3	8
● tools and resources would develop EP confid...	3	3
● standardised tools would be helpful	2	3
● spending time trying to find the right support	3	5
● needing to ensure good quality external supp...	2	2
● Trying to find appropriate charities was hard	3	3
● using CPD to inform their work with the YP	4	4
▼ ● Working with Parents	1	1

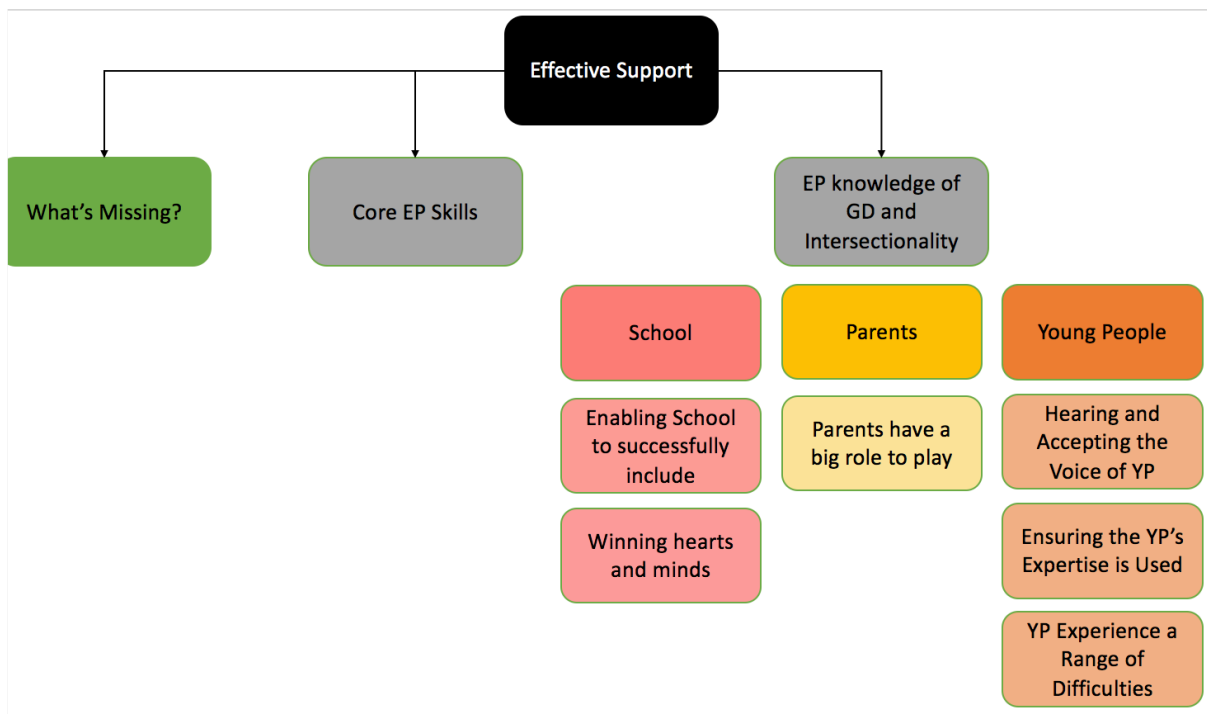
● parents supportive of GD	1	2
● building long-term relationships with families	1	2
● parents response to the YP	1	2
● facing difficulties with parents	3	5
● Parents being against GD	2	2
▼ ● School Practices	5	8
● schools offering support groups	1	2
● schools should provide ongoing support for...	1	1
▼ ● school staff not using correct names and pro...	1	1
● schools using clumsy language	2	5
● ASD and GD can be scary for schools	1	2
● Specialist setting offering inclusive support	1	2
● School accepting of a fluid identity	1	4
● traditional practices need reviewing	1	1
● school framing of the YP	3	4
● school concerns around changing facilities	2	2
● the benefit of inclusive school staff	3	7

## Appendix C.7 Development of Themes and Thematic Structure

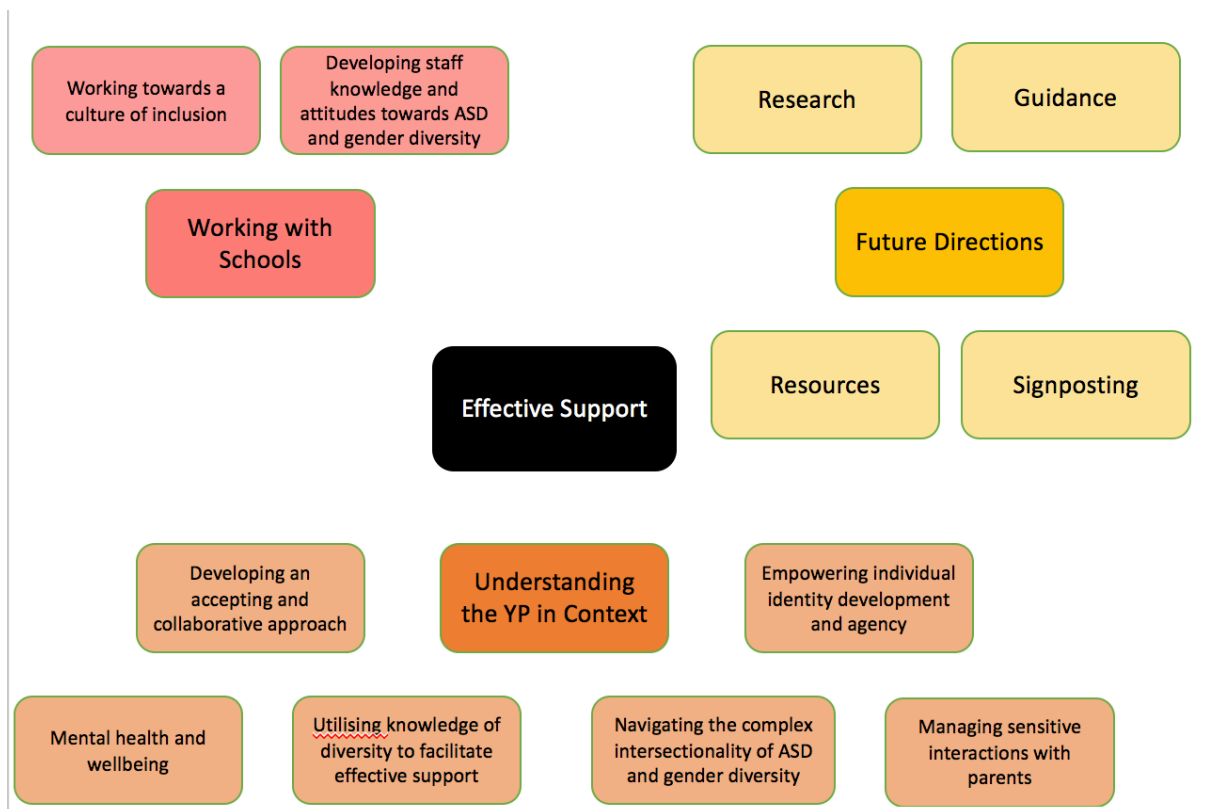
**Iteration 1:** Basic grouping of themes focusing particularly on elements of EP role in providing effective support



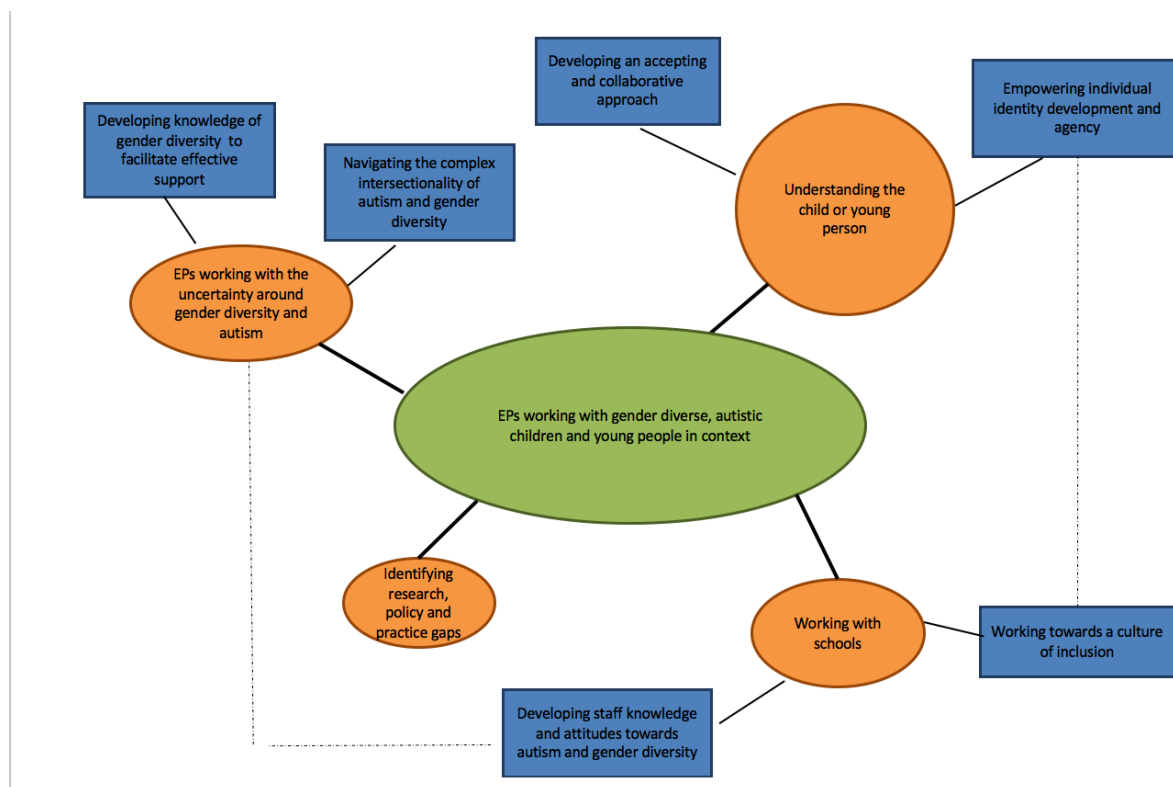
**Iteration 2:** Exploring skills and experiences related to facilitating and experiencing inclusion.



**Iteration 3:** Greater focus and reflection upon the YP in context and the role of the EP to utilise their core and specialist skills within this



**Iteration 4:** The role of the EP working to support the YP in context becomes central with a greater reflection upon the uncertainty and challenge of work in this area



### Illustrative Example of Theme Development

An example of the iterative process of theme development taken by the researchers can exemplified by the theme *EPs working with the uncertainty around gender diversity and autism*. This theme was initially informed by codes including ‘the complexity of the casework proved challenging’, ‘the complexity of intersectionality’ and ‘EP understanding of gender diversity’. Underlying many of these initial codes referring to the role of the EP and EP knowledge with this group of CYP was the concept of complexity. As themes were developed further, ‘complex casework’ became ‘the complexity of intersectionality is challenging’ in order to capture the specific challenge posed by the intersection of dual diversities within casework. This theme was then developed to include ‘EPs bringing their knowledge of GD to bear’ to reflect the ways in which EPs were utilising their secure knowledge of autism and emerging awareness of gender-diversity to try to manage the complexities present within the casework. This theme became more central to the nature of the work and was reconceived in iteration 2 as ‘EP knowledge of GD and Intersectionality’. Within iteration 3, the researchers repositioned the themes to no longer focus upon the knowledge and understanding of the EP but to place the YP at the centre of their context. Within this iteration, the researchers began to reconceptualise this theme to account for

the ways in which the EPs were grappling with the complexity rather than simply bringing their knowledge to bear. In iteration 3, the theme was split to account for this reconceptualization and became 'utilising knowledge of diversity to facilitate effective support' and 'navigating the complex intersectionality of ASD and gender diversity'. This, then, allowed the researchers to distinguish the ways in which EPs were able utilise their knowledge whilst grappling with the complexity of intersectionality. In the final iteration 4, these two aspects became the subthemes within the main theme of *EPs working with the uncertainty around gender diversity and autism*.