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Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences

School of Psychology

**School Experience and Sense of Belonging: Perspectives from Sexual and
Gender Diverse Young People**

by

Annie Louisa McGowan

Thesis for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology

June 2020

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University of Southampton

Abstract

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Sense of belonging is described as a fundamental human need, yet, LGBTQ+ youth typically report lower levels of school belonging than their peers. A systematic literature review of the factors that impact LGBTQ+ youth's sense of school belonging (SoSB) is presented in chapter one. Fourteen papers were deemed eligible for inclusion and they explored the effects of various factors that fit into seven broad categories: victimisation; school atmosphere; school achievement; personal support; gay-straight alliance (GSA) support; suicide; and other. The review identified victimisation as a strong predictor of lower sense of school belonging for LGBTQ+ pupils and, therefore, highlights victimisation as a key factor to address. Furthermore, support from parents, peers, teachers and GSAs, and a positive school atmosphere, were associated with higher levels of SoSB. Implications for the Department for Education, educational settings and Educational Psychologists are discussed.

Chapter two sought to explore the views and experiences of transgender young people in secondary education. Ten interviews were conducted with secondary school-aged transgender participants. Reflexive thematic analysis generated the overarching theme, acceptance and validation. Five main themes were also created: seeking acceptance and validation; receiving acceptance and validation; active rejection and invalidation; passive rejection and invalidation; and consequences of rejection and invalidation. The findings suggest there is a need to foster a sense of acceptance and validation within school environments to fulfil the basic need to belong. Therefore, trans education (for both staff and pupils) is necessary to increase understanding of gender diversity. In addition, changes to the national curriculum, school policies and practices are recommended to ameliorate the negative outcomes associated with transgender youth.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Annie McGowan

Title of thesis: School Experience and Sense of Belonging: Perspectives from Sexual and Gender Diverse Young People

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature:

Date: 07.06.2020

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Definitions and Abbreviations

ΔR^2	Delta R-Square
α	Cronbach's Alpha
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
B	Unstandardised beta coefficient
<i>b</i>	Standardised beta coefficient
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CI	Confidence Interval
Cohen's <i>d</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i> Effect Size
<i>df</i>	Degrees of Freedom
DfE	Department for Education
DSM	Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
EP(s)	Educational Psychologist(s)
<i>F</i>	<i>F</i> Test Statistic
<i>F</i> _{change}	Change in the Omnibus Test
GIDS	Gender Identity Development Service
GLB	Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual

Definitions and Abbreviations

GLBT	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender
GPA	Grade-Point Average
GSA	Gay-Straight Alliance
GV	General Victimization
ICD	International Classification of Diseases
IFI	Incremental Fit Index
LGB	Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and the '+' is intended to encompass all other sexual and gender minority identities
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Androgynous, and the '+' is intended to encompass all other sexual and gender minority identities
LGBTQQIAAP	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Allies and Pansexual
<i>M</i>	Mean
MANOVA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance
<i>N</i>	Total number of participants

n	Subsample number of participants
NFI	Normed Fit Index
NNFI	Non-Normed Fit Index
ONS	Office for National Statistics
p	Sig
PSHE	Personal, Social, Health and Economic
QA	Quality Assessment
r	Pearson's Correlation
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SoSB	Sense of School Belonging
SRMR	Standardised Root Mean Square Residual
t	t-test Statistic
TA	Thematic Analysis
WHO	World Health Organisation
χ^2	Chi-Square
XX Chromosomes	Female sex chromosomes
XY Chromosomes	Male sex chromosomes

Definitions and Abbreviations

z z score

Chapter 1 What Factors Impact Sense of School

Belonging for LGBTQ+ Youth?

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 What is LGBTQ+?

The acronym LGBTQ+, which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, has grown over the years from simply LGB referring specifically to sexual orientation, to LGBTQ+ which also encompasses gender diversity. The acronym has recently grown further to LGBTQIA+ or LGBTQQIAAP in an attempt to be fully inclusive of all sexual and gender diversity, though, it is widely accepted that LGBTQ+ is an inclusive short version (OutRight, 2019). Van der Ros and Motmans (2015) note that practical considerations and political advantages engineered the collaboration between these minority groups, and, whilst often grouped together, different members of the LGBTQ+ population may experience unique stressors. In order of the acronym, a lesbian is a female-specific term describing same-sex attraction. The term gay, however, can be used to refer to both male and female same-sex attracted individuals. Bisexual describes an individual attracted to members of both sexes and can be applied to males and females. Transgender, however, is not related to sexual attraction. Transgender is an umbrella term for individuals whose sex assigned at birth does not correspond with their gender identity. Therefore, a trans (abbreviation of transgender) individual may be heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian. Lastly, queer is a term used to resist specific labels of sexual attraction and/or gender identity (Stonewall, n.d.a). The list of sexual and gender diverse

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terminology provided here is not exhaustive, and the language used to talk about LGBTQ+ people is constantly evolving (OutRight, 2019).

The Office for National Statistics have provided an estimate of self-identified homosexual, bisexual, and 'other' sexually identified people aged 16 and over within the UK (ONS, 2020). There were an estimated 1.2 million people identifying as LGB in 2018 and the percentage of respondents identifying as heterosexual has decreased from 95.3% in 2014 to 94.6% in 2018, with numbers identifying as LGB rising. This data does not capture gender diversity, though, previous research has estimated there are between 200,000 to 600,000 trans individuals within the UK (Equalities Office, n.d.; Stonewall, n.d.b). Interestingly, the ONS identified young people aged 16 to 24 as more likely to identify as LGB than other age groups, which may suggest a similarly high prevalence for youth under 16 years of age. However, no reliable figures estimate the prevalence of LGBTQ identification in under 16-year olds despite research suggesting LGBTQ youth may be at greater risk of negative outcomes compared to sexual and gender minority adults (Bohan, Russell and Montgomery, 2003).

1.1.2 LGBTQ youth and associated negative outcomes

School environments are typically dominated by hetero- and cis-normative culture (Aerts, Van Houtte, Dewaele, Cox, & Vincke, 2012; Goldberg, 2016a). Heteronormativity is the social norm or assumption that the majority of individuals are heterosexual, and cisnormativity is the norm or assumption that the majority of individuals are cisgender (Goldberg, 2016a; Goldberg, 2016b). Social norms may be considered currency that people trade to achieve a sense of belonging. Tajfel (1979) proposed people form social groups to achieve a sense of social identity; this formation of social groups uses

normative and counter-normative behaviour to identify who may belong to the group (in-group) and who should be excluded (out-group). Furthermore, the in-group seeks to identify within-group similarities whilst highlighting differences from the out-group. This serves to enhance the status of the in-group and generate a stronger sense of belonging. In heteronormative and cisnormative societies, sexual or gender diverse experiences are considered counter-normative, thus risking marginalisation, social exclusion and, ultimately, discrimination (Chesir-Teran, 2003; Moran, 2017; Toomey, McGuire, & Russell, 2012; Van der Ros & Motmans, 2015).

LGBTQ+ youth are at disproportionate risk of victimisation (D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Kosciw, Greytak, & Diaz, 2009; Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark, & Truong, 2018). Victimisation is defined as the action of being treated cruelly or unfairly with the intention of causing harm. This may include bullying (ongoing or repetitive intentional hurting of a person with the involvement of a power imbalance) and discrimination (the action of treating someone worse due to a protected characteristic such as gender). LGBTQ+ youth are also at disproportionate risk of mental ill-health (D'Augelli et al., 2002; Kosciw et al., 2018; Russell & Fish, 2016) and academic difficulties (Kosciw, et al., 2018; Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012). Furthermore, many studies have found that LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to experience a lower sense of school belonging (Bos, Sandfort, de Bruyn, & Hakvoort, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2018; Rostosky, Owens, Zimmerman, & Riggle, 2003).

1.1.3 Defining belonging

Belonging is considered a fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1943). In his seminal paper, "A Theory of Human Motivation", Maslow (1943)

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organised basic human needs into a hierarchy of relative 'prepotency'. The hierarchy detailed physiological, safety, love, self-esteem and self-actualisation needs, and it stipulated that lower level needs must be satisfied before higher level needs emerge. 'The love needs' include the need to form reciprocal positive relations with family and friends, and the need to find one's place in society. These needs may jointly be termed 'belonging' and take precedence over self-esteem and self-actualisation.

Building on the work of Maslow, Baumeister and Leary (1995) developed the belongingness hypothesis. The hypothesis suggests the pervasive human motivation to form social relationships reflects an innate disposition based in evolution. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), satisfying belongingness requires two conditions: First, "a need for frequent, affectively pleasant interactions with a few other people, and, second, these interactions must take place in the context of a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other's welfare." (p. 497). An adequate sense of belonging can: reduce stress (Heinrichs, Baumgartner, Kirschbaum, & Ehlert, 2003); reduce health problems (Hale, Hannum, & Espelage, 2005); support self-regulatory behaviour (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005); and increase self-esteem (Leary, 2005; Tajfel, 1982).

1.1.4 Defining school belonging

School belonging is a related construct to belonging and is defined as "the extent to which [students] feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others – especially teachers and other adults in the school social environment." (Goodenow & Grady, 1993, pp. 60-61). School belonging, specifically, is associated with increased academic performance, engagement, school attendance, and a greater commitment to

school (Phan, 2013; Goodenow, 1993; Osterman, 2000). Ryan & Deci (2000) identified an association between sense of school belonging (SoSB) and increased levels of intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, Newman, Newman, Griffen, O'Connor, and Spas (2007) found SoSB had a positive impact on students' experience of depression, emotional distress, and non-academic risk behaviours such as violence, suicidal thoughts and behaviours, and substance misuse. Higher levels of SoSB have also demonstrated buffering effects of negative factors such as victimisation (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009). Thus, SoSB is an important factor for students' school lives, and may be of particular importance for LGBTQ+ youth to safeguard against academic difficulties, mental ill-health and victimisation.

1.1.5 Factors affecting school belonging for the general student population

1.1.5.1 Peer support.

Three studies have explored peer support as a potential factor supporting young people's SoSB. Hamm and Faircloth (2005) conducted a qualitative study and found participants who described a strong SoSB partially attributed this to their quality of friendships. Yet, some participants expressed a low SoSB despite describing high-quality friendships. Nevertheless, all participants suggested their friends helped them to feel more comfortable and secure at school signifying an association between peer relations and SoSB. In support of Hamm and Faircloth (2005), Kiefer, Alley and Ellerbrock (2015) conducted a mixed-methods study exploring the role of peer support on SoSB. Peer academic and emotional support was associated with participants' classroom engagement, feelings of security and happiness, and SoSB. Furthermore, peer support, together with teacher support, was found to explain the most variance for SoSB.

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A meta-analysis, conducted by Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, & Waters (2018) also explored peer support. Although peer support was influential towards SoSB, it made less of a contribution when compared with parent or teacher support. However, when the measures used within studies were divided into those measuring 'caring relationships' and those measuring 'peer acceptance and support', the former measures yielded moderate to strong associations with SoSB, and the latter produced mixed associations from weak to moderate. This suggests a difference between the effects of perceived general peer support and perceived quality of friendships on SoSB.

However, it is important to note the limitations of these studies. Hamm and Faircloth's (2005) study is 15 years old and participants were recruited from the same school. Furthermore, most participants described a socially exclusive school atmosphere which may have interacted with their peer-relations and/or SoSB. For the purposes of this study, 'school atmosphere' is defined as a composite measure of the quality of school life; it includes peer and school norms, values, beliefs and relationships.

Thus, further research is required to better understand the interaction of school atmosphere and peer relations on SoSB with students from a range of educational settings. Similarly, Kiefer et al. (2015) recruited participants from one school which reduces the generalisability of the findings. Although Allen et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of 51 papers, only 11 included measures of peer support and findings revealed mixed results amongst these studies. In addition, it is not clear how the studies were split into two distinct groups. Nevertheless, all three studies suggest an association between peer support and SoSB.

1.1.5.2 *Teacher support.*

Teacher support has also been explored regarding its effect on SoSB. Allen et al. (2018) examined 14 papers that measured the effects of teacher support within their meta-analysis and found a strong association with increased SoSB. Kiefer et al. (2015) explored the distinct effects of teacher respect and teacher involvement. Data gathered from the survey revealed teacher respect was positively associated with SoSB, and qualitative data from follow-up interviews provided further detail of the ways teachers foster a sense of respect: modelling respectful behaviour, explicitly stating classroom norms and encouraging respectful behaviour amongst students. Teacher involvement (i.e. getting to know students, availability and building trusting relationships) was also positively associated with SoSB. In addition, Anderman (2003) analysed data from a longitudinal research project. Participants completed surveys at three time points and analysis revealed 'perceived teacher promotion of mutual respect amongst peers', was a significant factor increasing participants' SoSB.

This research suggests a strong relationship between teacher support and SoSB. However, Allen et al. (2018) included studies with heterogeneous measures of teacher support, and, comparison of effect sizes may be inappropriate (see Simpson, 2017). Again, Kiefer et al.'s (2015) findings are not generalisable due to methods of recruitment, and, Anderman's (2003) data is 20-21 years old and may not be representative of today's school culture. Thus, further research is needed to generalise these findings.

1.1.5.3 *Academic perceptions*

Academic perceptions of students have also been explored in relation to SoSB. Anderman (2003) found prior school achievement, perceptions of the usefulness,

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importance and interest of core subjects, and perceptions of the purpose and meaning of academic tasks were significantly associated with SoSB. Thus, it was concluded that academic perceptions are important in developing higher SoSB. Allen et al.'s (2018) more recent study examined the effect of academic motivation, however, they found the effect was dependent on geographic location. Students in rural and suburban schools had a strong association between academic motivation and SoSB, whereas urban settings had weaker correlations. These findings suggest a strong relationship between academic perceptions and SoSB, but, further exploration is necessary to better understand the impact between geographical locations.

1.1.5.4 Homophobic victimisation.

Finally, Poteat and Espelage (2007) examined the effect of homophobic victimisation on 143 middle school students, though, they did not measure participants' sexuality or gender identity. Regardless, homophobic victimisation was a significant predictor of lower SoSB in males but not females. Therefore, homophobic victimisation is an important factor to further explore, particularly for young people with minority sexual orientations.

1.1.6 Factors affecting school belonging for the LGBTQ population

1.1.6.1 Victimization.

Few studies have explored factors that can facilitate higher levels of SoSB within the LGBTQ+ population. Collier, van Beusekom, Bos and Sandfort (2013) conducted a systematic review with 39 articles exploring the effect of one factor, LGBTQ-biased victimisation on participants' SoSB. The authors concluded there was strong evidence that LGBTQ-biased peer victimisation was associated with reduced SoSB and higher depressive

symptoms. Research by Hatchel, Espelage and Huang (2017) examined the directionality of the association between victimisation and depressive symptoms. The authors surveyed 404 students and as part of their analysis, found sexual harassment predicted lower SoSB, and, SoSB acted as a buffer for the effects of victimisation on depressive symptoms. However, this finding was not the focus of the study.

1.1.6.2 *Gay-straight alliances.*

Lee (2002) conducted interviews with seven students who self-identified as LGB or heterosexual and were associated with their school's gay-straight alliance (GSA). Results suggested participants felt empowered through having an association with their GSA which had a positive impact on their SoSB. However, it is unknown how many of the participants identified as LGB, though, it is reasonable to assume a minimum of three, one for each sexual orientation stated. Nevertheless, it is not clear from these findings that LGB youth specifically, benefit from having an association with their school's GSA.

1.1.6.3 *Current academic achievement.*

As a small part of their study into the associations between SoSB, alcohol and drug use, Rostosky et al. (2003) found participants' current academic achievement predicted their SoSB. However, the results of heterosexual and LGB participants were analysed together, thus, there are limited conclusions that can be drawn for LGBTQ+ youth.

1.1.7 *Review question*

Previous research has detailed a number of factors relevant to the general school population and, specifically, to LGBTQ+ youth. However, a review of the literature is warranted to compare findings of the same or similar factors and draw conclusions on the

extent of their impact. The current systematic literature review question is ‘what factors are associated with LGBTQ+ youth’s sense of school belonging?’ The review will also analyse the methodological quality and findings of each study included for review.

1.2 Method

1.2.1 Search strategy

The author completed several scoping searches prior to systematically gathering the articles included within this review. Searches were conducted in PsychINFO, Web of Science, ERIC and Scopus electronic databases. Search terms from two core domains formed the search strategy detailed in Table 1.1 and no search filters were applied that would have limited results. Database searching yielded a total of 117 articles.

Table 1.1 *Search Strategy*

Domain	Search terms
LGBTQ	“Trans” or “Transgender” or LGBT or LGBTQ or GLB or GLBT or LGB or Homosexual* or Lesbian or Gay or Bisexual or Queer or Transsexual or Transexual or “Gender neutral” or “Gender fluid” or “Non-binary” or “Gender variant” or “Gender non-conforming” or “Sexual minorit*”
Sense of belonging	“School belong*” or “School connect*” or “School membership”

1.2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

After the removal of duplicates ($n = 52$), the author applied the following inclusion and exclusion criteria to the title and abstract of 65 unique articles: studies had to (1) be

published in a peer-reviewed journal, (2) be written in English, (3) include a measure of SoSB, (4) study factors that affect SoSB, (5) analyse data collected from participants identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, non-binary, or any other sexuality or gender that differs from heterosexual and cisgender, and, (6) analyse data from participants in education (primary, secondary, college or university). Studies were excluded if they (1) only examined the effect of SoSB on other factors, (2) were unpublished theses or dissertations, (3) did not detail the sexuality and gender of participants. Excluded studies ($n = 49$) with the reasons for their exclusion are listed in Appendix A. The author then proceeded to examine the reference lists of the included articles ($n = 16$) for relevant literature which yielded 2 further papers, creating a total of 18 articles. After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria to the 18 full-text papers, four were excluded.

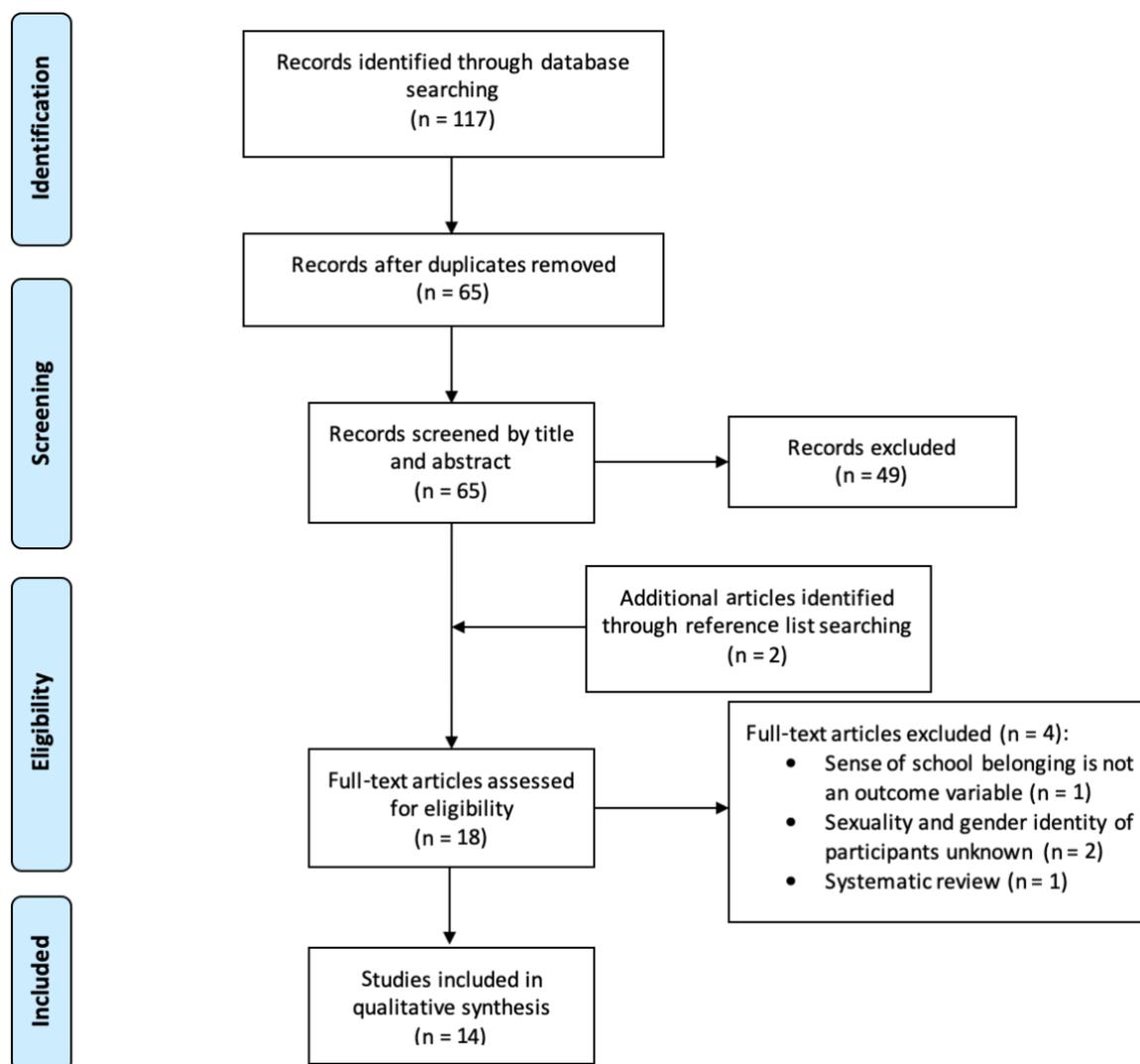


Figure 1.1 *PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Systematic Review Process*

Adapted from Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman (2009).

1.2.3 Quality assessment

The Manchester Review Framework for Quantitative Investigation Research (Bond, Woods, Humphrey, Symes, & Green, 2013; see Appendix B) was used to quality assess each article and provide a summative score. Overall, papers scored between 7 and 13 (see Table 1.2), with summative scores of 6-10 classified as medium quality, and 11-15 as high quality (see **Error! Reference source not found.** for a summary table of the individual scoring for all papers). The majority of studies provided clear research questions/aims and

every study included appropriate participant sampling (i.e. LGBTQ+ youth). However, studies with the largest sample sizes tended to include heterosexual participants, with LGBTQ+ youth making up a small percentage of their sample. All studies utilised surveys to gather cross-sectional data, though, three studies analysed the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health where data gathered in Wave I was different to that gathered in other waves. Thus, analyses did not look at time trends in the data, rather, they used correlational designs to examine the influence of cross-sectional Wave I data (e.g., suicidal ideation) on cross-sectional Wave II data (e.g., SoSB). Most studies included reliable and validated measures for SoSB, yet, the measures for factors analysed to predict SoSB varied in terms of both validity and reliability within and between studies. All studies made efforts to reduce recruitment bias but only eight studies reported response rates and nine studies reported the measures taken to deal with missing data. Furthermore, just seven studies reported adequate subgroup data including a breakdown of LGBTQ+ participants.

On the whole, four studies were of medium quality and ten were of high quality. No papers were excluded based upon their summative score, though the individual strengths and limitations of each study were noted for discussion when reviewing their findings.

1.3 Findings

1.3.1 Data extraction

Fourteen articles met the criteria for inclusion and are detailed within a data extraction table (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Most studies were conducted within the United States ($n = 10$), one in Belgium, one in Israel, one in The Netherlands, and one comparing samples within the United States and Israel. Data was collected

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between 1994 and 2015, and publication dates range from 2005 to 2019. Ten studies used data from national and regional surveys, and the remaining four studies collected their own data (see Table 1.2). Despite some of the original studies employing a longitudinal design, all studies used cross-sectional data within their SoSB analyses. Eight studies analysed data gathered from exclusively sexual minority and/or gender minority participants, and the remaining six studies also analysed data from heterosexual participants.

Quality assessment revealed the studies were of medium to high quality. Overall strengths included the clarity of research questions, the SoSB measures utilised and the efforts made to reduce recruitment bias considering the hard to access sample population. Limitations included the absence of measured time trends, the variable quality of measures used to analyse factors that may affect SoSB and the lack of geographic considerations.

Table 1.2 *Study Characteristics Table*

Study	Country	QA	Sample Number	Age of Sample	Data	Design
Watson, Barnett, & Russell (2016)	USA	12	12,064 participants including 1,279 LGB participants	14-18	Add Health Study	Cross-sectional
Watson & Russell (2016)	USA	12	1,279 LGB participants	14-18	Add Health Study	Cross-sectional
Russell & Toomey (2013)	USA	7	14,738 participants including 917 LGB participants	14-18	Add Health Study	Cross-sectional
Poteat, et al. (2013)	USA	12	15,965 participants including 926 LGBTQ participants	10-18	Dane County Youth Assessment (2009)	Cross-sectional

Poteat, et al. (2011)	USA	12	15,923 participants including 924 LGBTQ participants	10-18	Dane County Youth Assessment (2009)	Cross-sectional
Hatchel, Merrin, & Espelage (2019)	USA	12	934 LGBTQ participants	10-18	Dane County Youth Assessment (2015)	Cross-sectional
Hatchel, et al. (2019)	USA	13	4,778 transgender participants	10-18	California Healthy Kids Survey (2013-2015)	Cross-sectional
Toomey & Russell (2013)	USA	11	230 LGBQ participants	12-19	Preventing School Harassment Study	Cross-sectional
Aerts, et al. (2012)	Belgium	10	1,745 participants including 168 LGB participants	M = 16	ZZZip@Youth Project	Cross-sectional
Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw (2016)	USA and Israel	13	5,722 total LGBQ participants 5,242 US 408 Israel	US M = 15.9 Israeli M = 16.54	GLSEN National School Climate Survey (2007) and Israeli School Climate study (Shilo & Pizmony-Levy, 2008)	Cross-sectional
Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008)	Israel	11	298 LGB participants	11-18	Own data	Cross-sectional
Murdock & Bolch (2005)	USA	10	101 LGB participants	11-18	Own data	Cross-sectional
Bos, et al. (2008)	The Netherlands	10	866 participants including 74 LGB participants	12-15	Own data	Cross-sectional
Stewart, Heck, & Cochran (2015)	USA	11	25 LGBQ participants	16-19	Own Data	Cross-sectional

QA = Quality Assessment

1.3.2 Sample size

Sample sizes ranged from 25 to 15,965, however, numbers of LGBTQ+ participants ranged from 25 to 5,722. Of the studies that reported age ranges, participants were aged between 10 and 19.

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1.3.3 Gender

Participants' gender was reported in twelve studies (see Table 1.3), with four of these studies including transgender as a gender identity option, and one study reporting the number of participants for which their gender data was missing. Six studies had a near equal split of males and females (between 57-43%) and two had a higher proportion of females (around 66%). For the studies where 'transgender' was included as a gender category, data suggested that 2 to 6% of participants identified as transgender.

Table 1.3 *Gender of Participants in Each Study*

Study	Percentage of participants gender identity				
	Males	Females	Transgender	Other	Missing
Watson, Barnett, & Russell (2016)	57	43	NM	NR	NR
Watson & Russell (2016)	57	43	NM	NR	NR
Russell & Toomey (2013)	NR	NR	NM	NR	NR
Poteat et al. (2013)	50	50	NM	NR	NR
Poteat et al. (2011)	50	50	NM	NR	NR
Hatchel, Merrin, & Espelage (2019)	30	70	NM	NR	NR
Hatchel et al. (2019)	55	41	NM	NR	4
Toomey & Russell (2013)	36	59	6	NR	NR
Aerts et al. (2012)	39	61	NM	NR	NR
Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw (2016)	USA 33	USA 59	USA 5	USA 199	NR
	Israel 55	Israel 44	Israel 2	Israel 0	

Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008)	67	31	2	NR	NR
Murdock & Bolch (2005)	63	34	3	NR	NR
Bos et al. (2008)	55	45	NM	NR	NR
Stewart, Heck, & Cochran (2015)	NR	NR	NM	NR	NR

NM = Not Measured, NR = Not Reported.

1.3.4 Sexual and gender minority measures

Studies varied in how participants' sexual orientation and gender identity were measured. Five studies measured romantic attraction and seven studies used self-identification reports of sexual orientation, however, the inclusion of transgender participants varied. Of these seven studies, two included 'transgender' within their sexual orientation measure, four used a gender identity measure and one study did not collect transgender identity data. Of the final two studies, one measured previous romantic attraction, current sexual orientation and gender identity. The remaining study included only self-identified transgender participants.

1.3.5 Sense of school belonging measures

Exploring the factors that affect participants' SoSB was not the sole focus for the majority of studies. Nevertheless, 12 studies reported acceptable Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistics for their SoSB measure ranging from $\alpha = .77$ to $\alpha = .93$. The remaining two studies did not report reliability statistics. SoSB measures across all studies included items ranging from three to eighteen. Only one measure, the 18-item Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale designed by Goodenow (1993) was used in more than one data set. It is important to note that Russell and Toomey (2013) utilised the same data set

as two other studies, but, they analysed their SoSB measure items separately. Thus, their findings should be interpreted with caution as the SoSB measure may not be valid.

1.3.6 Factors explored

The studies examined a range of different factors and their effect on SoSB. These factors broadly fall in to six categories: victimisation, personal support, school achievement, school atmosphere, gay-straight alliance support, suicide, and a final ‘other’ category (see Table 1.4). These broad factors will be used to structure the review, and where relevant, studies will also be synthesised under the specific factors (these are indicated in bold in the table). Each section will end with a brief summary of that theme.

Table 1.4 *The Specific Factors Examined in Each Study and the Broad Categories Within Which they are Grouped*

Broad category	Specific factor	Study
Victimisation	General victimisation	Hatchel et al. (2019a)
	Peer victimisation	Poteat et al. (2011)
	Teacher victimisation	Poteat et al. (2013)
	Sexual harassment	Hatchel et al. (2019b)
	LGB victimisation	Pizmony-Levy and Kosciw (2016)
	Verbal harassment	Aerts et al. (2012)
	Physical harassment	Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008) Murdock & Bolch (2005)
School atmosphere	General atmosphere	Aerts et al. (2012)
	Social acceptance	Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw (2016)
	Social exclusion	Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008)
	Peer role strain	Murdock & Bolch (2005)
	LGB-related school atmosphere	Bos et al. (2008)
	Exposure to homophobic remarks	
	LGB friendliness	
Degree of comfort talking about LGB issues		
LGBTQ resources in school		
School achievement	School achievement	Watson & Russell (2016)
	Grade point average	Poteat et al. (2013)
	Prior school achievement	Aerts et al. (2012)
	Future educational expectations	Murdock & Bolch (2005)
	School trouble	
	Educational track	
	Absenteeism	

Personal support	Parent Parent support Disclosure to father Disclosure to mother Teacher Teacher support Teacher acceptance Peer Close friend support Peer acceptance Peer acceptance	Watson et al. (2016) Poteat et al. (2011) Hatchel et al. (2019a) Murdock et al. (2005) Bos et al., (2008) Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008)
Gay-straight alliance support	GSA Presence of GSA Membership to GSA Involvement in social justice activities	Toomey & Russell (2013) Poteat et al. (2013)
Suicide	Suicide Suicidal ideation Suicide attempts	Poteat et al. (2013) Russell & Toomey (2013)
Other	USA sample compared to Israeli sample Degree of outness Attendance at a religious affiliated school	Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw (2016) Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008) Stewart, Heck, & Cochran (2015)

1.3.6.1 *Victimisation measures.*

Eight studies explored the effects of victimisation on SoSB. A range of victimisation measures were employed, assessing general victimisation from peers and teachers, and LGBT-biased victimisation from peers.

Table 1.5 *Victimisation Measures*

Study	Victimisation	
	General	LGBT-biased
Poteat et al. (2013)	University of Illinois Victimization Scale, 4 items, $\alpha = .87$	1 item for homophobic victimisation
Poteat et al. (2011)	University of Illinois Victimization Scale, 4 items, $\alpha = .86 - .91$ across groups	1 item for homophobic victimisation
Hatchel et al. (2019a)	University of Illinois Victimization Scale, 4 items, $\alpha = .85$	NM

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Hatchel et al. (2019b)	12 items including 10 GV items and 2 LGBT-biased victimisation items, $\alpha = .90$	NM
Aerts et al. (2012)	6 items, general teacher discrimination scale based on a subscale of Al-Methen and Wilkinson (1998), $\alpha = .84$	3 items, designed for racist discrimination but adapted it to measure homophobic discrimination, no reliability statistic reported
Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw (2016)	1 item for general (not LGBT-biased) sexual harassment	1 item each for LGBT-biased verbal and physical harassment
Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008)	NM	1 item each for LGBT-biased verbal and physical harassment
Murdock & Bolch (2005)	NM	8 items for LGBT-biased victimisation, $\alpha = .93$

NM = not measured, Cronbach's Alpha is only provided for the studies in which they were reported

1.3.6.2 School atmosphere measures.

Aspects of the school atmosphere were measured by five studies including general and LGB-related school atmosphere factors.

Table 1.6 *School Atmosphere Measures*

Study	School atmosphere	
	General	LGB-related
Aerts et al. (2012)	NM	Perceived LGB friendliness of the school – 1 item

Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw (2016)	NM	<p>Frequency of exposure to homophobic remarks – 2 items for US sample and 3 items for Israeli sample</p> <p>LGB resources – 3 items for both samples</p>
Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008)	NM	<p>Frequency of exposure to homophobic remarks – 5 items, $\alpha = .81$</p> <p>Frequency of exposure to homophobic remarks by location – 5 items, $\alpha = .88$</p> <p>Degree of comfort talking about LGB issues – 4 items, $\alpha = .83$</p> <p>LGB resources – 4 items, analysed separately</p>
Murdock et al. (2005)	Social exclusion – 8 items, $\alpha = .93$	NM
Bos et al. (2008)	<p>Peer role strain – 6 items, subscale of the Early Adolescent Role Strain Inventory (Fenzel, 1989, 2000), $\alpha = .74$</p> <p>Social acceptance – 5 items, subscale of the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1982), $\alpha = .61$</p>	NM

1.3.6.3 School achievement measures.

Four studies included measures to explore participants' success at school. All measures were different and only two measures included reliability statistics.

Table 1.7 *School Achievement Measures*

Study	School achievement
Watson & Russell (2016)	<p>Academic experience - GPA - 4 items (science, English, social studies and maths grades), $\alpha = .94$.</p> <p>School 'trouble' - 3 items e.g., "getting homework done", $\alpha = .77$.</p> <p>Educational expectations - 1 item</p>
Poteat et al. (2013)	Truancy – 1 item

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Aerts et al. (2012)	Educational track – 1 item
Murdock et al. (2005)	Prior GPA – 1 item
	Current GPA – 1 item

1.3.6.4 *Personal support measures.*

Personal support measures explored general support from parents, teachers and peers, rather than LGBT-specific support. All measures yielded acceptable reliability scores between $\alpha = .74$ and $\alpha = .85$.

Table 1.8 *Personal Support Measures*

Study	Personal Support		
	Parent	Teacher	Peer
Watson et al. (2016)	10 items, general support, including 5 referring to mother and 5 referring to father, if information on just one parent was available an average of just 5 items was used, $\alpha = .84$	NM	NM
Poteat et al. (2011)	3 items, $\alpha = .74 - .85$ across groups	NM	NM
Hatchel et al. (2019a)	7 items, $\alpha = .80$.	NM	NM
Aerts et al. (2012)	NM	1 item, based on a measure of Mohr and Fassinger (2000) measuring degree of acceptance	1 item, based on a measure of Mohr and Fassinger (2000) measuring degree of acceptance
Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008)	NM	1 item	NM
Murdock et al. (2005)	6 items, subscale from The Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescents (Harter, 1985), $\alpha = .89$	6 items, subscale from The Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescents (Harter, 1985), $\alpha = .87$	6 items, subscale 'a close friend' from The Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescents (Harter, 1985), $\alpha = .80$

Bos et al. (2008)	5 items, Adolescent Disclosure Measure (Stattin & Kerr, 2000), measured separately for mother and father, $\alpha = .84$ and $\alpha = .83$ respectively	NM	NM
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1.3.6.5 *Gay-straight alliance measures.*

Two studies examined the effect of gay-straight alliances (GSAs) on participants' SoSB. In both studies, the presence of a GSA was measured, with one study further exploring participants' membership to and involvement in GSA activities.

Table 1.9 *Gay-Straight Alliance Measures*

Study	GSA
Poteat et al. (2013)	Presence – 1 item
Toomey and Russell (2013)	Presence – 1 item Membership – 1 item Involvement in social justice activities – 3 items

1.3.7 Impact of victimisation

1.3.7.1 *General victimisation.*

For the purpose of this review, only relevant analyses and findings within the included papers (those examining SoSB as a dependent variable rather than as an independent variable) are reported here; these analyses were often not the focus of the research. Five studies examined the effects of general victimisation (GV) by peers on students' SoSB. Three of these studies (Hatchel, Merrin & Espelage, 2019; Poteat et al.,

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2011; and Poteat et al., 2013) utilised the University of Illinois Victimization Scale. Hatchel et al.'s (2019a) mediation model exploring the direct effects of GV on SoSB and self-compassion, and the direct and indirect effects on suicidal ideation and suicide attempts demonstrated good fit, $\chi^2(32, N = 934) = 88.98, p < .01$, RMSEA = .04 [.033, .055], NFI = .972, CFI = .981. Analysis of this model found a significant direct effect of GV on LGBTQ participants' SoSB ($b = -.35, p < .05$), where higher levels of GV predicted lower levels of SoSB. Poteat et al.'s (2011) mediation models for LGBTQ white students and LGBTQ students of racial or ethnic minority were also a good fit, determined by scores above 0.96 for IFI, CFI and NNFI, and scores below 0.069 for SRMR and RMSEA. However, a significant direct effect of GV on SoSB was found only for LGBTQ students of racial or ethnic minority ($b = -.23, p < .01$). There was no significant direct effect of GV on white LGBTQ students' SoSB ($b = -.03, p > .05$) despite lower participant numbers in the racial or ethnic minority sample ($n = 320$) compared to the white sample ($n = 606$). Poteat et al. (2013) examined correlations between the included measures and found a positive correlation between GV and SoSB ($r = -.17, p < .001$). However, all 15,965 participants were included within this correlational analysis, thus, the results may not accurately represent the degree to which GV is correlated with LGBTQ participants' SoSB, as they made up only 5.8% of the sample.

Hatchel, Valido, De Pedro, Huang and Espelage (2019b) and Pizmony-Levy and Kosciw (2016) also analysed the relationship between GV and SoSB but used different GV measures. Hatchel et al. (2019b) used a 12-item GV measure but it also included two items that assessed LGBT-biased victimisation, which limits the conclusions that can be drawn as a general victimisation measure. Nevertheless, the results related to this measure are included here because there were more items of GV than of LGBT-biased

victimisation. Structural equation modelling found the structural model to demonstrate good fit, $\chi^2 (24, N = 4778) = 433.91, p < .01$, RMSEA = .06 [.055, .065], NFI = .971, CFI = .972, and analysis showed that GV had a direct effect on SoSB ($b = -.31, p < .001$). However, it is important to note that Hatchel et al. (2019b) included only transgender participants within their study, therefore, their results can only be generalised to transgender individuals. Pizmony-Levy and Kosciw (2016) analysed the effects of sexual harassment (not biased by LGBT status) on SoSB, and compared the results for LGBT participants from the United States to those from Israel. Regression analysis revealed a significant direct effect for sexual harassment on SoSB for the US sample ($B = -.031, p < .001$) and the Israeli sample ($B = -.102, p < .05$). It is possible that the slightly larger p value found for the Israeli sample may be explained by the large difference in sample sizes (US, $n = 5,242$ and Israel, $n = 408$) in that a larger sample size would result in higher statistical power. Cohen, Cohen, West and Aiken (2003) note that the number of participants required for appropriate analytical power should be $N = 30 \times m$ (where m is the number of independent variables). Accordingly, this analysis is sufficiently powered.

Furthermore, Aerts et al. (2012) explored the effect of GV by teachers on SoSB. Multiple regression analysis found a significant negative effect for the boys ($b = -.419, p < .001$), girls ($b = -.389, p < .001$), and LGB participants ($b = -.406, p < .01$). Therefore, teacher GV impacted on participants' SoSB regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

Out of the studies that analysed the effect of GV on SoSB, those with the largest LGBT sample sizes included potentially invalid measures of general victimisation, that is, victimisation not biased by a person's sexual orientation or gender. This was reflected in Pizmony-Levy and Kosciw's (2016) QA rating as their GV measure included just one item (QA = 12). However, Hatchel et al.'s (2019b) measure was validated as an overall

victimisation measure for LGBT youth (12 items including two measuring LGBT-biased victimisation) with a strong Cronbach's Alpha score of $\alpha = .90$. Thus, Hatchel et al.'s (2019b) QA was not affected (QA = 13). Poteat et al. (2011) and Poteat et al. (2013) analysed data from the same large-scale study, thus, their findings similarly found a relationship between GV and SoSB. However, Poteat et al. (2013) analysed heterosexual participants together with LGBTQ participants (QA = 11), though there is no reason to suggest that the effect of GV on SoSB would lessen or reverse for LGBTQ+ youth, this limits conclusions specifically related to this group.

1.3.7.2 Summary of general victimisation.

The general trend suggests GV by peers is significantly correlated with, and has a direct effect on SoSB for LGBT young people, in that higher levels of reported GV lead to lower levels of reported SoSB. Only one study measured GV by teachers but their findings suggest GV by teachers has a significant negative effect on all young people's SoSB regardless of their sexual orientation. However, further research examining this relationship is needed to draw firm conclusions.

1.3.7.3 LGBT-biased victimisation.

Six studies examined the relationship between LGBT-biased victimisation and SoSB (Poteat et al., 2011; Poteat et al., 2013; Aerts et al., 2012; Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw, 2016; Pizmony-Levy, Kama, Shilo, & Lavee, 2008; and Murdock & Bolch, 2005). Poteat et al. (2013) analysed the correlation between LGB-biased victimisation and SoSB for all participants which revealed a significant weak correlation ($r = -.15, p < .001$), where the higher the level of LGB-biased victimisation, the lower participants' SoSB. However, only 5.8% of the sample were same-sex attracted youth. Poteat et al. (2011) used regression

analysis which revealed that regardless of ethnicity and sexual orientation, homophobic victimisation significantly reduced all participants' SoSB: heterosexual white youth, $b = -.05$, $p < .01$; heterosexual youth of colour, $b = -.08$, $p < .01$; LGBTQ white youth, $b = -.10$, $p < .01$; and LGBTQ youth of colour, $b = -.11$, $p < .05$.

In support of this finding, Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008) found that higher levels of LGBT-biased verbal victimisation predicted lower levels of SoSB ($B = -.13$, $p < .01$), though, LGBT-biased physical victimisation was not a significant predictor for SoSB ($B = .03$, $p > .05$). It is important to note that Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008) created their dependent variables using exploratory factor analysis with the 18 items from the Psychological Sense of School Membership (Goodenow, 1993) scale. This resulted in the creation of two factors 'sense of respect from peers' and 'sense of belonging to school'. When verbal and physical LGBT-biased victimisation were regressed on sense of respect from peers, both were found to be significant predictors ($B = -.09$, $p < .01$ and $B = -.17$, $p < .01$ respectively). It is unclear why this analysis took place on a previously validated measure with a strong Cronbach's Alpha score, however, the researchers did state that their aim was to explore the effects of several variables on both SoSB and sense of respect by peers. In 2016, Pizmony-Levy et al. also analysed data gathered in Israel but compared it to data gathered in the United States in 2007. Regression analysis revealed that higher levels of both verbal and physical LGBT-biased victimisation predicted decreased levels of SoSB for the US sample ($B = -.103$, $p < .001$ and $B = -.120$, $p < .001$ respectively). However, for the Israeli sample, only verbal victimisation significantly predicted lower SoSB ($B = -.086$, $p < .001$) with physical assault demonstrating a negative but non-significant correlation ($B = -.073$, $p > .05$).

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Contrasting results were found by Murdock and Bolch (2005) who also used an adapted version of Goodenow's (1993) SoSB measure. Although LGBT-biased victimisation was found to be significantly correlated with SoSB ($r = -.45, p < .01$), multiple regression analysis revealed that after taking into account school exclusion and teacher support, LGBT-biased victimisation did not make a unique contribution to LGBT participants' SoSB ($b = -.12, p > .05$). Furthermore, Aerts et al. (2012) conducted three multiple regression analyses which examined the effect of homophobic victimisation on SoSB: one for the female participants (including LGB participants), one for the male participants (including LGB participants) and one for the LGB participants alone. The results revealed higher perceived homophobic peer discrimination was associated with lower SoSB for the males ($b = -.180; p < .001$) and the females ($b = -.157; p < .001$), but not for the LGB sample ($b = -.051; p > .05$), suggesting that contrary to expectations, heterosexual youth experienced reduced SoSB due to homophobic victimisation but LGB youth's SoSB was not significantly affected. However, there is a large difference in the sample sizes between the male and female groups ($n = 680$ and $n = 1065$ respectively), and the LGB participants ($n = 162$) which may have reduced statistical power. According to Cohen et al.'s (2003) rule, it is likely that the analysis for the LGB sample is underpowered. Though, it may be that other factors (such as peer exclusion or teacher discrimination) have a greater impact on SoSB.

1.3.7.4 Summary of LGBT-biased victimisation.

In conclusion, four out of the six studies that analysed the effect of LGBT-biased victimisation on LGBT participants' SoSB, found significant associations. These four studies received higher QA scores and included larger sample sizes compared to the two studies that found nonsignificant effects. In addition, Aerts et al. (2012) interestingly

found a significant effect of LGBT-biased victimisation for all participants (heterosexual and LGB), but did not find a significant effect for LGB participants alone. In theory, LGB participants would experience an equal or greater negative impact of LGBT-biased victimisation in comparison to heterosexual participants because the victimisation targets specific attributes of their identity. Therefore, it is possible that Aerts et al.'s three-item LGBT-biased victimisation measure adapted from a measure designed to assess racial discrimination is not valid. In addition, no reliability statistic was reported for this adapted measure.

1.3.8 Impact of school atmosphere

1.3.8.1 General school atmosphere.

Many school atmosphere factors were explored, some of which were general (social acceptance, social exclusion and peer role strain) and some were LGB-focussed (exposure to homophobic remarks, LGB friendliness, degree of comfort talking about LGB issues and LGB resources). Bos et al. (2008) explored the relationship of SoSB with the school atmosphere variables, social acceptance and peer role strain. Due to the complex analysis used within this study, the effects of parental support (a personal support factor) on SoSB are also discussed here. All analyses conducted within Bos et al.'s (2008) study included heterosexual and LGB participants together as one sample, which has an impact on the conclusions that can be drawn specifically for LGB youth. Bos et al. (2008) found sexual orientation, social acceptance and peer role strain significantly predicted SoSB in anticipated directions (sexual orientation, $b = -.08$, $p < .05$; social acceptance, $b = .08$, $p < .001$; and peer role strain, $b = -.09$, $p < .05$). However, after controlling for openness with the father, social acceptance and peer role strain, sexual orientation no longer

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significantly predicted SoSB ($b = -.05, p > .05$). A bootstrapping method test for multiple mediations was used to investigate the indirect processes of openness with father, social acceptance and peer role strain for the effect of sexual attraction on SoSB. This method estimates sampling distributions by resampling the data collected at least 1000 times and using the properties of each sample to create a sampling distribution. Bos et al. (2008) found all three variables were significant mediators of the effect of sexual attraction on SoSB (openness with father, $z = -2.30, p < .05$, CI 95%: low $-.07$, high: $.00$; social acceptance, $z = 1.81, p < .05$, CI 95%: low $-.05$, high: $.00$; peer role strain, $z = -1.99, p < .05$, CI 95%: low $-.05$, high: $.00$). In other words, openness with the father, social acceptance and peer role strain better explained the significant difference between heterosexual and LGB youth's SoSB.

In support of Bos et al.'s significant finding for social acceptance, Murdock and Bolch (2005) found social exclusion was significantly correlated with SoSB ($r = -.71, p < .01$). Furthermore, hierarchical regression analysis found social exclusion explained 50% of the variance for SoSB ($F_{\text{change}}(1, 98) = 102.57, p < .01$). Thus, higher social exclusion significantly predicted lower levels of LGB participants' SoSB.

1.3.8.2 Summary of general school atmosphere.

Both of the studies exploring general school atmosphere factors scored a medium quality summative QA score of 10. They included small numbers of LGB participants (Bos et al. (2008), $n = 74$ and Murdock and Bolch (2005), $N = 101$) and found significant relationships between SoSB and variables exploring participants' perceptions of social inclusion versus exclusion at school. It will be important for further research with larger sample sizes to explore the statistical significance and the size of effect of perceived social

inclusion in order to draw firmer generalisable conclusions about its importance with regards to SoSB.

1.3.8.3 LGB-related school atmosphere.

Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008) explored Israeli LGB participants' frequency of exposure to homophobic remarks at school, frequency of exposure to homophobic remarks at specific locations within school, degree of comfort talking about LGB issues, and access to LGB resources within school. Exposure to homophobic remarks is a measure of the LGB-related school atmosphere because it measures the frequency with which participants heard homophobic remarks used in a negative manner around school (e.g., "that's so gay"), compared to remarks aimed towards participants. The authors found that exposure to general homophobic remarks by location within school and the extent to which participants were comfortable talking about LGB issues significantly predicted SoSB using a regression analysis ($B = -.18, p < .01$ and $B = .18, p < .01$ respectively). Interestingly, in terms of the remarks, this prediction was based on the location participants were exposed to the remarks. However, it is not possible to discern which locations within school had the biggest effect as the 'homophobic atmosphere' measure utilised within this study averaged the scores of items for each location (cafeteria, classrooms, empty classrooms, hallways, lavatory, school bus and school grounds). Consequently, it is not clear how the measures for 'exposure to homophobic remarks' and 'exposure to homophobic remarks by location' are different. Yet, frequency of exposure to homophobic remarks at school ($B = .06, p > .05$) was not a significant predictor of SoSB. Access to LGB resources within school (books, $B = -.10, p > .05$; websites, $B = .07, p > .05$; guest lecture, $B = .13, p > .05$; collaborative school, $B = -.04, p > .05$) were also not significant predictors of SoSB. The same results were found when the school atmosphere

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factors were regressed on sense of respect by peers: frequency of homophobic remarks by location ($B = -.19, p < .01$); degree of comfort talking about LGB issues ($B = .17, p < .01$); frequency of homophobic remarks ($B = .07, p > .05$); books ($B = .03, p > .05$); websites ($B = .13, p > .05$); guest lecture ($B = -.04, p > .05$); and collaborative school ($B = .08, p > .05$).

Conversely, Pizmony-Levy et al. (2016) only measured exposure to homophobic remarks (not by location) and found that higher exposure to remarks significantly predicted lower SoSB for both the United States and Israeli participants. This pattern held for both samples after including GV and LGBT-biased victimisation, with higher frequencies predicting lower SoSB (Model 2: US sample, $B = -.152, p < .001$; Israeli sample, $B = -.129, p < .001$). Therefore, the results suggest homophobic atmosphere affects participants' SoSB above and beyond GV. Yet, the analysis may be unreliable because too few items were included to measure the exposure to homophobic remarks factor in both samples (see Raubenheimer, 2004).

Aerts et al. (2012) employed just one item to measure participants' perceived LGB friendliness of their school. The variable was found to be a significant predictor of all participants' SoSB, where the higher the perceived LGB friendliness of the school, the higher the participants' SoSB (male participants: $b = .238, p < .001$; female participants, $b = .106, p < .001$; LGB participants, $b = .367, p < .05$). However, one item is not a robust or reliable measure for a latent factor (Raubenheimer, 2004).

1.3.8.4 Summary of LGB-related school atmosphere.

The measures used to assess LGB-related school atmosphere factors were inadequate and potentially unreliable for all factors except 'frequency of exposure to homophobic remarks' and 'degree of comfort talking about LGB issues' measured within

Pizmony-Levy et al.'s (2008) study. Frequency of exposure to homophobic remarks by location and degree of comfort talking about LGB issues were found to be significant predictors of participants' SoSB. Although other studies measures were not reliable, they did support the findings of Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008) by also finding SoSB was predicted by frequency of homophobic remarks and LGB friendliness (which may be related to degree of comfort talking about LGB issues).

1.3.9 Impact of school achievement

Various aspects of school achievement were measured in four different studies: current school achievement, prior school achievement, educational track, educational expectations, and truancy. Watson and Russell (2016) conducted a cluster analysis of LGB participants to identify potential clusters of achievement based on four academic experience variables (grade point average (GPA), SoSB, school trouble and educational expectations). Results of the analysis revealed two clusters titled engaged ($n = 834$) and disengaged youth ($n = 445$). The clusters significantly differed on all academic experience variables; GPA ($F = 12.83, p < .001$), SoSB ($F = 20.36, p < .001$) school trouble ($F = 17.23, p < .001$) and educational expectations ($F = 26.86, p < .001$), with higher mean scores for the engaged cluster for all variables except school trouble. Although this analysis cannot draw conclusions on the factors that affect SoSB for LGB youth, it does highlight the significance of SoSB. It also highlights potential relationships between SoSB and the academic experience variables, whereby higher GPA and educational expectations, and lower school trouble scores are associated with higher SoSB. Further causal-comparative analysis is needed to better understand the relationship between these variables and their effect on SoSB.

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Murdock and Bolch (2005) used causal-comparative analyses to look at the effect of current and prior GPA on SoSB. They found current but not prior school achievement was significantly correlated with LGB participants' SoSB (current, $b = .30, p < .01$; prior, $b = .12, p > .05$). Unsurprisingly, hierarchical regression analysis revealed prior GPA did not significantly predict SoSB (final model: $b = .01, p > .05$). It is not clear why this analysis took place because a non-significant correlation was found between prior GPA and SoSB and so a regression analysis would yield the same non-significant result. Inopportunately, the regression analysis did not regress current GPA on SoSB despite the significant positive correlation. Therefore, there is a need for future research to perform a regression analysis of current school achievement on SoSB to conclude if it has a significant impact on SoSB.

Poteat et al. (2013) analysed the effect of absenteeism and found a significant negative correlation with SoSB ($r = -.18, p < .001$), suggesting that higher levels of truancy are associated with lower SoSB. The authors also modelled the nested data of participants within schools using a mixed model regression analysis. This revealed that both truancy and SoSB were significantly predicted by participants' sexual orientation, with LGBTQ participants reporting greater levels of truancy and lower SoSB compared to heterosexual youth ($b = -.12, p < .001$ and $b = .26, p < .001$ respectively). However, we cannot infer from this analysis that truancy would significantly predict SoSB as truancy was included as a dependent variable.

Using multiple regression analysis, Aerts et al. (2012) analysed the effect of educational track (the possible routes through the Belgium education system). Educational track was not a significant predictor of SoSB (final model: arts, $b = -.064,$

$p > .05$; technical, $b = -.094$, $p > .05$; vocational, $b = -.349$, $p > .05$). Therefore, the type of educational route chosen did not predict LGB participants' SoSB.

1.3.9.1 Summary of school achievement.

It is possible that current GPA, educational expectations and school trouble are related to SoSB, however, further research is required to establish this association, particularly as the data from Watson and Russell's (2016) study was gathered over 20 years ago. Current GPA was significantly correlated with SoSB in Murdock et al.'s (2005) study, yet, their regression analysis did not measure the effect of current GPA on SoSB and so it is not possible to discern if current GPA significantly predicts SoSB for LGBTQ youth. Thus, again, further research is necessary to establish its predictive power. Similarly, absenteeism was found to be significantly correlated with SoSB but the type of analysis utilised within the study did not allow conclusions to be drawn with regards to its impact on SoSB. Lastly, educational track, did not predict LGB participants' SoSB. Therefore, no firm conclusions can be drawn in relation to the effects of school achievement on SoSB as studies examined various different factors and often conducted analyses that were inappropriate to draw desired conclusions.

1.3.10 Impact of personal support

1.3.10.1 Parent support.

Five studies explored the effect of parental support on participants' SoSB (Watson, Barnett & Russell, 2016; Poteat et al., 2011; Hatchel et al., 2019a; Murdock and Bolch, 2005; Bos et al., 2008). Correlational analyses conducted by Watson et al. (2016) revealed that when heterosexual and LGB participants reported higher parental support, they also reported higher SoSB (heterosexual youth $r = .26$, $p < .01$, LGB youth $r = .30$, $p < .01$). In

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addition, this correlation significantly differed between heterosexual and LGB participants ($p < .05$), whereby the correlation between parental support and SoSB was significantly stronger for LGB youth suggesting a greater role of parental support for this group.

Multiple regression analysis including all participants revealed parent support and sexual orientation were predictors of higher SoSB ($b = .04, p < .001$ and $b = .25, p < .01$ respectively), with higher parent support predicting a higher SoSB. Furthermore, a significant two-way interaction was found between sexual orientation and parent support on SoSB ($b = .01, p < .05$). In order to explore this interaction further, simple slopes were plotted which revealed that at high levels of parental support, heterosexual and LGB participants reported similarly high levels of SoSB, but at low levels of parent support, LGB participants reported significantly lower SoSB (heterosexual participants, $b = .22, p < .001$, LGB participants, $b = .30, p < .001$).

Poteat et al.'s (2011) structural equation mediation model, described previously in relation to GV and LGBT-biased victimisation, also analysed the direct effect of parent support on SoSB. In support of Watson et al.'s (2016) findings, Poteat et al. (2011) found higher levels of parental support predicted higher levels of SoSB for all participants, regardless of race or sexual orientation: heterosexual white youth, $b = .46, p < .01$; heterosexual youth of colour, $b = .34, p < .01$; LGBTQ white youth, $b = .37, p < .01$; and LGBTQ youth of colour, $b = .23, p < .01$. The researchers also tested the moderating effects of parent support between GV and SoSB, and, LGBT-biased victimisation and SoSB. According to the written text, parent support buffered the effect of GV on SoSB only for LGBTQ youth of colour. However, according to the model statistics, a non-significant moderating effect of parent support on the relationship between GV and SoSB was

indicated ($b = .20, p > .05$). Therefore, no firm conclusions can be drawn on the moderating effect of parent support from this study.

Hatchel et al. (2019a) similarly explored the potential moderating effect of parental support. They developed a latent interaction term between GV and parental support, predicting SoSB, where the effect of GV depends on the level of parental support and, inversely, the effect of parental support depends on the level of GV. The model demonstrated good fit, $\chi^2 (64, N = 934) = 176.39, p < .01$, RMSEA = .05 [.044, .057], NFI = .960, CFI = .974. Model 2 revealed a significant effect of parental support on LGBTQ participants' SoSB ($b = .34, p < .01$), however, the interaction effect of parental support x GV on SoSB was not significant ($b = .02, p > .05$). Thus, higher parental support predicts higher SoSB, but does not moderate the effect of GV on SoSB.

Murdock and Bolch (2005) analysed the intercorrelations among the variables examined within their study which revealed a significant positive correlation between parental support and LGB participants' SoSB ($r = .36, p < .01$). Further analysis to explore a possible interaction effect between parental support x school atmosphere on participants' SoSB revealed no additional explained variance for SoSB ($\Delta R^2 = .01, F_{\text{change}} (2, 94) = 1.02, p = .12$). Therefore, the interaction effect of parent support x school atmosphere was non-significant, supporting Hatchel et al.'s (2019a) findings that parental support does not moderate the effect of the school atmosphere on participants' SoSB.

In addition, Murdock and Bolch (2005) examined the contexts experienced by participants and looked at possible groupings within a number of variables: school exclusion, LGB-biased victimisation, teacher support, close friend support, and family support. The authors found four separate clusters and labelled them, 'highly supported', 'low adult support', 'homophobic school, decent support', and 'highly vulnerable'. Scores

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for each factor were converted to z scores and were interpreted as follows; 'low' scores fell below $-.61$, 'below average' scores were between $-.60$ and $-.31$, 'average' scores were between $-.30$ and $+.30$, 'above average' scores were between $+.31$ and $+.60$, and 'high' scores were $+.61$ or above. The scores for each variable in each cluster are detailed in Table 1.10. A MANOVA revealed participants who experienced high levels of social exclusion and LGB-victimisation, and, low levels of teacher, family and close friend support, had significantly lower levels of SoSB. The MANOVA was conducted with cluster as the grouping variable and SoSB as one of the dependent variables which revealed a main effect of cluster, (Wilks' lambda $F(9, 231.36) = 10.39, p < .01$). A significant univariate effect for SoSB was revealed, $F(3, 97) = 22.61, p < .01$. The highly vulnerable group had significantly lower levels of SoSB ($M = 1.62$) than all of the other clusters (low adult support, $M = 2.31$; homophobic school, good support, $M = 2.38$; highly vulnerable, $M = 3.35$).

Table 1.10 *Murdock and Bolch's (2005) Four-Cluster Solution with Interpreted Scores*

Variable	Cluster			
	Highly supported ($n = 37$)	Low adult support ($n = 39$)	Homophobic school, decent support ($n = 12$)	Highly vulnerable ($n = 14$)
Social exclusion	Low	Average	High	High
LGB-victimisation	Below average	Below average	Average	High
Teacher support	High	Low	High	Low
Close friend support	Above average	Average	High	Low
Family support	High	Below average	Average	Low

As discussed previously within the general school atmosphere section, Bos et al. (2008) explored the relationship of SoSB with the parental support variable 'openness with parents' to indicate participants' parent-adolescent relationship. Openness with both parents was significantly correlated with SoSB but for the entire sample, of which only 8.5% ($n = 74$) reported romantic attraction to the same sex, (father, $r = .38, p < .001$ and mother, $r = .33, p < .001$). Yet, only openness with the father significantly predicted SoSB ($b = .21, p < .001$). In addition, openness with father, together with both social acceptance and peer role strain factors, was found to be a better indicator of the difference in SoSB between LGB and heterosexual youth than sexual orientation.

1.3.10.2 Summary of parent support.

All of the studies that explored the direct effect of parent support on SoSB included appropriate measures of parental support with good reliability scores. In addition, they all found significant results, demonstrating that higher parent support predicts higher SoSB. This suggests that parental support is a key factor for SoSB. Four studies also explored the potential moderating effect of parental support for victimisation on SoSB, but found no significant effects. It may be that parent support is only significantly associated with SoSB at low levels of victimisation as was found in Watson et al.'s (2016) study. Consequently, there is a need to explore other possible moderators of victimisation on LGBT youth. The results of Murdock and Bolch's (2005) cluster analysis suggest that it is the combined effects of social exclusion, victimisation and low levels of support that are of particular importance to LGBTQ participants' SoSB.

1.3.10.3 Teacher support.

Murdock and Bolch (2005) utilised an established 6-item subscale to measure teacher support and found the data to be significantly correlated with SoSB ($r = .55, p < .01$). Further analysis using hierarchical regression revealed teacher support significantly predicted LGB participants' SoSB ($b = .32, p < .01$), and together with personal victimisation, it explained an additional 11% of variance ($F_{\text{change}}(2, 96) = 13.77, p < .01$). Similar findings were revealed by Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008) through bivariate correlation analysis which found that teacher support was positively correlated with sense of respect from peers and SoSB. However, the authors used just one item to measure teacher support and the Pearson's r statistic was not reported for the correlation between teacher support and sense of respect from peers. In addition, the correlation reported for teacher support and SoSB was negative, despite the text describing a positive correlation ($r = -.24$); nevertheless, an r statistic of $\pm .35$ or less is considered to be a weak correlation (Taylor, 1990). Additional regression analysis revealed supportive teachers significantly predicted higher sense of respect by peers ($B = .18, p < .01$) but did not significantly predict higher SoSB ($B = .19, p > .05$). Therefore, higher levels of teacher support only predicted an increase in student's sense of respect from peers.

Aerts et al. (2012) explored the effects of teacher support, specifically teacher acceptance of participants' LGB identification, on SoSB. However, teacher acceptance was measured with only one item, and therefore, may not be a valid or reliable measure of teacher acceptance (Raubenheimer, 2004). Nevertheless, Aerts et al. conducted a multiple regression analysis and found acceptance of teachers did not significantly explain more SoSB variance ($b = .080, p > .05$) above peer and teacher victimisation, LGB friendliness of the school and educational track.

1.3.10.4 Summary of teacher support.

Murdock and Bolch (2005) found a significant effect of teacher support on participants' SoSB. They included good measures of both SoSB ($\alpha = .87$) and teacher support ($\alpha = .87$), and received a medium quality QA summative score of 10, however, they had a small sample size of just 101 LGB participants. This limits the ability to generalise their findings. Aerts et al. (2012) also had a relatively small sample of LGB youth ($n = 162$ LGB participants) and included an unreliable measure of teacher support focussing specifically on teacher acceptance of participants' LGB identification (QA = 9). Similarly, Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008) included an unreliable measure of teacher support, though, included a much larger sample size of 298 LGB participants (QA = 11). Of the studies that conducted correlational analyses, both found positive correlations between teacher support and SoSB, thus, we can conclude that teacher support is likely associated with SoSB. However, we cannot be sure to what extent teacher support is a significant predictor of SoSB.

1.3.10.5 Peer support.

The level of support received from peers was measured in two studies (Aerts et al., 2012; Murdock et al., 2005). Aerts et al. (2012) used just one item to measure peer acceptance of participants' sexual orientation. Multiple regression analysis was used to explore the extent to which peer acceptance predicted SoSB. Acceptance of peers yielded a weak negative association but was not a significant predictor of SoSB ($b = -.023, p > .05$). Conversely, Murdock and Bolch (2005) found a significant correlation between close friend support and SoSB ($r = .28, p < .01$), suggesting an increase in peer support would increase SoSB, although directionality cannot be inferred from this analysis. Multiple regression analyses, however, revealed that peer support did not account for any

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additional explained variance in SoSB ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $F_{\text{change}}(2, 94) = 1.02$, $p = .12$), nor did peer support moderate the effects of exclusion of LGB people, or, victimisation for being LGB ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F_{\text{change}}(4, 90) = 1.98$, $p = .10$). Consequently, Murdock and Bolch also found that peer support did not significantly affect LGB participants' SoSB.

1.3.10.6 Summary of peer support.

Although peer support may be correlated with SoSB, regression analyses in both studies revealed insignificant results. However, Aerts et al. (2012) used a potentially invalid measure for peer support and both studies had small sample sizes which marginally met criteria for regression analyses. Therefore, further research with valid and reliable measures and larger sample sizes are required to make any conclusions on the effect of peer support on SoSB.

1.3.11 Impact of gay-straight alliance support

Two studies examined the effect of the presence of gay-straight alliances (GSAs) on LGBTQ participants' SoSB. Poteat et al. (2013) conducted a regression analysis which revealed SoSB was not significantly predicted by the presence of a GSA at school ($b = -.03$, $p > .05$). An interaction effect between GSA and sexual orientation was also analysed, however, this also yielded a non-significant result ($b = .08$, $p > .05$), suggesting that LGBTQ participants' SoSB was not predicted by the presence of a GSA at school.

Effects of the presence of, and membership to a GSA were explored by Toomey and Russell (2013). They found both the presence of a GSA and membership to a GSA was significantly associated with LGBTQ participants' SoSB even after including LGBT-biased victimisation (presence, $b = .35$, $p < .001$; membership, $b = .25$, $p < .01$). In addition, the authors examined the effect of involvement in GSA-related social justice activities on

participants' SoSB. The more involvement in social justice activities, the higher the participants' SoSB ($b = .23, p < .001$). Furthermore, the authors examined whether the presence of a GSA, membership to a GSA and involvement in GSA-related social justice activities could buffer the negative impacts of LGBT-biased victimisation. Neither the presence of, or membership to a GSA significantly moderated the association between LGBT-biased victimisation and SoSB. However, GSA-related social justice activity involvement reportedly did significantly moderate this effect, though no statistics for this analysis were provided. Simple slopes analysis showed that neither the high-involvement group nor the low-involvement group significantly differed from zero ($b = -.06, t = -.90, p > .05$ and $b = -.07, t = 1.55, p > .05$ respectively). Therefore, the groups only differed in SoSB scores at low levels of victimisation, whereby the high-involvement group had significantly higher SoSB than the low-involvement group.

1.3.11.1 Summary of GSA support.

The results of Toomey and Russell (2013) suggest that it is the active involvement in GSA-related activities that has the most impact on participants' SoSB, however, these effects are not able to moderate the impact of LGBT-biased victimisation on SoSB. However, there was no reliability statistic reported for Toomey and Russell's measure for involvement in GSA-related social justice activities. Therefore, no firm conclusions can be drawn.

1.3.12 Impact of suicidal ideation and attempts

Russell and Toomey (2013) and Poteat et al. (2013) both explored the effects of suicidal ideation on SoSB. In a correlation analysis of the factors explored within their study, Poteat et al. (2013) found suicidal ideation and suicide attempts were significantly

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correlated with SoSB for all participants ($r = -.20, p < .001$ and $r = -.11, p < .001$ respectively). Russell and Toomey (2013) conducted regression analyses on data from the Add Health study which began in 1994 to examine the impact of suicidal thoughts on SoSB. They conducted over 60 regression models but only reported the nine models found to be statistically significant. It is also important to note that the researchers did not carry out a Bonferroni correction or similar procedure to adjust for significant effects relative to how many repeated analyses were done. Consequently, the likelihood of making a type one error was high, though, the authors do acknowledge this within their discussion. Nevertheless, Russell and Toomey (2013) reported that LGB youth with suicidal thoughts had significantly lower SoSB than LGB youth who did not report suicidal thoughts and heterosexual youth that did report suicidal thoughts. However, the items comprising the SoSB measure were analysed separately. The statistics reported include only the means for heterosexual and LGB participants, and the effect sizes (see Table 1.11 below).

Table 1.11 *Results of the Effect of Suicidal Thoughts on SoSB (Russell and Toomey, 2013)*

SoSB item	Non-suicidal (0) Suicidal (1)	Heterosexual mean	LGB mean	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Feel close to school	0	3.74	3.66	.05
Feel close to school	1	3.56	3.13	.37
Feel part of school	0	3.86	3.73	.07
Feel part of school	1	3.66	3.16	.39
Feel happy at school	0	3.73	3.69	.02
Feel happy at school	1	3.48	2.96	.39

1.3.12.1 Summary of suicidal ideation and attempts.

The significant findings from Russell and Toomey (2013) are not necessarily reliable due to the analysis conducted which increased the likelihood of a type one error, and the separation of the items comprising the SoSB measure. Though, Poteat et al.'s (2013) findings do support their results and suggest a relationship between suicidal thoughts and attempts, and participants' SoSB. Nevertheless, Poteat et al.'s (2013) correlation was conducted for all participants and may not represent the 5.8% of participants who identified as LGBTQ. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to determine the predictive power of suicidal ideation and attempts on LGBTQ participants' SoSB.

1.3.13 Impact of other factors

Three 'other' factors were explored in relation to participants' SoSB, however, they were explored by only one study each. Pizmony-Levy and Kosciw (2016) compared data collected from US and Israeli participants and found that the US sample ($M = 2.54$) had lower SoSB than the Israeli sample ($M = 2.74$; $t = 6.55$, $p < .001$). This may represent differences in the societal narrative around the LGBTQ population, though, further research is needed to understand this better.

Pizmony-Levy et al. (2008) analysed the effect of being 'out' on SoSB. Regression analysis found outness did not significantly predict SoSB ($B = -.09$, $p > .05$) or sense of respect from peers ($B = -.20$, $p > .05$).

Finally, Stewart et al. (2015) examined the effect of attending religious versus non-religious schools. LGBTQ participants who attended religiously affiliated schools had a

slightly higher mean score for SoSB ($M = 18.52$) compared to the participants who attended a non-religiously affiliated school ($M = 16.52$). However, this difference was not significant ($t = 1.31$, $df = 48$, $p = 0.195$).

1.4 Discussion

1.4.1 Summary of findings

The purpose of this systematic literature review was to investigate the factors that affect SoSB for LGBTQ+ youth. After application of inclusion and exclusion criteria to 67 unique articles, a total of 14 were deemed eligible for inclusion. The studies were of medium to high quality according to their summative scores and they explored the effects of various factors that fit into seven broad categories: victimisation; school atmosphere; school achievement; personal support; GSA support; suicide; and other.

The application of a quality assessment tool enabled the author to consider the level of certainty that pertained to the results within each study. Due to the fact that the majority of studies included within this review focussed on SoSB as an independent variable, the analyses that were relevant for this review (i.e., with SoSB as an independent variable) were often not the focus of each study. Therefore, some degree of caution must be employed when interpreting the findings. Thus, with a fair level of certainty, the included studies were able to reliably answer the review question - the factors 'victimisation', 'school atmosphere', and 'perceived levels of support' significantly impacted LGBTQ+ participants' SoSB. These findings are explored in further detail by each factor below.

Victimisation, both general and LGBT-biased, was found to negatively affect participants' SoSB regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. These findings are consistent with previous research that highlights the harmful impact of victimisation. Poteat and Espelage (2007) found that for any student, being victimised at school can reduce their SoSB. In addition, Poteat, Scheer, DiGiovanni and Mereish (2014), and, Russell, Sinclair, Poteat and Koenig (2012), found that bias-based victimisation had a stronger association with negative outcomes than general victimisation. These findings may be explained by minority stress theory, whereby bias-based victimisation (minority stress), "is additive to general stressors that are experienced by all" (Meyer, 2003, p.4). Thus, minority stress is likely to have a stronger negative impact due to its 'additional' nature. This indicates a clear need to address both general and LGBT-biased victimisation within schools to attend to the significant difference in SoSB between heterosexual and LGBT youth.

The school atmosphere, both LGB-related and not LGB-related, also had significant effects. The more LGB friendly the school, the higher LGBTQ+ participants' SoSB. However, the more exclusionary or peer role strain experienced, the lower participants' SoSB. These findings support previous research detailing the positive effects of inclusive and supportive atmospheres, however, this has not specifically focussed on SoSB. Kelleher (2009) found LGB-related exclusionary and oppressive social environments have negative impacts on LGBTQ youths' psychological wellbeing. In addition, Diaz, Kosciw, & Greytak, (2010), Kosciw, Palmer, Kull, & Greytak (2013), and, Greytak, Kosciw, & Boesen (2013) found inclusive social environments within schools directly related to greater SoSB, as well as lower victimisation, better academic outcomes and decreased absenteeism. Given the positive relationship between positive school climates and SoSB, it will be

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important for future research to establish the degree to which positive school environments may buffer the negative impacts of victimisation. However, it may be that victimisation contributes to aspects of school atmosphere (e.g., peer role strain), as prior research has found associations between victimisation and low peer acceptance (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Fekkes, Pijpers, Fredriks, Vogels, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2006; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). Therefore, further research needs to explore the relationships between victimisation, school atmosphere and SoSB.

Personal support factors, including parent, teacher and peer support were associated with increased SoSB, though, only parent support was found to be a significant predictor of SoSB. Once again, these findings support previous research in related areas: parental support was deemed important for LGB youth's self-acceptance and mental wellbeing (Bowes, Maughan, Caspi, Moffitt, & Arseneault, 2010; Shilo & Savaya, 2011); friend acceptance was important for LGB youth's mental wellbeing and likelihood of disclosure of their LGB status (Shilo & Savaya, 2011); and teacher support was related to lower levels of victimisation and decreased absenteeism (Greytak et al., 2013). These findings may suggest that support from teachers and peers are significantly, but indirectly, associated with increased SoSB through the variables of mental wellbeing, absenteeism and victimisation; though, further research is needed to clarify these relationships. Moreover, despite being a significant predictor, parental support was not able to buffer the effect of victimisation on SoSB. This suggests that in order to ameliorate the effect of victimisation, efforts should be directed in finding other factors that can facilitate higher SoSB, and, in finding effective ways to reduce victimisation in schools.

Similar findings were found for GSA support, where the presence of, membership to, and active involvement in, a GSA were significantly associated with higher SoSB and

active involvement was a significant predictor of increased SoSB. These findings support those of Lee (2002) and Heck, Flentje and Cochran (2013). However, this review found that GSA support was unable to buffer the impact of victimisation on SoSB. Yet, previous research by Diaz et al. (2010) found that having a GSA at school was related to significantly lower levels of victimisation. Thus, although the presence of a GSA may not be able to buffer the effects of victimisation, it may serve to reduce the level of victimisation experienced by LGBTQ youth and increase SoSB.

For the broad category factors of school achievement, suicide and 'other', no firm conclusions could be drawn because each factor was typically explored by just one study. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to conclude their effect on SoSB. Nevertheless, results indicated current school attainment, educational expectations, absenteeism and school trouble may be related to SoSB. Participants' prior school achievement, degree of 'outness' and attendance to religiously affiliated schools did not significantly affect SoSB. Finally, LGBT participants from the United States had significantly lower SoSB compared to LGBT participants from Israel. This may be an effect of culture and/or politics on the societal and school atmosphere, but further research is needed to conclude this reasoning.

1.4.2 Strengths and limitations

1.4.2.1 Strengths and limitations of the included studies.

Overall, the studies attained summative scores indicating medium to high quality. However, the methodological quality of most studies was poor. All studies analysed cross-sectional data, limiting the ability to understand the longitudinal impacts of each factor. All used only one measure for SoSB, with two studies using unreliable SoSB measures, and

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half using invalid or unreliable measures for the factors explored. In addition, the majority of studies focussed on SoSB as an independent variable, with analyses of SoSB as a dependent variable secondary to the research aim. Furthermore, ten out of fourteen studies were conducted within the United States and so the findings may not be generalisable to the UK given that social and cultural factors may affect LGBTQ+ experiences. Yet, all studies appropriately detailed their methods of gathering data and their efforts to reduce bias within participant recruitment. This was particularly important as the target population is hard to reach due to their vulnerability. The sampling methods of half of the studies were mostly opportunistic and utilised snowball sampling, thus, some findings are less generalisable. Yet, seven studies used the data from large-scale studies conducted in schools within the United States so these findings are more representative.

A number of factors were explored that the author fit into broad categories to enable comparison between findings. However, some measures were more or less suited to broad factors. For example, the author included the specific factors of teacher, parent and peer support, within the broad category of personal support. However, teacher and/or peer support may be more closely related to the school atmosphere broad category. This reflects the lack of operationalisation of variables within this field of research. In addition, the author discussed victimisation as a category distinct from social inclusion/exclusion but these factors may not be discrete. Nevertheless, it is important to note that social psychological variables are influenced by many factors which interact, thus, it would not be possible to fully separate all factors into distinct categories (Bardi & Zentner, 2017).

Further research is needed as this is a limited field of enquiry at the present time. Therefore, future research should address the limitations discussed here by focussing on SoSB as a dependent variable, and ensuring reliable and validated measures of SoSB are employed. In addition, longitudinal research is required to establish an understanding of the effects of various factors on SoSB over time. It will also be important to employ sampling methods that ensure proportional representation of different members within the LGBTQ+ population such as stratified sampling.

1.4.2.2 *Strengths and limitations of the review process.*

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were sufficiently stringent to ensure included studies addressed the review question. However, non-English and unpublished papers were excluded which may have affected the main findings had they been included. In addition, it is possible that some studies may have reported relevant findings but they focussed on SoSB as an independent variable instead of a dependent variable. Consequently, these studies may not have been identified in the abstract screening phase. Still, the exclusion criteria were applied to ensure high-quality research was chosen to enable reasonable conclusions to be drawn.

A key strength of this review was the detailed quality assessment of each paper. The Manchester Review Framework was employed to review the strengths and limitations of each paper. The broad nature of the questions included within this framework sometimes guided the author to recognise both strengths and limitations within one section. This level of detail was useful to gain a sense of quality for each of the included studies, but this quality was not necessarily reflected within the summative score. Accordingly, the summative scores from the quality assessment may not accurately represent the quality of each study.

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Despite the frequent reporting of effect sizes, the heterogeneity of measures utilised between studies, the participant sample, and the analytic methods employed, suggests that effect sizes should not be compared between studies (Simpson, 2018). Moreover, effect size does not provide a measure of the effect, rather, “a measure of the clarity of a study” (Simpson, 2018, p. 908).

1.4.3 Implications

The Preventing and Tackling Bullying guidance document (DfE, 2017) which provides the latest advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, does not include LGBTQ+ young people within their list of pupils vulnerable to bullying. The guidance does, however, recommend that school staff are provided with effective training in anti-bullying practices. Yet, it states that schools would need to invest in specialised LGBT anti-bullying training. The findings of this review suggest the Department for Education (DfE) need to recognise LGBTQ+ youth as highly vulnerable to bullying so that school staff can be alert to any issues. Furthermore, to reduce the levels of victimisation in school, teachers should be aware of sexual and gender diversity, and their associated issues. Specialised LGBTQ+ training should, therefore, be mandatory for schools and be provided at a reasonable cost. Specialised training would also serve to inform teachers of the importance of acceptance and support for LGBTQ+ youth.

With adequate support schools should ensure their anti-bullying policy makes specific reference to LGBTQ-biased victimisation and is clear to pupils. The findings of this review also suggest schools should consider the value of creating a ‘LGBTQ+ and allies’ club to foster a SoSB, and potentially reduce levels of victimisation. By creating a club for LGBTQ+ pupils, schools would also promote an inclusive school atmosphere.

Educational Psychologists (EPs) support educational settings to ensure school is a safe place for all pupils through dissemination of evidence-informed practice. Therefore, EPs may be well placed to develop and deliver specialised LGBTQ+ training to schools. EPs could develop a package of LGBTQ support, including guidance on developing anti-bullying policies focussing on LGBTQ+ youth, delivery of whole-staff training on LGBTQ issues and information, and LGBTQ sessions directly to students. In addition, EPs could study the impact of such support. EPs may also be well placed to extend previous findings on victimisation, support and school atmosphere factors, and their effects on SoSB.

1.4.4 Conclusion

Sense of belonging is described as a fundamental human need, and school belonging is defined as the sense of acceptance in school, and respect from teachers and peers. However, LGBTQ+ youth typically report lower levels of school belonging than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that impact LGBTQ+ youth's SoSB so that effective policies and practices can be developed to enhance their SoSB. This review identified victimisation as a strong predictor of lower SoSB for LGBTQ+ pupils and, therefore, highlights victimisation as a key factor to address. Furthermore, support from parents, peers, teachers and GSAs, and a positive school atmosphere, were associated with higher levels of SoSB. Consequently, the DfE, educational settings and EPs need to focus their efforts on facilitating teacher and peer support, reducing victimisation and creating LGBTQ+ friendly school atmospheres to ensure schools are places within which all young people can find a place to belong.

Chapter 2 An Exploration of the Views and Experiences of Transgender Youth in Secondary Education

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Sex and gender

Sex is typically a “determination made through the application of socially agreed biological criteria for classifying persons as males or females” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, pp. 127); i.e. XX or XY chromosomes and observable primary sexual characteristics. Deceptively straightforward as they are, such methods of sex classification are not possible in everyday life, therefore, individuals must rely upon other visual, auditory and behavioural displays to categorise others as biologically female or male. The need to identify the sex of others may be due to the ubiquitous use of sex to order social life (Bem, 1981, Fagot & Leinbach, 1989; Kachel, Steffens, & Niedlich, 2016). However, this assumes that one’s gender is fixed and associated with distinct characteristics. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013, p. 1) reminds us that, “gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs and our desires that it appears to us to be completely natural.” But perhaps, as Bem (1981) argued 39 years ago, “human behaviours and personality attributes should cease to have gender, and society should stop projecting gender into situations irrelevant to genitalia” (p. 363).

Historically, according to West and Zimmerman’s (1987) seminal paper, everyone ‘does gender’. ‘Doing gender’ traditionally involves dressing, behaving and interacting in a manner that expresses one’s sex (Lorber, 1994; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Thus, gender is not an essential characteristic of all humans, rather, gender is a social construct that

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emerges through interaction with others (Johnson, 2015; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Consequently, individuals cannot engage in behaviour without the prospect of gender assessment, that is, a judgement of their sex (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender is binarised into the categories of male and female with an implicit societal expectation that one's biological sex should predict (and be congruent with) their gender expression (Burdge, 2007; Lorber, 1994; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This is also known as cisnormativity and is not a new issue. However, gender is a continually renegotiated construct (Burdge, 2007; Lorber, 1994; Martin & Jurik, 2006); for example, previously, grooming of body hair was considered feminine behaviour, however, it is now accepted that males regularly groom their body hair (Miller, 2018).

Recently, new models of gender have arisen that challenge the traditional gender norms. Killermann (2017) developed a model of gender that depicts a person's sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation as existing independently of one another. In the latest version of this model, known as The Genderbread Person v4, each of these aspects are presented on two continua enabling gradations from 'lack of woman-ness' to 'woman-ness' and 'lack of man-ness' to 'man-ness' (see Figure 2.1). In addition, these gradations may change over time rather than being fixed characteristics (Whittle, Turner, Al-Alami, Rundall, & Thom, 2007).

The Genderbread Person v4 by its pronounced METROsexual.com

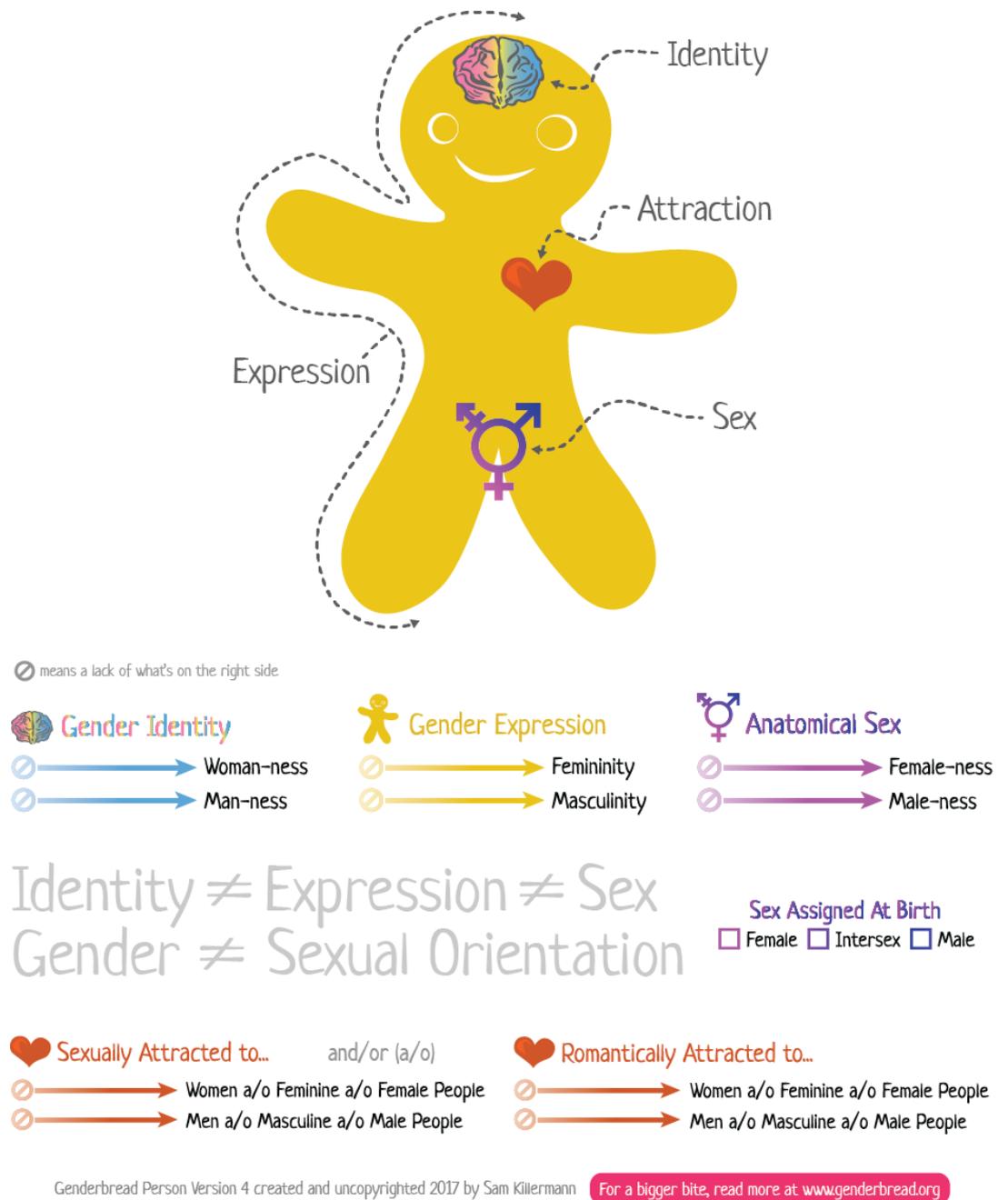


Figure 2.1 *The Genderbread Person v4*

According to this model, there are four main characteristics that define a person's sense of self: gender *identity* refers to the psychological sense of self; gender *expression* denotes the way in which one presents their gender identity through clothing, grooming and behaviour; anatomical sex refers to the characteristics associated with biological sex,

such as hormones and genitalia; and sexual orientation indicates attraction (Gires, 2019; Killerman, n.d.; Shields, 2008). Thus, “gender is not sex, and sex is not gender” (Sheridan, 2009, p.2). One group which embody this distinction is the transgender population.

2.1.2 Defining transgender

The term ‘trans’ is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth; this includes trans men, trans women, non-binary, cross-dressers, drag performer, androgynous, genderqueer, gender variant and differently gendered people (Stonewall, n.d.a; Haynes & Schweppe, 2017). Transgender individuals challenge the traditional gender binary model in that their sex and gender identity are incongruent (Burdge, 2007). In contrast, ‘cisgender’ is a term often used to describe those who can more easily conform to traditional gender norms (Cava, 2016). Schneider (2010) noted that different members of the trans community will experience exclusive societal challenges based upon their gender identity and expression and, therefore, research exploring one group (e.g., trans men and women) will not necessarily have relevance for other trans individuals (e.g., non-binary or androgynous).

The current research focuses on the binary trans community (i.e. trans men and trans women). Binary transgender individuals typically undergo a process of social transition whereby steps are taken to bring their presentation in line with their gender identity (Gires, 2019; Stonewall, n.d. a). This process often includes informing friends and family, adopting a new name and pronouns, and dressing in the normative clothing of their gender identity. Their transition may or may not be supported by medical intervention (Gires, 2019).

In addition to not always acknowledging within group differences within the trans population, the research literature has often conflated lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons as one population. This may be due to the widely held belief that sexuality and gender are inextricably linked dichotomous variables; male and female, masculine and feminine (Burdge, 2007; Burns, Leitch, & Hughes, 2016; Haynes & Schweppe, 2017; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). However, the 'T' in LGBT research is often underrepresented (McBride & Schubotz 2017; Renn, 2010), and whilst some LGB research may be relevant to trans individuals, this will not always be the case (Schimmel-Bristow et al., 2018). It is important to highlight that LGB identification is related to sexual orientation, not gender identity (Burdge, 2007), thus, transgender individuals experience unique challenges in that they are seeking a different gender identity.

Transgender individuals are one of the most marginalised and oppressed populations in society (Sausa, 2005; Seelman, 2014). They are subjected to greater discrimination, victimisation and hate crimes compared to non-trans individuals based on the perception of others who believe they have transgressed gender norms (Burgess, 1999; Dugan, Kusel & Simounet, 2012; Haynes & Schweppe, 2017; Jamel, 2018; McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Sausa, 2005). Therefore, researchers have suggested that trans-hate is a means of enforcing gender norms that we so heavily rely upon to order society (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013; Haynes & Schweppe, 2017). Our reliance on gender as a way of ordering life may explain why the consequences of transgressing gender norms are greater than the consequences of transgressing sexual orientation norms. Experiences of transphobia can lead to trauma and significant mental health difficulties (Mizock & Lewis, 2008), and a recent study by Bachmann and Gooch (2018) found more than two thirds of trans respondents had experienced depression and/or anxiety in the last year.

Furthermore, the number of transgender suicide attempts is much higher than the rates for non-transgender people (Bachmann & Gooch, 2018; Maguen & Shipherd, 2010). This research evidences a clear need to conduct trans-focussed research that seeks to identify their unique experiences of seeking a different gender identity.

2.1.3 The transgender population

It is estimated that there are approximately 200,000-600,000 trans people within the UK (Equalities Office, n.d.; Stonewall, n.d.b). However, it is likely that this is an underestimate as some trans people choose to conform to traditional gender norms in order to prevent discrimination and victimisation (Linville, 2011; McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Toomey et al., 2012). Whilst an accurate figure is currently unavailable, an additional question is proposed for the 2021 census which may enable a more accurate figure. However, the proposed question is aimed at individuals aged 16 and over, and therefore, will not represent young people under the age of 16 despite gender identity development being secure by the age of 8 (Martin & Ruble, 2004; O'Keefe & Hyde, 1983). Nevertheless, it is possible to review the number of referrals made to the Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS, n.d.), a specialised clinic within the UK commissioned by the NHS for young people experiencing gender dysphoria. Over the past five years, the number of referrals has increased by 282% (see

Table 2.1) and in the past year, 86% of referrals in England were for youth between the ages of 11-16.

Table 2.1 Gender Identity Development Service Referral Figures in the UK

Financial Year	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Total number of referrals	678	1361	1919	2444	2590

2.1.4 Transgender youth

As has been found with trans adults, higher levels of victimisation in trans youth have been correlated with increased levels of depression, suicide ideation and attempt, mental health difficulties, substance misuse, and decreased self-esteem (Fedewa & Ahn, 2011; Kosciw et al., 2012; Russell et al., 2011). However, trans youth experience additional stressors in comparison to trans adults such as ageism, lack of parental and family support, and violence and discrimination at school (Day, Perez-Brumer, & Russell, 2018; Hatchel et al., 2019; Jones & Hillier, 2013; Sausa, 2003). A survey including 594 trans young people aged from 11 to 19 years, found 51% were bullied for being trans, 33% didn't feel safe in their school, 51% had skipped school due to bullying, 84% had self-harmed and 45% had attempted to take their own life (Bradlow. Bartram, Guasp, & Jadva, 2017).

Due to feelings of depression and lack of safety at school, trans youth are more likely to truant single lessons and whole school days, resulting in reduced attendance at school and lower academic attainment which can have a profound impact upon their future lives (Kosciw et al., 2012; Kosciw et al., 2018; Day et al., 2018). Given trans youth

are at greater risk compared to trans adults, there is a need for research that seeks to identify the factors that both lead to and prevent negative outcomes.

2.1.5 Transgender and the social model

One potential factor impacting on trans youth outcomes is the extent to which they feel a sense of belonging. Due to traditional gender norms, trans youth may be experiencing lower levels of belonging, which may be contributing to their increased likelihood of mental health difficulties. However, the aetiology of being transgender is often considered of a biological or psychological origin (Coolhart, Provancher, Hager, & Wang, 2008; Nolan, Kuhner, & Dy, 2019; Zucker, 2017). Recent changes to the diagnostic labels within the DSM-5 and ICD-11 have aimed to move the trans narrative away from that of a mental illness through the removal of the term 'disorder' (Johnson, 2015; WHO, n.d.). Yet, the new diagnostic labels position the feeling of gender dysphoria or incongruence as "resulting from a lack of access to medical interventions rather than the social consequences of gender ideology, transphobia, or cissexism" (Johnson, 2015, p. 804). In other words, gender dysphoria may be alternatively explained utilising a social model whereby the social construction of traditional gender norms and associated gender expectations lead to feelings of gender dysphoria. Thus, the associated risks of mental health difficulties may be due to a deficit in a sense of belonging within societies that enforce traditional gender norms.

Belonging is a fundamental human motivation that drives emotion and behaviour (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). According to Leary (2010) belonging is described as acceptance by a group of individuals and according to Linehan (1997), validation is important to convey acceptance. Consequently, it is important that individuals are

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accepted and validated as their true selves in order to fulfil their need to belong. Deficits in belonging have been linked to both psychological and physical health issues which may explain the higher rates of mental health difficulties in the transgender population.

'Treatments' such as conversion therapy explicitly invalidate gender diverse individuals and have been condemned as unethical because of their association with severe psychological distress (Bernal & Coolhart, 2012; Olson, Durwood, DeMeules, & McLaughlin, 2016; Riggle, Rostosky, McCants & Pascale-Hague, 2011; Turban, Beckwith, Reisner, & Keuroghlian, 2020). Thus, belonging may also explain why enabling a young person to transition is considered an appropriate and effective method of intervention for gender dysphoric individuals, alongside counselling and psychotherapy (Butler, De Graaf, Wren, & Carmichael, 2018; NHS, 2020).

Olson-Kennedy et al. (2016) highlighted the need to examine the social environments of transgender youth to recognise the possible ameliorative support mechanisms. However, only a small number of published studies have explored trans youths' experience of their school environments during their gender transition. Furthermore, only two studies have been conducted within the UK. Research undertaken within the USA and Australia revealed transgender youth were more likely to experience harassment and victimisation, inadequate sex education, and highly gendered school environments (Day et al., 2018; Jones, Smith, Ward, Dixon, Hillier & Mitchell 2016; McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell 2010; Sausa 2005; Schimmel-Bristow et al., 2018). They also found peer and school staff support, and GSAs were viewed as protective factors against victimisation and hostile school climates. Burns et al. (2016) explored factors that affected educational equality from the perspective of two trans students, three parents and two trans advocates in the UK. The barriers for participants included

gender stereotyping, transphobic bullying, peer exclusion and school absenteeism. Similarly, McBride and Schubotz's (2017) study explored the experiences of 15 transgender youth in the UK and found homophobic and transphobic name calling to be greater for trans youth compared to their non-transgender peers. In addition, hetero-/cis-normative policies were found to negatively impact trans youths' school experiences. Both of these studies referred to the need for trans-inclusive education to be part of school curricula, as well as trans-inclusive policies and flexibility in school practices. What the research to date does not explicitly explore are the factors that support and hinder an overall positive school experience. A nuanced understanding of these factors combined with effective policies and practices could ameliorate the negative outcomes experienced by trans youth. Thus, the current study asks young people directly about their views and experiences of transition within secondary education in the UK. The research question for the present study is: What are the views and experiences of transgender youth in secondary education?

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Design

The researcher took a social constructionism epistemological stance whereby "reality is socially defined but this reality refers to the subjective experience of everyday life, how the world is understood rather than to the objective reality of the natural world" (Andrews, 2012, p 40). This subjective, socially defined, reality is understood through the use of language which enables the development of shared meaning and understanding (Burr 1998). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were employed to elicit rich qualitative data relating to the views and experiences of transgender young people. The

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knowledge and understanding of these factors can be shared in the hope of developing a redefined social understanding of gender which may lead to positive social action (Burr, 2006).

Interviews, rather than focus groups, were chosen due to the sensitive nature of the research topic as they provide confidentiality and anonymity (Longhurst, 2003). In addition, separate interviews enabled each participant to explore the issues that they felt were important in contrast to discussing shared views and experiences of a group (Longhurst, 2003). The interviews lasted between 17 - 38 minutes ($M = 26$ minutes and 7 seconds).

2.2.2 Participants

Ten transgender participants between the ages of 13 – 16 years ($M = 15$) were recruited through opportunity sampling. Saunders et al.'s (2018) critical reflection on the concept of saturation questioned its 'gold standard' positioning in assessing the quality of qualitative research and its relevance to different approaches. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether a study has met saturation due to its lack of operationalisation. Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, (2017) "found code saturation was reached at nine interviews, whereby the range of thematic issues was identified" (p. 591). Accordingly, 10 participants were recruited. All participants were in attendance of a charity weekend residential in the United Kingdom led by Mermaids. Mermaids is a charity that works to support young people who are transgender or gender variant, and their families, to enable young people to freely explore their gender identity, feel empowered and to provide a sense of community (Mermaids, n.d.). Mermaids agreed to provide access to participants with no conditions; they had no vested interest in this piece of research.

Parental consent and participant assent were required for participants under the age of 16 years whereas participants aged 16 were able to provide consent. Most participants identified as male ($n = 8$), one participant identified as female and one participant was comfortable being identified as either male or female at the time of the study, though, they wanted to identify as female in future. Three participants lived in England and seven lived in Scotland. No other participant information was gathered such as additional labels or diagnoses as they were not the focus of this thesis. However, participants were free to disclose any information they felt was relevant to the focus of this research – the views and experiences of trans youth in secondary education.

2.2.3 Materials

Two audio recording devices were used to record the interviews to reduce the risk of data corruption or error. The interviewer used a copy of the interview schedule (see Appendix E) which included questions to explore the views and experiences of participants, in particular, the positive and negative aspects of their school experience. It was thought that by taking a holistic approach to questioning participants, a greater understanding would be gained to determine suitable implications. The interview schedule was devised in collaboration with a young transgender adult who had completed their secondary education. Suggestions were made to the terminology within, and structure of, the questions to facilitate a conversational interaction between interviewer and participant. The trans young adult believed the changes would help to ease any tension or discomfort experienced by participants, and enable participants to discuss what was relevant and significant to and for them. All suggestions were applied to the interview schedule.

2.2.4 Ethical considerations

It was important to consider the ethical issues related to this study, mainly, the vulnerability of participants who are part of a highly marginalised and oppressed population. In addition, the potential power imbalance created by the use of interviews and the interpretation of participants voices from the perspective of a cisgender researcher. Consequently, the researcher aimed to address these concerns in a number of ways. Firstly, the researcher attended a charity weekend residential where participants received social and emotional support, and, the ability to be open about their gender identity without fear of judgement or rejection. Thus, participants were likely to feel most comfortable in this setting. The researcher also prepared participants by explaining the purpose of the study, with the support of the Participant Information Sheet, and had procedures in place for participants who experienced psychological discomfort. This included ending the interview with a focus on the positive views and experiences discussed and, if needed, speaking with the participant's parent to inform them that the conversation was difficult at times and the participant may need support to emotionally recover after the interview. Furthermore, the researcher had spoken with a trans young adult to create an interview schedule that would facilitate a comfortable and friendly discussion with a close to equal balance of 'power'.

The researcher was fully aware of her potential subjectivity as a female cisgender individual and held this in mind prior to collecting data, during the interviews, and throughout the analysis and write-up. The researcher was open about her gender identity with participants and offered mini summaries during the interviews to ensure she had understood the information provided in the way intended by the participant. The

researcher kept a journal to document decisions and reflect on these throughout the research project in order to minimise potential bias.

Participants were not given pseudonyms within this study; thus, it may appear that these young people are 'faceless'. However, this decision was made in order to protect their anonymity which is often the first line of defense for trans young people, as details such as the charity organisation and the general area in which the residential weekend took place have been disclosed within this paper. Consequently, providing the gender or diagnoses of participants may have affected their anonymity. Therefore, it was important that the researcher put in place necessary precautions to protect participants' safety.

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Southampton School of Psychology Ethics Committee and Research Governance (see Appendix F).

2.2.5 Procedure

At the weekend residential, the researcher delivered a presentation of their study to parents of transgender youth. The presentation outlined the nature of the study, reasons for the young people to take part and the intention of the author to publish the study. Parents were given an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the presentation and were invited to inform their young people.

Interested participants visited the researcher in the room allocated to interviews within the residential setting and were provided an information sheet and consent form, or assent form for those aged under 16, prior to the start of their interview. Parents of participants under 16 years of age were also provided with an information sheet and consent form. Both were given enough time to read and ask questions prior to signing the forms if they wished to take part. Participants were given the choice of completing the

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interview independently or with a parent present; two participants opted to have their parent attend with them. Audio recording began when participants stated they were ready.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher welcomed the participant and introduced herself. The consent forms were reviewed, and the researcher checked that the young person remained willing to take part. Participants were reminded that the interviews would be recorded, and that the audio data would be deleted after transcription. In addition, participants were reminded that their data would be kept confidential and anonymised. The researcher used the interview schedule as a guide for each interview and used prompts to elicit further details where appropriate. At times of misunderstanding or confusion, interview questions were reworded.

At the end of each interview, participants were asked if they wished to discuss anything else related to the study topic. Once recordings were stopped, participants were given a debrief statement including the researcher's details to withdraw from the study if desired (no participants withdrew). Participants were also provided with a £10 Amazon voucher to compensate and thank them for their time and effort. Protective measures, such as speaking with the participant's parent to notify them of the uncomfortable nature of our discussions, were utilised when necessary to protect the psychological wellbeing of participants.

2.2.6 Analysis

The author manually transcribed and anonymised each interview recording prior to its deletion. The transcripts were analysed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis (TA) from a social constructionism perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher

followed Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2019; 2020), Clarke and Braun's (2018), and Clarke, Braun and Hayfield's (2019) iterative six-stepped guidance for reflexive thematic analysis using the software program N-Vivo 12: they conducted the interviews; transcribed the data; generated initial codes for each relevant piece of information within the transcripts, some of which were thought of at the time of the interviews; actively created themes through reflexive analysis of the codes (Clarke & Braun, 2018; DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000); reviewed each theme together with their supervisors; defined each theme; and reported the findings.

It is important to note that the author employed a 'Big Q' or 'reflexive' TA approach (rather than a 'Small Q' – qualitative positivist - TA) which sought to encourage researcher subjectivity in order to develop 'fully realised' themes that uncovered the central organising concepts of the data, rather than 'domain summaries' (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2020). This required the researcher's immersion and active engagement during analysis of the data (Clarke & Braun, 2018) which aligns with "the values of a qualitative paradigm, centring researcher subjectivity, organic and recursive coding processes, and the importance of deep reflection on, and engagement with the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 593). Thus, the researcher brought their prior experience and knowledge into the analysis of the data but with full awareness of their subjectivity with regards to their cisgender identity in order to minimise bias (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The researcher kept a reflexive journal to document their decisions throughout analysis of the data which was shared with their supervisors and continuously reflected upon. The thematic map went through a series of iterations before finalisation (see Appendix H).

2.3 Results

Participants studied within either the English or Scottish secondary education system and, therefore, participants referred to their education system using the relevant terms; for example, 'S3' for their third year of secondary school, equivalent to Year 10 in England. For ease of comparison, the participants' school years are outlined here using the English school system: one participant was in year 9, two participants were in year 10, three were in year 11, three were in year 12 and one was in year 13.

The researcher actively generated one overarching theme from analysis of the ten interview transcripts using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2019; Clarke & Braun, 2018); 'Acceptance and Validation' (see Figure 2.2).

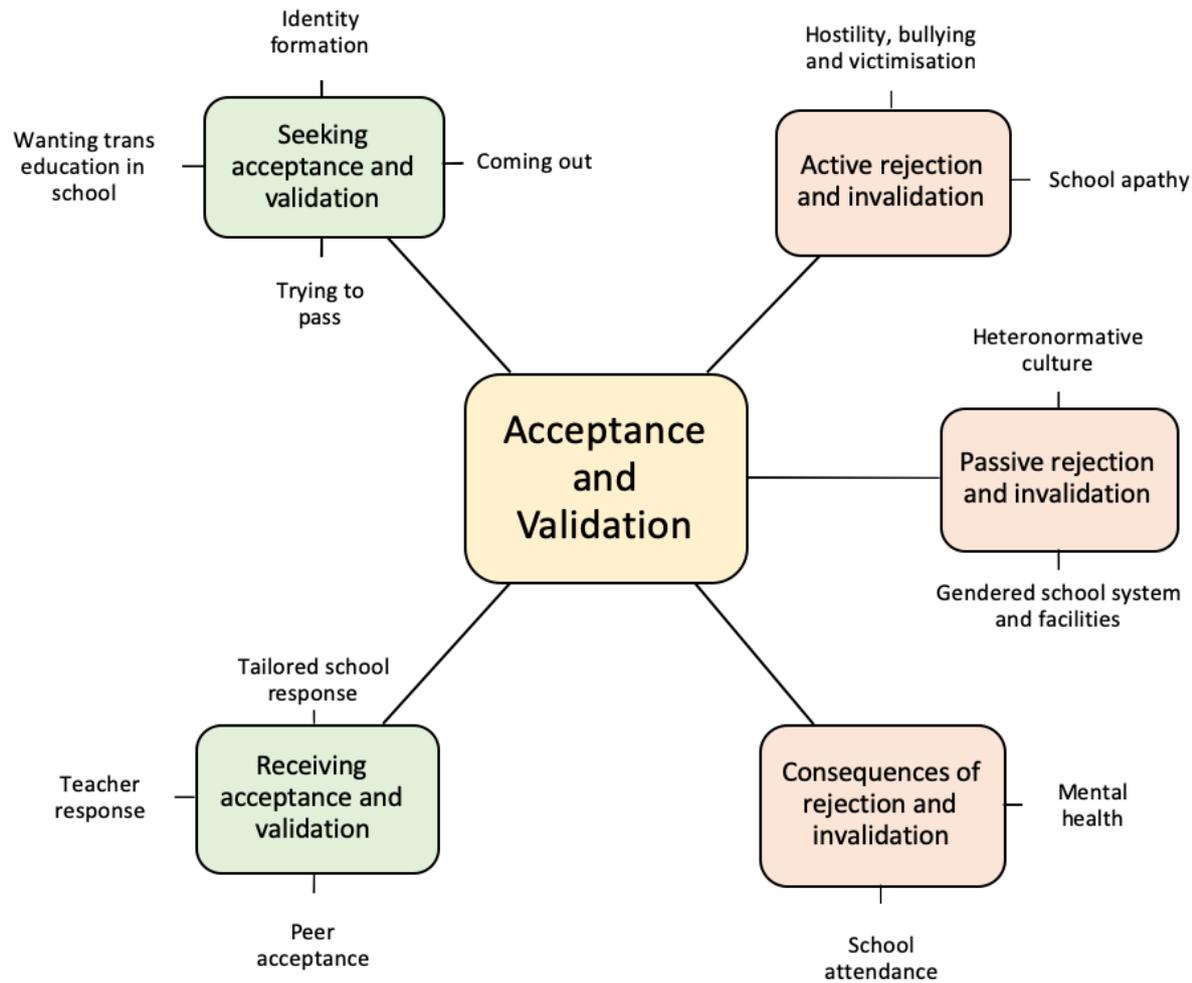


Figure 2.2 *Thematic Map Including the Overarching Theme, Main Themes and Sub-Themes Created Through the Process of Thematic Analysis*

It appeared that central to participants' views and experiences of attending secondary school were the core concepts of 'Acceptance and Validation'. Participants expressed their desire to be accepted by school staff and their peers which, in turn, provided them with a sense of gender validation. Their views and experiences within this overarching theme were broken down into five main themes: 'seeking acceptance and validation'; 'receiving acceptance and validation'; 'active rejection and invalidation'; 'passive rejection and invalidation'; and 'consequences of rejection and invalidation'.

2.3.1 Theme one: Seeking acceptance and validation

2.3.1.1 Subtheme: Identity formation.

The act of coming out as transgender was described as a process rather than a single time point through which participants formed their identity and sought to receive acceptance and validation. The process typically began with internal dissonance which created the need for an explanation and better understanding of the self. However, the way in which participants learned of the ability to transition gender differed, and most participants believed that the concept of being transgender was not widely known or understood. Nevertheless, once the term 'transgender' was learned, most participants shared that they conducted their own research (usually online as this provided privacy) to further understand what being transgender meant. Finding the 'answer' that they were transgender seemed to help participants understand themselves, feel more normalised and gain the confidence to explain their experience to others. Participants 4 and 2 provided details of their experiences that supported their identity formation:

It was actually taught, one, we had one class, one class on LGBT and they mentioned transgender for like a split second and then I went home and then we searched because when they were talking about like feeling like trapped in your, like this is the body that you have biologically, not feeling like that's who you are, that's not your gender really... And I just felt like that was, that is exactly how I feel and I went and did more research before I was going to come out or anything like that because I didn't want to come out and then be like I'm not actually, I'm just confused

(Participant 4).

Yeah I really had to sort of do my own research and figure things out and I guess that's how I sort of started to come to terms with it more because I did more research on like the science sort of side of being trans, like how your gender's developed and that sort of thing because it gave me a lot more confidence in myself and my own identity to know that there was scientific proof that I existed (**Participant 2**).

2.3.1.2 Subtheme: Coming out.

Prior to coming out, many participants noted the importance of researching and becoming familiar with the legal rights for transgender individuals. Participants felt that acquiring knowledge of their rights would increase their ability to explain their identity and, in turn, increase the likelihood of their friends and family accepting and validating them. Participant 1 shared:

Get as much information as you can. Because there's certain points where you feel, like definitely research about what rights you have in schools, what places in public, what laws protect you because that kinda thing is really important and it gives you a lot of confidence to go into school knowing that you're safe and that if someone does harm you they are responsible and they can legally be put in court and stuff like that (**Participant 1**).

Social acceptance issues related to sex, gender identity and stereotypes, seemed to impact the timing of when participants chose to come out. Some participants hid their gender dysphoria and waited until later in life to come out when they believed they would be better accepted. Participant 9 shared their reflection on the timing of coming

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out, “maybe I could [have] come out earlier, when I was like, when I knew... or come out after school... I wouldn’t have been bullied as much.” Participant 5 also shared their experience of hiding their gender identity:

Can you remember when you first began to socially transition, like who you told? Or?” (Interviewer). “Socially well, it’s kind of a weird one because when I was like 8 years old... Like I was like so like adamant that like I wanted to be male... Like I was telling everyone like ‘oh I want my name to be X’ and like yeah. But then like, because I was like, I was scared, I just kinda like put it behind me, but like I knew I still wanted it, but like I kinda just put it behind me until like I hit year 9 (**Participant 5**).

Many participants appeared to experience a tension between ongoing gender dysphoria and the overwhelming pressure to conform to gendered expectations. These participants shared that after suppressing their thoughts and feelings for some time, they eventually felt a strong need to come out to alleviate gender dysphoria which outweighed the pressure to conform to gendered expectations. For example, Participant 1 shared, “I started thinking about maybe I should come out because pronouns and that were starting to get on top of me and being called like a boy and stuff like that was really affecting me”. In order to maximise the likelihood of receiving acceptance from others, participants chose the timing of coming out carefully. Considerations were given to the time in the school year, to the perceived inclusivity of the school that they currently attended and to how they wanted to come out:

I think it was because I was going to leave, the timing was good, so everyone had sort of the whole summer to come round to it and like know if you know what I mean, all my pals had that time to think about it

and that, so I think it was good in that respect that they had all summer because I didn't see some of them for the full summer, so it had, it gave them the chance to have the seven weeks to think about it so **(Participant 3)**.

I guess, I started to really think about it sort of first year of high school... Is when, because that was the first sort of chance I got to actually think about it more openly because this high school that I'm going to is a lot better than what my primary school was. It's a much more accepting place and it's much more open... They [school] like got a bunch of guidance teachers and our year of head and our head teacher to like go around classrooms and read out this note I'd prepared, this little short paragraph I'd written before and emailed off to the school and said 'hey can you read this out to everyone in my class' **(Participant 2)**.

However, some participants experienced unexpected complications when planning to come out such as premature school use of their new name and concerns that coming out before a school trip would complicate sleeping arrangements. This suggests that participants felt at risk of losing control of how and when they would come out. For example, Participant 6 shared:

Yes, so it's, I came I socially transitioned at the start of S3 erm it had been postponed because of a trip to New York, I was supposed to come out in the June which is the change of timetables." (Participant 6). "Mm hmm." (Interviewer). "And, but there's a trip that I was going on to New York erm and I'd be sharing a room with a girl and they said that I couldn't come out because erm their parents might ask questions about why there

was someone who identifies as a man sharing a room with a girl

(Participant 6).

2.3.1.3 Subtheme: Trying to pass.

Most participants did not identify as 'trans male' or 'trans female' when asked for their gender; rather, they stated simply male or female. These participants wanted to be viewed, treated, accepted and validated as the gender with which they identified rather than as a 'trans' individual. Therefore, one main concern participants expressed was related to 'passing' as their identified gender in everyday life. In other words, if they visually appeared as their identified gender to others. If participants were misgendered (identified as their assigned sex rather than the gender with which they identified) they experienced negative emotions including gender dysphoria. For some participants, there was a strong sense of avoiding exposure as being a trans young person as they wished to be recognised only as the gender with which they identified, i.e. male or female.

Participant 4, "It was really hard because I would get misgendered a lot and it could just, it would ruin a day, completely ruin a day for me." This was echoed by participants 7 and 5:

Erm when like you don't really feel like you pass enough as like a guy or something because all the other ones are really tall they really deep voices with veins sticking out their arms and stuff ha ha and I'm just sitting there like 'oh' like half half the height of everyone and like really squeaky voice **(Participant 7).**

If I'm going to the swimming pools like they're asking me why I'm wearing a err like a rash vest you know like a top a swimming top, I'm like

‘oh I’ve had like acid burns’ or like... I’d rather say anything like that other than [say I’m trans] **(Participant 5)**.

2.3.1.4 Subtheme: Wanting trans education in schools.

In order to increase trans acceptance and validation, and also acceptance for all members of the LGBTQ+ community, participants suggested that schools should educate pupils about sexual and gender diverse individuals. In doing so, participants believed that schools would increase understanding, reduce concerns and increase the likelihood of acceptance for all LGBTQ+ individuals from both staff and pupils. In addition, through education of LGBTQ+ issues, participants felt that the feelings of young people experiencing confusion with regards to their sexuality or gender identity could be normalised. Moreover, they felt that young people may spend less time feeling different as they will have the language and understanding to explain their emotions. Participant 2 felt people should be, “Listening and educating themselves and educating people at school and trying to push for more, not just trans rights but LGBT rights.” Participants 3 and 4 echoed these views:

Yeah more education, I think there needs to be education on LGBT things from a young age... like in primary schools, so that these kids understand that it’s okay to be you and be whoever you want to be, and they accept other people for it because it’s easier to change a child’s mindset **(Participant 3)**.

Because they don’t ever really talk that much about LGBT, it’s always like, they taught one class on it and then it’s, the rest of it’s just about drugs and alcohol... so I really wish they’d just talked about it more... because if

they hadn't done that one class I'd have probably never known

(Participant 4).

2.3.2 Theme two: Receiving acceptance and validation

2.3.2.1 Subtheme: Tailored school response.

The participants who felt accepted and validated at school by both the staff and their peers had often experienced highly individualised support when they came out to school. A tailored school response involved staff asking the young person what they wanted to happen and, importantly, the staff would listen carefully so that they could apply the young person's views by tailoring the school's approach to supporting them. This was important to participants because each trans young person had different wants, needs and views; therefore, it was key that the school provided support with which the young person would feel comfortable. Participants who were provided with the opportunity to have autonomy over the way in which they would come out, the support to be put in place, and any changes to be made in school, felt accepted and conveyed a positive view of the school's response. In contrast, schools who appeared to have a set process for responding to participants coming out as transgender created feelings of worry and confusion amongst the participants. Some participants had a clear sense of what they wanted to happen in relation to informing their peers, for example participant 9 shared, "I wanted like an assembly not just for me but for other people because there's, there is a few [LGBT students]." (Interviewer) "Okay and did that happen?" (Participant 9) "No." Other participants were not as certain in the type of actions they wanted the school to undertake, but they valued having the options put forward and the opportunity to

accept or decline them. Participants 2, 6 and 7 highlighted the need to be heard by school staff:

So, they were really really listening to me and I really appreciated that, that they, because I had a much more solid idea of how I wanted to come out, when I wanted to come out, why I wanted to come out. Like all these different reasons and they listened to that and they understood that and took it in and, and were really really good about it **(Participant 2)**.

I would have like them to have been a bit more respectful of my opinions and of my where I was at... 'cause I just wanted to erm have access to the male toilet which I didn't think was that big an issue, erm and it's not but that's what it's turned in to ha ha **(Participant 6)**.

And then she was saying that 'oh we've done this before so we know what we're doing' and erm and at one point you said *looking at parent* 'yes well you haven't done this for like my child so you have to get it right for them and like all the other kids' **(Participant 7)**.

2.3.2.2 Subtheme: Peer acceptance.

Most participants had received supportive attitudes and behaviour from their close friends and peers which contributed to the participant's sense of acceptance and validation at school. Participants appreciated peers who were curious, yet, well-meaning, and those with whom they could have 'normal' conversations. For example, "a lot of people started their questions by saying 'I don't want to sound rude but' and then asked the question that wasn't in any way rude and they were, the people at school are lovely" (Participant 6). Such normalisation fostered a sense of belonging amongst their peers. In

addition, participants valued peers who made an effort to use the correct pronouns and names, and peers who were willing to accept their pronoun and name mistakes in a humble manner without excessively apologising. In doing so, it appeared that discomfort from accidental misuse of pronouns was reduced by avoiding attention from others related to their gender identity. Efforts from others to treat participants normally seemed to demonstrate acceptance and validation of the participants' gender identity:

They're all great, the other thing I really like about the friends group is that they don't make a big deal of it, so everybody makes mistakes with like pronouns and stuff like that so if they make a mistake and they're like sorry, then I'm like don't worry about it **(Participant 1)**.

2.3.2.3 Subtheme: Teacher response.

The extent to which school teachers expressed their acceptance of trans students influenced some participants' perceptions of their school's level of acceptance and inclusivity. Teachers who were viewed as accepting and validating ensured the use of the participants' correct pronouns and names. For example:

A lot of the staff are lovely as well, a lot of just my regular teachers... that I have for subjects, they're always really polite and really respectful erm, I've had a lot of people just apologise to me for err messing up my pronouns erm and it's just really nice 'cause they err a lot of the staff and all the pupils do respect me and do try their best to be a good ally **(Participant 6)**.

In addition, teachers would adjust their style of communication and the topics they discussed to align with the student's gender identity:

Teachers' demeanour towards me and stuff like that if you get what I mean so kind of a bit less sort of stereotypical, manly type conversations and stuff like that and more just kinda regular just talking about work and stuff like that... especially PE teachers and stuff like that... because I'm I'm big into athletics, so it was like 'oh when's your next competition?', 'who's your main opponents?' and stuff like that, you get 'what's your training like?' before then, but, whereas it's a bit more sort of laid back now and relaxed in that sense, it's not so much 'oh hows, how you going to be able to beat' whoever it is in your next competition it's more like 'oh how are you doing?' 'Do you feel okay for the next competition?', 'are you feeling a bit more confident and that since the last one?' (**Participant 1**).

2.3.3 Theme three: Active rejection and invalidation

2.3.3.1 Subtheme: Hostility and bullying.

Prior to beginning their social transition by coming out to a friend, family member or their school, participants had experienced rejection in various ways. Some participants were aware that they wanted to be the opposite gender while others felt different but did not yet know about the possibility of being transgender. Irrespective of their knowledge and understanding of their gender identity, several participants were concerned about peers who they described as subscribers of toxic masculinity ideology. For example, Participant 8 shared, "all the boys are like masculine and bullies." Therefore, participants were concerned that their divergence from traditional gender stereotypes would be rejected and invalidated through deliberate acts of verbal or physical

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victimisation due to toxic masculinity. Participant 2 and 10 describe other incidences of hostility and bullying:

My primary school was a really horrible place... and I just think about how toxic the place was because there was a huge imbalance of boys and girls... I think 21 or 22 boys... and they were all like, I'd say most of them were very toxic-ly masculine, like a lot of them didn't grow up in households where they were taught in a good way about how to like act I guess, and a lot of them were very very toxic people **(Participant 2)**.

I've had some comments from teachers." (Participant 10). "Okay, positive comments or negative? (Interviewer). "No negative... this teacher turned to me, I think that she's a lesbian, but she turned to me and said 'you're not a real boy so I don't have to treat you like one' **(Participant 10)**.

Some participants experienced a reduction in bullying after coming out as transgender, Participant 6 shared, "and up until that point [coming out] I'd been bullied... for a lot of different things, I'd just, I'd been bullied by girls, by boys, but after coming out I wasn't bullied as much and people were really respectful." In addition, Participant 4 shared:

I mean I didn't I didn't get like, I mean I was bullied in high school but people were more, they were more curious than like hostile towards me... I've got more hate by being gay than, than trans... I don't know why that is... but I suppose people can accept me for being another gender more than they can accept me for liking another gender **(Participant 4)**.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that no participant reported experiencing a total absence of hostile or bullying behaviour.

Many participants who experienced bullying referred to the purposeful public use of their old assigned name (deadnaming) and pronouns (misgendering) as a means for bullies to reject and invalidate their gender identity. Participant 3 discussed their experience of deadnaming, both accidental and on purpose, “the teacher deadnaming me... and there’s been a couple of kids that have done it to try and annoy me.”.

Participant 10 also experienced purposeful deadnaming:

This one girl decided she was going to come up to me and say ‘are you a boy or a girl?’ and I said boy and she was like ‘no, you’re a girl’ and I was like, I walked away like I was like ignoring her she like and then she went ‘you’re a girl you’re a girl’ she kept screaming it at me (Participant 10).

2.3.3.2 Subtheme: School apathy.

The way in which school staff responded to participants coming out had an impact on their view of the supportive and inclusive nature of their school, and therefore, their sense of rejection and invalidation. Schools were typically portrayed as well-meaning, yet, some were apathetic towards the importance of changes and provision of support to enable the participant to feel comfortable at school. For example, Participant 8 shared that she was experiencing emotionally-based school avoidance and had informed her school that she would like to change her gender identity, (Interviewer) “When you first told them what was their response like?” (Participant) “Just get back into school.”

Participant 5 believed the staff had not been thorough in their actions to support his transition, (Interviewer) “is there something you’d have liked the school to have done

differently then around trying to make sure it's as supportive and positive a change as possible?" (Participant 5) "Double check that it's [old name] deleted next time".

Participant 10 also detailed a sense of nonchalance from members of their pastoral staff:

(Participant 10) I first told my head of year and she was like 'oh we've got a list of trans people in this school, I just didn't know you were one of them'... I was like 'okay' like 'cool'. (Interviewer) Okay and did they sort of talk to you about how to? (Participant 10). Nope they were just like 'okay bye' (**Participant 10**).

2.3.4 Theme four: Passive rejection and invalidation

2.3.4.1 Subtheme: Heteronormative culture.

Most participants identified the dominant culture of their school as heteronormative and with a demarcated binary model of gender. As participants learned the cultural norms were at odds with their internal experience of gender, participants indirectly experienced a strong sense of rejection and invalidation. Participant 1 reflected on the progress in societal acceptance of the homosexual population, "Transgender issues now are like what gay rights issues were about 30 years ago it's kinda that kinda thing. It's still a very taboo thing in schools". Participant 2 noted an experience of implicit heteronormative and cisnormative bias within the school curriculum:

People were like, they tried to be accepting of like different sexualities but like my primary, the closest thing we got was in our final like three lessons of sexual health sort of education, was a one-minute talk of the teacher asking the entire class 'does everyone know what gay means? And do you know not to be mean to people for it?' and that was it, just

moving on. So it was, it was really indirect, but it was very clearly shown that it wasn't normal, like it wasn't a normal thing **(Participant 2)**.

2.3.4.2 Subtheme: Gendered school systems and facilities.

All ten participants noted experiences of rejection and invalidation due to the systemic use of gender as a method of social categorisation. Many participants attended schools where certain classes were divided into male and female, and their classroom seating was organised by the gender of students. In addition, every school that participants attended had gendered toilets and changing rooms. Moreover, school staff were thought to unconsciously validate heteronormative culture through their use of language and conversation topics with male students in comparison to female students. This use of gender as a means of social categorisation within schools serves as an unconscious endorsement of heteronormativity and, therefore, rejection and invalidation for participants whose gender identity does not conform to this culture. Furthermore, such gendered facilities would often expose the participant as 'different' as they would require special measures to accommodate their gender identity. For example:

The PE department erm they decided it would be a great idea for the first time ever, since I'm in this year, and decide to split it into boys and girls for PE and decided to use my old name on the list put me in an all-girls class **(Participant 7)**.

Yeah I I feel like it's bad though because if it's like everything's so gendered like what about non-binary people where do they go in a boy boy girl seating plan?... Yeah they like the they erm a lot of teachers are a lot more respectful to girls than they are to boys... teachers have the

mindset that all the boys are going to be nightmares... and all the girls are going to be okay **(Participant 10)**.

Changing rooms were the other thing so that's why I wanted to get them sorted as soon as possible, changing rooms, toilet, they kind of go in the same category... naa I didn't like it at all, it would flare up dysphoria and then obviously you get the banter in the changing rooms and stuff like that and I just felt really disconnected from that kind of thing **(Participant 1)**.

I have to use the disabled toilet, I have to go to the office to get a key for it every time I need to go to the toilet... They told me I couldn't use the me- guys toilets, and obviously I wouldn't want to use the female toilets **(Participant 3)**.

2.3.5 Theme five: Consequences of rejection and invalidation

2.3.5.1 Subtheme: Mental health.

Most participants shared that they had experienced significant mental health difficulties. Some participants were unsure whether their poor mental health was a pre-existing factor that may have been negatively impacted through experiences of rejection and invalidation. However, other participants believed their mental health had deteriorated as a direct result of experiencing ongoing rejection and invalidation of their gender identity. Participant 3 contemplated if his anxiety was related to his gender identity, "because of anxiety... it's got worse as the years have gone on though... I think it could be to do with being trans as well, it's got a bit worse." Participant 9 shared how ongoing victimisation affected him, "I developed like mental health problems... to the

point where I ended up trying to take my own life... erm which landed me in an inpatient unit.”

2.3.5.2 Subtheme: School attendance.

Rejection and invalidation also had a significant negative impact on some participants’ school attendance. In all cases, participants whose school attendance was negatively affected experienced mental health difficulties. Participant 8 shared the effects of rejection and anticipated rejection from staff and peers on her school attendance, (Interviewer) “is that anxiety having quite a big impact on your day-to-day school life?” (Participant). “Mm hmm.” (Interviewer). “What kind of impact?” (Participant). “I don’t go”. Participant 4 provided another example of mental health impacting school attendance:

(Interviewer) So how did you come to be attending college then and not attending school anymore?” (Participant) “Because I just, they couldn’t handle, I wasn’t going into any of the classes because I just couldn’t handle the, my mental state was just not there at that point... because of people.” (Interviewer)... “And is that because they were being unkind or because?” (Participant) “Yeah... most of the time they were... and so my education took the biggest dive” **(Participant 4)**.

Overall, participants’ views and experiences of secondary education appeared to be underpinned by the degree to which the school community provided (or would provide) a sense of acceptance and validation, or, rejection and invalidation. It appeared there were ongoing tensions between participants’ need to reduce negative feelings of gender dysphoria and their need to ‘fit in’ and feel included. However, the need to personally

accept their gender identity was often the most potent driver; “The only way to achieve true happiness is by living your truth” (Participant 2).

2.4 Discussion

2.4.1 Summary of results

This research set out to explore the views and experiences of transgender young people in secondary education. The overarching theme, acceptance and validation, was identified through inductive reflexive thematic analysis of the data, together with five main themes: seeking acceptance and validation; receiving acceptance and validation; active rejection and invalidation; passive rejection and invalidation; and consequences of rejection and invalidation.

The overarching theme generated in this study underpins the narratives of participants’ views and experiences and highlights two basic needs for trans youth in school: acceptance and validation. This finding can be explained by Baumeister and Leary’s (1995) belongingness hypothesis whereby the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation. In the present study, participants detailed their attempts to maximise the amount of acceptance and validation they could receive through various means, including researching gender, carefully timing coming out, and endeavouring to pass as their identified gender. The attempts made by participants appeared to be motivated by their basic need to belong; participants favourably reflected on the ways in which they received acceptance and validation, and negatively discussed ways in which they were rejected and invalidated as their identified gender. Baumeister and Leary (1995) found that individuals who experienced deficits in belonging were more likely to suffer from psychological and physical health problems. This serves to explain participants’ accounts

of the ways in which they experienced rejection and invalidation (a deficit in belonging) and how this affected their mental health and wellbeing. Thus, participants' views and experiences seemed to be shaped by the extent to which teachers, peers and the school environment provided a sense of belonging through social acceptance and validation.

The dominance of heteronormative and cisnormative cultures perpetuated in schools through a variety of means provided challenges to participants achieving a sense of belonging. Within this study and previous research, there are examples of ways in which schools passively reinforce gender norms, including gender segregated facilities, the discourse and everyday language students and teachers use when discussing gender, and the lack of LGBTQ+ information within the curriculum (Frohard-Dourlent, 2018; Jones et al., 2016; McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Ryan, 2016; Sausa, 2005; Toomey et al., 2012; Woolley, 2017). Although transgender individuals fit within the accepted binary model of gender (male to female or female to male), in contrast to having no place within that model (i.e. non-binary), heteronormative culture expects a person's gender to reflect their biological sex and to be demonstrated clearly through stereotypical visual appearance and behaviour. Participants experienced a passive, yet sincere, sense of rejection as they learned that the cultural norms of the environment were at odds with their internal experience of their gender. Consequently, they often chose to disregard or conceal their feelings to avoid potential social rejection and invalidation engendered by the cultural norms.

Actively seeking acceptance and validation continued to be a strong motivator for participants as they felt a tension between the need to reduce personal feelings of dysphoria and the need to be accepted as their identified gender. Participants sought information related to their gender incongruence to gain a sense of acknowledgement

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and validation of their feelings, and to increase their levels of self-confidence. However, learning about being transgender was not enough to feel a sense of belonging to society and every participant eventually felt a strong need to come out due to feelings of dysphoria. Participants' experience of dysphoria appeared to be due to a sense of dissonance between their personal gender identity and how others perceived their gender (based on biology). Therefore, participants' sense of dysphoria may have been a result of cisnormative culture and associated experiences of invalidation and rejection, which led to a negative and dissonant perception of their body. If a new model of gender, such as the Genderbread model (Killerman, 2017) were accepted and normalised, trans individuals may not feel a sense of dissonance between their body and gender identity; their body would no longer represent the 'wrong' gender. Hence, gender dysphoria may ultimately be, at least in part, a sense of societal rejection.

Many participants carefully planned when they would come out to others, selecting a time when they believed their social environment might be most accepting and validating. As participants adopted the transgender label, they felt a sense of congruence between their inner and outer gender states together with a sense of belonging to the transgender community; findings consistent with Riggle et al.'s (2011) study. Additionally, participants may have believed that the trans label would provide others with an explanation for their gender-divergent behaviour, which may serve to remove the sense of challenge to others' traditional gender ideology. Therefore, transgender self-identification may reduce hostility and increase acceptance and validation. These attempts to attain a sense of belonging support the findings of Nielsen, Walden and Kunkel (2000) whereby participants concealed their gender identity until they were in an accepting environment. However, many participants experienced a further tension

between their drive to feel a personal sense of belonging to their identified gender and their fundamental need for societal belonging. As participants realised that being transgender was not widely accepted or understood, many participants who had since formed their trans identity preferred to be known only as their chosen gender, rather than as a trans individual. This placed pressure upon them to look and act in ways typical of their identified gender in order to 'pass' in everyday life. It is likely that by passing as their preferred gender, participants not only reduced personal feelings of dysphoria, but also societal prejudice associated with being transgender. It appeared that participants ultimately rejected a 'trans' identity in order to avoid threats to belonging.

Many participants shared their experiences of active rejection prior to, and subsequent to, coming out. Victimization of transgender young people has been documented extensively within previous research (Day et al., 2018; Kosciw et al., 2018; McGuire et al., 2010; Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Toomey et al., 2012). The heteronormativity and cisnormativity frameworks can help to explain bullying whereby individuals who subscribe to such views attempt to 'police' and uphold gender norms by actively rejecting and invalidating those who might transgress them (McGuire et al., 2010; Toomey et al., 2012). It is possible that individuals who perceive violations of traditional gender norms feel a sense of challenge to their accepted model of gender and, therefore, feel the need to defend it (Read, Sargeant, & Wright, 2020). Some participants also experienced further direct rejection in the form of school apathy, whereby school staff appeared to lack understanding of the importance of providing young trans people with a sense of belonging through school changes. It has been well documented that experiences of bullying, rejection and invalidation related to gender identity are linked to negative outcomes including feelings of isolation, school absence, poor educational

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outcomes and mental health difficulties (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Burns et al., 2016; Day et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2018; Sausa, 2005; Schimmel-Bristow et al., 2018). Within this study, some participants believed that the rejection they experienced directly affected their mental health, which then impacted upon their school attendance; this was also found by Schimmel-Bristow et al. (2018). Thus, the main themes of ‘active rejection and invalidation’, ‘passive rejection and invalidation’, and ‘consequences of rejection and invalidation’ provide further support to Baumeister and Leary’s (1995) conclusion that individuals subjected to deficits in belonging are likely to experience mental health difficulties.

Experiences of receiving acceptance and validation at school appeared to provide participants with a sense of belonging. Participants valued having opportunities to express their views of what changes in school would be helpful to increase their sense of belonging, and to have their opinions influence the appropriate actions to be taken. Therefore, it was important that schools listened and tailored their response to each trans young person rather than responding in a standardised manner, which supports findings by Schimmel-Bristow et al. (2018). By sharing their views, participants may have increased the level of compassion in their school staff, that is, “a feeling of concern for another person’s suffering which is accompanied by the motivation to help” (Singer & Klimecki, 2014). Therefore, school staff actions to reduce rejection and invalidation may be increased or improved. The responses of individual school staff also influenced participants’ sense of acceptance and validation of their gender. Participants noticed the ways in which individual teachers demonstrated acceptance such as using desired pronouns and names, and discussions centred around topics of conversation stereotypically associated with the participants’ gender identity (Bischoping, 1993).

Moreover, participants' views of school were often determined by the accepting nature of their peer group. Participants were pleased when students at their school were curious, and when they treated them as normal. Together, a tailored school response, positive individual teacher response, and peer support helped to create a positive school climate for participants, which has been determined as an important predictor of belonging in past research (Aerts et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2016; Ma, 2003; Schimmel-Bristow et al., 2018).

2.4.2 Limitations

Notable limitations of this study are related to the method of data collection. All participants were recruited at a single charity residential weekend, so all participants were in receipt of support from the charity. This may have influenced participants' views and experiences through either a greater focus on positive or negative aspects. Additionally, in order to attend the residential event, the charity required young people to be accompanied by parents; thus, participants' attendance suggests supportive relationships with their parents in relation to their gender identity. Furthermore, it is likely that participants chose to attend the nearest residential taking place and so it can be assumed that participants were from similar areas of the UK.

Hannes (2011) listed four evaluation techniques to critically appraise original qualitative studies: assessing credibility; assessing transferability; assessing dependability; assessing confirmability. Through application of these criteria, it is important to note further limitations of this present research. Due to the epistemological and methodological positioning of this research, coding reliability was not employed. In addition, participants were not provided with the results in order to validate the

representation of their views and experiences. Thus, the credibility of this research may be considered low. With regards to transferability, participant details such as age, year of study, gender, geographical location, and involvement with supportive charities have been provided in order to enable transferability of findings. In order to protect participant anonymity, no other details were gathered, therefore, transferability is limited due to ethical considerations. The researcher received regular supervision, kept a reflexive journal of the decisions made throughout the research project and has provided the iterations of thematic maps (see Appendix H), and a transcript (see Appendix I) within the appendices of this paper. Thus, it is considered that this research has a high level of dependability. Finally, the confirmability of this research can be assessed in light of the researcher's acknowledgement of their potential bias as a cisgender individual and their actions to minimise any potential effect, and, in their provision of epistemological positioning. Consequently, the confirmability of this researcher is considered to be high.

Other limitations include a low representation of lower secondary school aged youth and trans females. Future research could aim to gather views and experiences from equal numbers of trans females and males to ensure findings are representative of the binary trans population. In addition, it will be important to explore the views and experiences of trans young people who are currently not receiving support.

2.4.3 Implications

The rich data collected within this study provides a detailed account of the factors that enable, and those that hinder, a positive school experience for trans youth in secondary education within the UK. With considerable evidence of the significant negative outcomes for trans young people, actioning change to improve their experiences

at school is key. This research evidence can be used to inform and develop the best practice for supporting young trans people at school.

Several implications are noted for the Department for Education (DfE), schools and Educational Psychologists (EPs) to enable trans young people to feel a sense of belonging at school. The DfE may wish to amend the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) national curriculum to include teaching about gender diversity and discrimination. Specifically, all young people could be given the opportunity to learn about alternative models of gender such as queer sociology, gender pluralism and degendering (Sanger, 2010). Consequently, young people experiencing a varied sense of gender would be accorded knowledge and validation, which may in turn, serve to support their mental health and wellbeing. Furthermore, the integration of gender identity information and issues into the wider curriculum (not solely within the PSHE curriculum) would normalise gender diversity and promote acceptance, validation and inclusion.

With adequate support, senior school staff members would be in a good position to modify their school policies, systems and practices to create a gender-inclusive school environment and ethos. The key changes could include degendering PE lessons, creating gender-neutral toilet and changing facilities, providing gender diversity training to staff, and ensuring alternative gender options are available on all documents. It will be important for future research to establish the effectiveness of whole-school approaches that promote acceptance of gender diversity to increase trans young peoples' sense of acceptance and validation in school. In addition, research could focus on determining the most effective methods of developing a gender-inclusive school ethos so that efforts can be concentrated on the most effectual methods.

Chapter 2

Schools could also provide clear and accessible guidelines on what constitutes gender identity related bullying within their school policy, and the process of reporting and dealing with such cases. It may also be useful for schools to designate a member of staff as an LGBTQ+ ally, though, it would be important that all staff understood their role in supporting transgender students by embracing diversity and fostering good relations. Staff will need support to ensure they are cognisant of transphobic and discriminatory behaviour, and to know how best to address such behaviour. Moreover, school staff will need support to understand the importance of treating a trans student as the gender with which they identify and avoid gendered classroom practices such as ‘boy-girl’ seating plans and ‘boys versus girls’ competitions to prevent feelings of rejection.

EPs are in a good position to gain the knowledge, skills and resources to develop and deliver whole-school training on gender diversity. Such training would facilitate school staff understanding of key transgender issues, including gendered environments, gendered language and the need for a tailored response. EPs are also well positioned to support the successful implementation of new school policies and practices by collaboratively devising implementation plans with schools (Graham et al., 2006; Patel, 2013). Moreover, EPs are independent of schools and are highly skilled in working directly with young people to elicit their views. Therefore, EPs are apposite advocates for young people and can act as facilitators of problem-solving meetings between school staff, parents and the young person.

2.4.4 Conclusion

The transgender population are highly marginalised and potentially oppressed, and encounter ongoing issues of rejection and invalidation that can negatively impact on their

mental health. In order to support trans youth more effectively within education, the findings suggest there is a need to foster a sense of acceptance and validation within the school environment. Therefore, trans education (for both staff and pupils) is necessary to increase understanding of gender diversity with the intention to nurture acceptance and validation. Changes to the national curriculum to teach about alternative models of gender and to integrate gender identity information within the wider curriculum would serve to validate and normalise gender diversity. In addition, school policies and practices need to accommodate gender diversity by promoting trans acceptance, providing gender-neutral facilities, avoiding gendered classroom practices, developing anti-bullying policies with clear guidance for acts of transphobia, and by employing person-centred practices that are tailored to the needs of the individual.

To conclude her interview, and this article, Participant 1 shared the following advice:

Just remember that there are people that support you. Don't ever feel like the one option is that you're alone and just scared and that you're never going to get there, because everybody feels like that from time to time; it doesn't matter if you're trans, cis, black, white, gay, straight whatever it is, everybody feels alone, scared, depressed at one point in their life or another. So just remember that you've got that kind of support out there and there are people that love you for who you are.

Appendix A Excluded Studies with Reasons

Excluded studies with reasons

Title	Authors	Reason for exclusion	Database
Helping Children Grow Up in the 90's: A Resource Book for Parents and Teachers	Poteat, V; Espelage, Dorothy L.	Book	ERIC
A media-based school intervention to reduce sexual orientation prejudice and its relationship to discrimination, bullying, and the mental health of lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents in western Canada: A population-based evaluation.	Burk, J., Park, M., Saewyc, E.M.	Intervention	Web of Science
School belonging, self-esteem, and depressive symptoms in adolescents: An examination of sex, sexual attraction status, and urbanicity.	Gallagher, Renee Vickerman., Rostosky, Sharon Scales., Hughes, Hannah K	Lower school belonging for sexual minority	PsychInfo
An ecological systems comparison between homeless sexual minority youths and homeless heterosexual youths.	Gattis, Maurice N	Homeless	PsychInfo
School Belonging, School Victimization, and the Mental Health of LGBT Young Adults: Implications for School Psychologists.	Heck, Nicholas C., Lindquist, Lauri M., Machek, Greg R., Cochran, Bryan N	Sense of belonging predicts other variables	ERIC
The impact of school connectedness and teacher support on depressive symptoms in adolescents: A multilevel analysis{*}.	Joyce, Hilary D., Early, Theresa J	Sense of belonging predict other variables	Web of Science
Suicidality and Intersectionality Among Students Identifying as Nonheterosexual and With a Disability.	King, Matthew T., Merrin, Gabriel J., Espelage, Dorothy L., Grant, Nickholas J., Bub, Kristen L	Sense of belonging as protective factor	Web of Science
School connectedness and suicidal thoughts and behaviors: A systematic meta-analysis.	Marraccini, Marisa E., Brier, Zoe M F	Sense of belonging as a protective factor	PsychInfo
Sexual orientation in a sample of college students in Quito, Ecuador.	Paredes, Estuardo B., Polanski, Thomas X	Not accessible	Web of Science

Appendix A

Inequities in educational and psychological outcomes between LGBTQ and straight students in middle and high school.	Robinson, Joseph P., Espelage, Dorothy L	Just identified sense of belonging as low in LGBTQ population	PsychInfo
Associations among sexual attraction status, school belonging, and alcohol and marijuana use in rural high school students.	Rostosky, Sharon Scales., Owens, Gina P., Zimmerman, Rick S., Riggle, Ellen D B	Sense of belonging predicts other variables	PsychInfo
Bullying in an agrarian university of the state of Mexico.	Ruiz-Ramirez, Rosalva., Zapata-Martelo, Emma., Luis Garcia-Cue, Jose., Perez-Olvera, Antonia., Martinez-Corona, Beatriz., Rojo-Martinez, Gustavo	Not in English	Web of Science
Protective factors in the lives of bisexual adolescents in North America.	Saewyc, Elizabeth M., Homma, Yuko., Skay, Carol L., Bearinger, Linda H., Resnick, Michael D., Reis, Elizabeth	Lower sense of belonging for bi students	PsychInfo
School, family, and faith: Social influences on educational outcomes of nonmetropolitan sexual minority students.	Stapel, Christopher J.	Dissertation	PsychInfo
The Role of Social Connectedness and Sexual Orientation in the Prevention of Youth Suicide Ideation and Attempts Among Sexually Active Adolescents.	Stone, Deborah M., Luo, Feijun., Lippy, Caroline., McIntosh, Wendy LiKamWa	Sense of belonging as a protective factor	Web of Science
Sexual orientation in adolescence and young adulthood: Measures, connectedness, and depression.	Waller, Martha Wilkinson Jane Alexandre	Book	PsychInfo
Disordered eating behaviors among transgender youth: Probability profiles from risk and protective factors.	Watson, Ryan J., Veale, Jaimie F., Saewyc, Elizabeth M	School connect a protective factor for disordered eating	PsychInfo
Challenging Conventions of Bullying Thresholds: Exploring Differences between Low and High Levels of Bully-Only, Victim-Only, and Bully-Victim Roles.	Goldbach, Jeremy T., Sterzing, Paul R., Stuart, Marla J	No sense of belonging measure	Web of Science
Affective distress among adolescents who endorse same-sex sexual attraction: Urban versus rural differences and the role of protective factors.	Cohn, Tracy J., Leake, Valerie S	Sense of belonging predicted other variables	PsychInfo
LGBT students and allies participating in a school-based support program: School performance, connectedness, and perceptions of school climate.	Hansen, Anastasia	Dissertation	PsychInfo

Understanding intersectionality and resiliency among transgender adolescents: Exploring pathways among peer victimization, school belonging, and drug use.	Hatchel, T., Marx, R	Sense of belonging predicts other variables	Web of Science
Sexual harassment victimization, school belonging, and depressive symptoms among LGBTQ adolescents: Temporal insights.	Hatchel, Tyler., Espelage, Dorothy L., Huang, Yuanhong	School belonging mediated peer victimisation-> depressive symptoms	PsychInfo
Safe schools? Transgender youth's school experiences and perceptions of school climate.	Day, Jack K, Perez-Brumer, Amaya, Russell, Stephen T	Trans youth more likely to have more negative perception of school climate	PsychInfo
School protective factors and substance use among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents in california public schools.	De Pedro, Kris Tunac, Esqueda, Monica Christina, Gilreath, Tamika D	Sense of belonging predicted other variables and drug focus	PsychInfo
A multilevel analysis of the association between school climate dimensions and adolescent depressive symptoms using the ecological perspective	Drew, Hilary Latham	Dissertation	PsychInfo
School environment is related to lower health and safety risks among sexual minority middle and high school students.	Ethier, Kathleen A, Harper, Christopher R, Dittus, Patricia J	Sense of belonging predicted other variables	PsychInfo
School connectedness and student-teacher relationships: A comparison of sexual minority youths and their peers.	Joyce, Hilary D	Sexual minority youth report lower school connectedness	PsychInfo
The relationships between sense of belonging to a community GLB youth group; school, teacher, and peer connectedness; and depressive symptoms: Testing of a path model.	McLaren, Suzanne, Schurmann, Jacqueline, Jenkins, Megan	Belonging predicted other variables	PsychInfo
Enacted stigma, problem substance use, and protective factors among Asian sexual minority youth in British Columbia.	Poon, Colleen, Saewyc, Elizabeth, Chen, Weihong	Sense of belonging as protective factor	PsychInfo
Mental health concerns among LGBTQ youth in schools.	Poteat, V Paul, Rivers, Ian, Scheer, Jillian R		PsychInfo

Appendix A

The role of protective factors on the high school retention of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students.	Rodriguez-Hobbs, Scott D	Dissertation	PsychInfo
School safety and connectedness matter for more than educational outcomes: The link between school connectedness and adolescent health.	Saewyc, Elizabeth, Homma, Yuko	Book	PsychInfo
Beyond resilience: A retrospective study of the personal strengths and school-based protective factors that promote positive outcomes for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning/queer youth.	Toleson, Christine	Dissertation	PsychInfo
School-based protective factors related to suicide for lesbian, gay, and bisexual adolescents.	Whitaker, Kelly, Shapiro, Valerie B, Shields, John P	Sense of belonging predicted less suicidal ideation	PsychInfo
School Connectedness and Protection From Symptoms of Depression in Sexual Minority Adolescents Attending School in Atlantic Canada.	Wilson, Maria N, Asbridge, Mark, Langille, Donald B	Sense of belonging as a protective factor	Web of Science
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression Related Peer Victimization in Adolescence: A Systematic Review of Associated Psychosocial and Health Outcomes.	Collier, Kate L van Beusekom, Gabriel Bos, Henny M W Sandfort, Theo G M.	Includes the studies already included within my review	Web of Science
School experiences, social support, and the educational and psychosocial outcomes of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth.	Kiedman.	Dissertation / not in English	PsychInfo
Factors Associated with Academic Achievement for Sexual and Gender Minority and Heterosexual Cisgender Students: Implications from a Nationally Representative Study.	Fenaughty, Lucassen, Clark, & Denny.	Sense of belonging affected achievement	PsychInfo
Have mischievous responders misidentified sexual minority youth disparities in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health?	Fish, Jessica N., Russell, Stephen T	Identifying youth who misidentified as LG	PsychInfo
School supports for LGBTQ students: counteracting the dangers of the closet. Lindquist.	Lindquist.	Dissertation	PsychInfo
Predicting psychosocial consequences of homophobic victimisation in middle school students.	Poteat, & Espelage.	Sexuality of p's unknown	PsychInfo

School-based supports for LGBT and other minority youth: understanding the roles of teachers, staff, gay-straight alliances, and anti-harassment policies.	Fischer.	Dissertation	PsychInfo
Extracurricular activity and social justice involvement of sexual minority youth.	Toomey.	Dissertation	PsychInfo
The 2009 national school climate survey: the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our Nation's schools.	Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, Bartkiewicz.	Survey	ERIC
LGBT Students: New evidence on demographics and educational outcomes.	Sansone.	LGBT have lower sense of belonging	Web of Science
Predictors of sexual victimisation and suicidal ideation among transgender and gender-nonconforming adolescents.	Marx, Hatchel, Mehring, & Espelage.	Sense of belonging predicts other variables	Web of Science
Preservice teachers' preparedness to serve different family compositions.	Miller.	Qual	Web of Science
The early roots of sexual-orientation health disparities: associations between sexual attraction, health and well-being in a national sample of Australian adolescents.	Perales, & Campbell.	Sense of belonging part of general health and wellbeing	Web of Science
Associations between bullying and engaging in aggressive and suicidal behaviours among sexual minority youth: the moderating role of connectedness.	Duong & Bradshaw.	Sense of belonging as a protective factor	Web of Science
Intersections of victimization among middle and high school youth: Associations between polyvictimization and school climate.	Garnett, Bernice Raveche; Brion-Meisels, Gretchen;	LGBTQ identity unknown	PsychInfo
Exploring the relation between bullying homophobic verbal content: The Homophobic Content Agent Target (HCAT) scale.	Poteat, V.Paul; Espelage, Dorothy L;	LGBTQ identity unknown	PsychInfo
Supportive, Not Punitive, Practices Reduce Homophobic Bullying and Improve School Connectedness	Day, Snapp & Russell	LGBTQ identity unknown	Psychinfo

Appendix B Completed Example of the Manchester

Review Framework



MANCHESTER
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D.Ed.Ch.Psychol. 2017

Review framework for quantitative investigation research

Author(s): Russell & Toomey

Title: Risk and protective factors for suicidal thoughts among sexual minority youth-evidence from the Add Health study

Journal Reference: Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health

Criterion	R1	Comment
Data gathering		
Clear research question or hypothesis <i>e.g. well-defined, measurable constituent elements</i>	0	Not clear... " To examine multiple individual and contextual risk and protective factors for suicidal thoughts." The factors to be explored have not been stated.
Appropriate participant sampling <i>e.g. fit to research question, representativeness.</i>	1	Data came from The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health) wave I and II (1994-1996). 14,738 participants 6.22% sexual minority LGB 81.96% heterosexual 11.82% no romantic attractions Random sample of schools stratified by region (northeast, Midwest, sound and west)
Appropriate measurement instrumentation. <i>e.g. sensitivity; specificity</i>	0	'Attitudes towards school' as sense of belonging measure 4 items. No reliability score. Items analysed separately in analyses.

Appendix B

Comprehensive data gathering <i>e.g. multiple measures used; context of measurement recorded (e.g. when at school vs at home)</i>	0	One measure of SoSB One measure (2 items) of sexual attraction (yes or no) One item about suicidal thoughts (yes or no)
Appropriate data gathering method used <i>e.g. soundness of administration</i>	1	National survey. In school questionnaire – self-administered. Parents could opt out In home interviews https://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth/design/wave2
Reduction of bias within participant recruitment/instrumentation/administration <i>e.g. harder-to-reach facilitation; accessibility of instrumentation</i>	1	Systematic sampling methods and implicit stratification ensure that the 80 high schools selected are representative of US schools with respect to region of country, urbanicity, size, type, and ethnicity. (in-school survey before in-home survey). All students who completed the In-School Questionnaire plus those who did not complete a questionnaire but were listed on a school roster were eligible for selection into the core in-home sample - A nationally representative sample of adolescents in grades 7 to 12 in the USA. Students in each school were stratified by grade and sex. About 17 students were randomly chosen from each stratum so that a total of approximately 200 adolescents were selected from each of the 80 pairs of schools. The in-home core sample interviewed 12,105 adolescents. Interviews were 1-2 hours long. Answers written on laptop by either interviewer or interviewee (depending on sensitivity of question)
Response rate/ completion maximised <i>e.g. response rate specified; piloting; access options</i>	0	More than 70 percent of the originally sampled high schools participated. Each school that declined to participate was replaced by a school within the stratum. Feeder school's response rate data was not provided. There are 132 schools in the core study. Parents of each adolescent interviewed in wave 1 was asked to complete an interviewer-assisted questionnaire. No response rate provided
Population subgroup data collected <i>e.g. participant gender; age; location</i>	0	14,738 participants 6.22% sexual minority LGB, 81.96% heterosexual, 11.82% no romantic attractions No breakdown of LGB participants and no data on gender
Data analysis		
Missing data analysis <i>e.g. Level and treatment specified</i>	1	Pair-wise deletion which resulted in varying sample sizes for each model
Time trends identified <i>e.g. year on year changes</i>	0	Longitudinal data but only analysed how wave 1 data may predict suicidal ideation measured in wave 2
Geographic considerations	0	None

<i>e.g. regional or subgroup analyses</i>		
Appropriate statistical analyses (descriptive or inferential) <i>e.g. coherent approach specified; sample size justification.</i>	0	Inappropriate analysis. Completed many (over 60) logistic regression analyses without use of a Bonferroni Correction or similar correction to account for the increase in likelihood of a Type 1 error. Only reported the 9 significant results. One result (not relevant to my review, is highly counterintuitive and appears to be a type 1 error.
Multi-level or inter-group analyses present <i>e.g. comparison between participant groups by <u>relevant</u> location or characteristics</i>	1	Sexual minority compared to heterosexual participants
Data interpretation		
Clear criteria for rating of findings <i>e.g. benchmarked/ justified evaluation of found quantitative facts</i>	0	Significance $p < .05$ but not all findings reported – only statistically significant ones so it is difficult to interpret
Limitations of the research considered in relation to initial aims <i>e.g. critique of method; generalizability estimate</i>	1	Likelihood of type 1 error (false positives) given the number of associations examined Not able to capture processes that are specific to sexual minority stress e.g. victimisation or rejection Just a single item for suicidal thoughts Data is 20 years old
Implications of findings linked to rationale of research question <i>e.g. implications for theory, practice or future research</i>	1	Suicidal thoughts associated with lower SoSB
Total	7	

Appendix C Quality Assessment Scores for all Papers

Article	Review Framework Criterion															Total	
	Research question	Sample	Measurement	Comprehensive data gathering	Data gathering method	Recruitment bias	Response rate	Subgroup data	Missing data	Time trends	Geographic considerations	Statistical analyses	Multi-level analyses	Rating of findings	Limitations		Implications
Watson, Barnett & Russell (2016)	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	12
Watson & Russell (2016)	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	12
Russell & Toomey (2013)	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	7
Poteat, Sinclair, DiGiovanni, Koenig & Russell (2013)	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	10
Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni & Koenig (2011)	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	11
Hatchel, Merrin & Espelage (2019a)	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	12

Appendix C

Hatchel, Valido, De Pedro, Huang & Espelage (2019b)	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	13
Toomey & Russell (2013)	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	11
Aerts, Van Houtte, Dewaele, Cox & Vincke (2012)	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	9
Pizmony-Levy & Kosciw (2016)	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
Pizmony-Levy, Kama, Shilo & Lavee (2008)	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	11
Murdock & Bolch (2005)	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	10
Bos, Sandfort, De Bruyn & Hakvoort (2008)	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	10
Stewart, Heck & Cochran (2015)	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	10

Appendix D Data Extraction Table

Reference	QA Sample	Country	Design	SoSB Measure	Other Relevant Measures	Key Findings
Watson, R. J., Barnett, M. A., & Russell, S. T. (2016). Parent support matters for the educational success of sexual minorities. <i>Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 12</i> (2), 188-202.	12 Subsample of 12,064 - which included participants that reported both SSA and OSA, SSAY (1,279 - males 723 and females 556) and OSAY (10,785 - "sample demographics did not differ for heterosexual participants"). Wave I began when students were between 14 and 18 years of age (males Mage = 15.83, females Mage = 16.04), and Wave II was conducted one year later. Ethnically diverse sample.	USA	Used data from wave I and II of the Add Health Study (began in 1994). Multiple imputation used for missing data. Correlational analysis to assess if patters of associations between variables differed between OSAY and SSAY. Followed by survey regression to assess parent support, association with grades, school belonging, and school troubles. This approach was used to adjust for the complex sample design and weights of Add Health survey.	Three item measure on a scale of 0 (never), 4 (every day); $\alpha = .77$.	Romantic attractions – 2 items related to romantic attraction to a male and to a female. If answered yes to only the opposite sex then categorised as heterosexual attraction. Parent support - 10 items (5 refer to mother and 5 refer to father) with response options from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) $\alpha = .84$ (Crockett, Veed & Russell, 2010). If information on just one parent was available, average of the 5 items used.	Parent support was significantly associated with school belonging for OSAY and SSAY ($r = .26, p < .01$ and $r = .30, p < .01$). This correlation was stronger for SSAY than OSAY. Survey regression model found parent support to predict more school belonging ($B = .22, p < .001, b = -0.04$). Significant interaction between parent support and sexual minority status on school belonging ($B = .08, b = 0.01, p < .05$). Simple slopes analysis revealed that for both SSAY ($b = .30, p < .001$) and OSAY ($b = .22, p < .001$) reporting higher parental support was associated with higher school belonging. However, this effect was stronger for SSAY than OSAY. At high levels of parental support SSAY and OSAY report equivalent school belonging but at lower levels of parental support, SSAY

Appendix D

						report significantly lower school belonging than OSAY.	
Watson, R. J., & Russell, S. T. (2016). Disengaged or bookworm: Academics, mental health, and success for sexual minority youth. <i>Journal of Research on Adolescence</i> , 26(1), 159-165.	12	Subsample of 1279 same sex and both-sex attracted participants. 57% male. Wave I of the study began when participants were 14-18 years of age. Only Wave I and II data analysis relevant to this study. Ethnically diverse sample. No breakdown of LGB status. No outness measure or statistics.	USA	Data used from the Add Health Study which began in 1994. The multiple imputation procedure was used for missing data (variables with more than 5% missing data included school belonging, school trouble and GPA). A cluster analysis was conducted and a MANCOVA to investigate whether the clusters differed on variables that measured educational and other variables.	3 items with response options ranging from 0 to 4, $\alpha = .77$.	Romantic attraction - 2 items related to romantic attraction to a male and to a female. If answered yes to only the opposite sex then categorised as heterosexual attraction. Academic experience - GPA - 4 items of science, English, social studies and maths grades averaged, responses on a 4-point scale, $\alpha = .94$. School trouble - 3 items answered from 0 to 4, "getting along with other students", "paying attention", and "getting homework done", $\alpha = .77$. Educational expectations - one item answered from 1 to 5.	2 distinct groups found through cluster analysis labelled 'engaged youth' and 'disengaged youth' which significantly differed on school belonging ($F = 20.36, p < .001$) with the engaged cluster having higher school belonging. They also significantly differed on GPA ($F = 12.83, p < .001$), school trouble ($F = 17.23, p < .001$) and desire for college ($F = 26.86, p < .001$).
Russell & Toomey (2013) Risk and protective factors for suicidal thoughts among sexual minority youth: Evidence from the Add Health study. <i>Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health</i> , 17(2), 132-149.	7	Subsample of 14,738 participants. 6.22% (n = 917) LGB and 81.96% (n = 12,079) heterosexual and 11.82% (n = 1742) no romantic attraction. No breakdown of LGB participants. No gender or ethnicity statistics reported. No outness measure or statistics.	USA	Data used from Wave 1 and 2 of the Add Health Study which began in 1994. Used pair-wise deletion to deal with missing data. Completed a series of independent logistic regression models to predict suicide in Wave 2.	4 items (analysed separately) with response options ranging from 1-5. No reliability statistic	Romantic attraction – questions about romantic attraction to a female and to a male (answered yes or no). Same sex attracted youth included those who answered yes to both, heterosexual youth answered only yes to the opposite sex. No romantic attraction youth said no to both questions. Suicidal thoughts – one item related to the past 12 months answered yes or no.	For youth who do not experience suicidal thoughts, SoB is similar between SSA and heterosexual youth. SSA youth report more suicidal thoughts - SSA girls compared to heterosexual girls ($\chi^2 (df = 1, n = 6,428) = 38.49$; O.R. = 2.18) and SSA boys compared to heterosexual boys ($\chi^2 (df = 1, n = 5,956) = 6.80$; O.R. = 1.48). Sexual minority youth who reported suicidal thoughts also reported significantly lower levels of SoB than SSA youth without suicidal thoughts and heterosexual youth with

						suicidal thoughts (no statistics reported other than means, SDs and effect sizes – $d = 0.37$ for feel close to school; $d = 0.39$ for feel part of school; $d = 0.39$ for feel happy at school).	
Poteat, V. P., Sinclair, K. O., DiGiovanni, C. D., Koenig, B. W., & Russell, S. T. (2013). Gay–straight alliances are associated with student health: A multischool comparison of LGBTQ and heterosexual youth. <i>Journal of Research on Adolescence</i> , 23(2), 319-330.	10	Subsample of 15,965 students who reported their sexual orientation and gender identity LGBTQ or heterosexual. 50% males, 50% females. 926 (5.8%) participants LGBTQ. No breakdown by LGBTQ status. Participants aged 10-18 (M = 14.87). Ethnically diverse sample.	USA	Data was taken from the 2009 Dane County Youth Assessment (DCYA) which was an anonymous electronic survey. Multiple imputation with bootstrapping to impute missing values with simulated values based on the available data. Tested models including the main and interaction effects of the independent variables (GSA presence, sexual orientation and gender). Covariates included school size, middle school vs high school, racial and sexual orientation diversity and student’s SES).	4 item measure - The psychological sense of school membership scale (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999). $a = .80$, Answers given on a scale of 0 to 3.	Sexual orientation – 1 item options were gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning or none of the above. Those who marked none of the above were classed as heterosexual. Those who did not mark none of the above were categorised as LGBTQ. General victimisation - 4 item measure (The University of Illinois Victimization scale, Espelage & Holt, 2001) asked about the past 30 days. Responses answered on a scale of 0-4, $a = .87$. Homophobic victimisation - School characteristics - asked if there was presence of a GSA answered yes or no. Truancy – 1 item related to the last 4 weeks, responses on a scale of 1-5 but responses were dichotomised to yes or no. Average grades – 1 item coded to reflect GPA scores	For all participants, general victimisation and SoB negatively correlated ($- .17, p < .001$). SoB significantly correlated with homophobic victimisation ($- .15, p < .001$), truancy ($- .18, p < .001$), smoking ($- .20, p < .001$), drinking ($- .21, p < .001$), suicidal ideation ($- .20, p < .001$), suicidal attempts ($- .11, p < .001$), sex with casual partners ($- .14, p < .001$), sex and drugs ($- .17, p < .001$). No significant GSA main ($b = -.03$) or interactive effects (GSA x sexual orientation $b = .08$, and GSA x Gender $b = -.01$) for school belonging. The sexual orientation x gender interaction was significant for school belonging ($b = -.09, p < .05$), with boys reporting lower SoB than girls with these gender differences being larger for heterosexual than LGBTQ youth.

Appendix D

<p>Poteat, V. P., Mereish, E. H., DiGiovanni, C. D., & Koenig, B. W. (2011). The effects of general and homophobic victimization on adolescents' psychosocial and educational concerns: the importance of intersecting identities and parent support. <i>Journal of counselling psychology, 58</i>(4), 597.</p>	<p>11 Subsample of 15,923 youth. 50% male. Aged 10-18 ($M = 14.85$) 94.2% heterosexual, 5.8% LGBTQ but no breakdown of LGBTQ status. LGBTQ white participants $n = 606$ and LGBTQ racial or ethnic minority participants $n = 320$. Ethnically diverse sample. No outness information.</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p>Data from 2009 Dane County Youth Assessment DCYA - anonymous online survey with only child assent. Used multiple imputation for missing values. MANOVAs conducted to test for gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity differences on school belonging and other measures. Follow up ANOVAs were conducted to look at sexual orientation differences on school belonging. Structural equation modelling to test the direct effect of victimisation on school belonging.</p>	<p>4 item Psychological Sense of School Membership scale. Response options ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree). $\alpha = .79-.85$ across groups.</p>	<p>Sexual orientation - 1 item with multiple options. Students who only marked none of the above were categorised as heterosexual, students with any combination of responses (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning) and who did not mark 'none of the above' were categorised as LGBTQ.</p> <p>General victimisation - 4 item measure (The University of Illinois Victimization scale, Espelage & Holt, 2001) asked about the past 30 days. Responses answered on a scale of 0-4, $\alpha = .86 - .91$ across groups.</p> <p>Homophobic victimisation - 1 item asking about the past 12 months. Responses on a scale of 0-4. No reliability statistic.</p> <p>General parent support - 3 items, answers ranged from 0-3, $\alpha = .74 - .85$ across groups.</p>	<p>Structural equation modelling tested the direct effects of general and homophobic victimisation on suicidality and school belonging: general victimisation effects on SoB were significant for LGBTQ ethnic minorities but not for LGBTQ white youth. Homophobic victimisation significantly affected SoB in all LGBTQ youth. General parent support directly predicted higher school belonging. General parent support did not buffer the effect of general victimisation or homophobic victimisation on school belonging.</p>
<p>Hatchel, T., Merrin, G. J., & Espelage, A. D. (2019). Peer victimization and suicidality among LGBTQ youth: the roles of school belonging, self-compassion, and parental support. <i>Journal of LGBT Youth, 16</i>(2), 134-156.</p>	<p>12 Subsample of 934 LGBTQ youth (gay or lesbian = 148, bisexual = 412, transgender = 60, questioning = 209). 10 - 18 years old ($M = 15.91$). 70.2% assigned female at birth. Ethnically diverse sample. No outness measure or statistics.</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p>Data used from the 2015 Dane County Youth Survey. Questionnaires completed online at school. Full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation was used to handle missing data. Structural equation modelling and exploratory factor analysis.</p>	<p>A 6-item measure from 1 to 4 but includes school climate question ('the rules and expectations are clearly explained') $\alpha = .86$.</p>	<p>Sexual orientation – no items provided but appears that choices were heterosexual, gay/lesbian, bisexual, questioning or other.</p> <p>Gender identity – female, male, transgender or not sure what transgender means.</p> <p>Peer victimisation (independent variable) - the University of Illinois Victimization Scale (Espelage, Holt & Henkel, 2003) a 4-item measure answered on a scale of 1-5, $\alpha = .85$.</p> <p>Parental support and monitoring (moderating variable) - 7 item scale answered from 1 - 4, $\alpha = .80$.</p>	<p>Peer victimisation had a direct effect on school belonging ($b = -.35, p < .05$). A latent interaction term was developed between peer victimisation and parental support predicting school belonging - the model demonstrated good fit $\chi^2(64, N = 934) = 176.39, p < .01$, RMSEA = .05 [.044, .057], NFI = .960, CFI = .974. Model 2 demonstrated that parental support had a direct effect on school belonging ($b = .34, p < .01$). The interaction effect of parental support x peer victimisation was not</p>

						significant on school belonging ($b = .02, p = n.s.$).	
Hatchel, T., Valido, A., De Pedro, K. T., Huang, Y., & Espelage, D. L. (2019). Minority stress among transgender adolescents: the role of peer victimization, school belonging, and ethnicity. <i>Journal of Child and Family Studies, 28</i> (9), 2467-2476.	13	Subsample of 4,778 transgender adolescents aged 10-18 years ($M = 14.71$). Sex assigned at birth - female = 40.5%, male = 55.3% and missing = 4.2%. No sexual orientation data. Ethnically diverse sample - YOC 73.8% and YNOC 24.7%.	USA	Used data from the 2013-2015 California Healthy Kids (CHKS) Survey. Structural equation modelling and confirmatory factor analysis.	5 item measure on a scale of 1-5 ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'). Cronbach's Alpha = .85. A latent variable, school belonging, was used to adjust for measurement error.	Gender identification – participants identified as transgender (no other information provided). Peer victimisation - 12 item measure (2 items assessed LGB victimisation and gender victimisation, and 10 items assessed violence safety, harassment and bullying) answers on a scale of 0-3, a .90. A latent variable was used to account for measurement error.	Trans YOC ($M = -.198$) reported slightly less belonging than trans YNOC ($M = 0$) ($d = 0.19$). Peer victimisation had a direct effect on school belonging ($b = -.31, p = <.001$).
Toomey, R. B., & Russell, S. T. (2013). Gay-straight alliances, social justice involvement, and school victimization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer youth: Implications for school well-being and plans to vote. <i>Youth & Society, 45</i> (4), 500-522.	11	Subsample of 230 LGBTQ youth aged 12-19. 58.7% female, 35.65% male and 5.65% trans or genderqueer. No breakdown by LGBTQ status. Ethnically diverse sample.	USA	Data was analysed from the Preventing School Harassment study (PSHS). The survey was administered in both paper and online formats. Multi-level regression analysis was used to analyse the data.	4 item measure on a scale of 1-4 with a reliability of $a = .81$	Sexual identification – no information provided other than participants identified as LGB or Q. GSA presence, membership and social justice involvement - one question on if their school had a GSA, one question if they had ever been a member, three questions about involvement in social justice activities. A sum score was created to assess overall involvement. No reliability statistic reported. Experience of LGB victimisation based on sexual orientation - used the measure from CHKS. No reliability statistic reported.	Involvement in GSA related activities positively associated with school belongingness ($b = .20, p = <.001$). The presence of a GSA at school was positively associated with school belongingness $b = .35, p = <.001$. GSA membership was positively associated with school belongingness $b = .27, p = <.01$. Significant interaction between participation in social justice activities and school victimisation on school belongingness $b = .09, p = <.05$. At low levels of victimisation, social justice participation positively correlated with school belonging. But at high levels of victimisation, this effect dissipated - No statistics

						<p>given. Simple slopes analysis revealed that the slope for both groups did not differ from zero ($b = -.06, t = -0.90, p = n.s.$) and ($b = .07, t = 1.55, p = n.s.$) respectively. Therefore, these two groups only differ at low levels of victimisation - high social justice activity involvement correlates with higher school belongingness compared to low social justice activity involvement.</p>
<p>Aerts, S., Van Houtte, M., Dewaele, A., Cox, N., & Vincke, J. (2012). Sense of belonging in secondary schools: A survey of LGB and heterosexual students in Flanders. <i>Journal of homosexuality</i>, 59(1), 90-113.</p>	<p>9 1,745 participants. 90.4% heterosexual, 5.2% L&G, 4.4% bisexual. Mean age 16 (SD = 1.57). No ethnicity statistics provided. Degree of outness measured on scale of 1-7: to teachers $M = 3.53$; to peers $M = 4.91$. 39% were male.</p>	<p>Belgium</p>	<p>Data from 2007 ZZip@Youth project. Online survey. Participants recruited through organisations and institutions including secondary schools, youth services, organisations and website for LGB youth. Comparison of mean scores on sense of belonging scale and the different sub groups of the sample using one-way ANOVA. Then hierarchical multiple regression analyses</p>	<p>18 items - the Psychological Sense of School Membership scale of Goodenow (1993b). Rated on a 5-point Likert-scale. $\alpha = 0.88$ and the range = 0–4.</p>	<p>Sexual orientation - measured using the Kinsey Scale (Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, 1948) - a 7-point scale from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual. These were recoded into 3 categories: heterosexual included 1&2; bisexual included 3, 4 &5; homosexual included 6&7.</p> <p>Educational track - asked which educational track or level they were enrolled on/at (academic/arts/technical/vocational).</p> <p>Discrimination by teachers - used a general discrimination scale based on a subscale of Al-Methen and Wilkinson (1998). 6 items on a 5-point Likert-scale. $M = 1.19, \alpha = .84$.</p> <p>Discrimination by peers - 3 item scale based on measures of Utsey (1998) and Krieger, Smith, Naishadham, Hartman and Barbeau (2005) but adapted for homophobic rather than racist discrimination. For each item participants were asked if this was because of their sexual orientation. $M = .61, \alpha = .65$.</p>	<p>For the LGB sample, sexual orientation did not have a significant impact on SoB (lesbian $b = 0.076, p > .05$; bisexual $b = -0.067, p > .05$) compared to homosexual. For the LGB sample, higher perceived discrimination by teachers predicted lower SoB ($b = -0.406, p < .01$) and perceived LGB friendliness of the predicted a higher SoB school ($b = 0.367, p < .001$). Educational track, discrimination by peers, degree of outness and acceptance of coming out by peers and teachers were not significant predictors of SoB.</p>

					Perceived LGB friendliness of the school - 1 item on a 5-point Likert scale. M = 3.33, no reliability statistic.		
					Degree of outness to teachers and peers - based on a measure of Mohr and Fassinger (2000) 1 question for each on a 7-point Likert scale.		
					Degree of perceived acceptance of outness - 1 question on a 5-point Likert scale for both teachers and peers. No reliability statistic.		
Pizmony-Levy, O., & Kosciw, J. G. (2016). School climate and the experience of LGBT students: A comparison of the United States and Israel. <i>Journal of LGBT youth, 13</i> (1-2), 46-66.	12	5,242 US participants and 408 participants from Israel. In the US sample, the mean age was 15.9, 33.2 % men, 58.5% women, 4.5% trans and 3.8% other; 53.5% gay/lesbian, 42.1% bisexual and 4.4% other; ethnically diverse sample. 3.55% were not 'out'. In Israeli sample, the mean age was 16.54, 54.5% men, 43.5% female, 2% trans and 0 other; 66% gay/lesbian, 29.6% bisexual, 4.4% other. 10.76% were not 'out'.	USA and Israel	Data from the Israeli School Climate Study (IGY study) (Pizmony-Levy, Kama, Shilo & Lavee, 2008) and GLSEN 2007 National school climate survey (Kosciw, Diaz & Greytak, 2008). The GLSEN survey recruited participants through community-based LGBT groups and the internet. The Israeli study is based on the GLSEN previous studies and recruited their sample through multiple methods. A series of chi-square tests and t tests were conducted on independent means to compare the samples. Multivariate analyses were used to examine the relationships between school climate indicators and academic outcomes. For school belonging, they estimated an ordinary least square regression.	Used the Psychological Sense of School Membership scale (Goodenow, 1993) - 18 items on a 4-point Likert scale, a = .91 for GLSEN survey and a = .93 for the IGY survey	Sexual orientation – coded into three groups, gay/lesbian, bisexual and other. Absenteeism - 1 item on a 5-point Likert scale but the variable was recoded as binary 0 (no) and 1 (yes). No reliability statistic. Homophobic remarks - 2 items in the GLSEN survey rated from 1-5 and 3 items in the IGY survey rated from 1-5. The items correlated in each sample. Experience with harassment and assault <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbal harassment 1 item, • physical assault – 1 item, • sexual harassment – 1 item, All answered on a 5-point scale from never to frequently. LGBT resources:	Data for all participants. LGBT students in the US had lower sense of belonging than Israeli students ($t = 6.55, p < .001$). Frequent exposure to homophobic remarks decreased school belonging in both the US and Israeli sample ($B = -.264, p < .001$ and $B = -.211, p < .001$). After adding verbal, physical and sexual harassment, the pattern held ($B = -.152, p < .001$ and $B = -.129, p < .001$). In the US, verbal ($B = -.103, p < .001$), physical ($B = -.086, p < .001$) and sexual harassment ($B = -.031, p < .001$) had significant negative relationships with SoB to school. In Israel, only verbal ($B = -.120, p < .001$) and sexual harassment ($B = -.102, p < .05$) had significant negative effects on SoB. Physical assault ($B = -.073,$

Appendix D

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • books – 1 item • websites – 1 item • extracurricular activities – 1 item • supportive teachers – 1 item 	$p > .05$) was not a significant predictive factor.	
Pizmony-Levy, O., Kama, A., Shilo, G., & Lavee, S. (2008). Do my teachers care I'm gay? Israeli lesbigay school students' experiences at their schools. <i>Journal of LGBT Youth</i> , 5(2), 33-61.	11	298 participants completed valid questionnaires. 89% completed online. 67% male, 31% female and 2% transsexuals. Aged 11-18 (M = 16.47). Ethnicity matches population diversity. 51% gay, 14% lesbian, 21% bisexual and 14% undecided. 85% reported they had come out to at least one person.	Israel	Questionnaire based on the School Climate Survey GLSEN where most items were translated into Hebrew. The questionnaire was pre-tested on a sample of 30. Two versions of questionnaire (paper copy and online version). The paper copy was distributed to youth at social groups of the Israeli Gay Youth Organisation. The online version was published on 4 websites aimed at LG youth. Snowball sampling technique was also used. Simple correlations and multivariate analysis (Ordinary Least Square regression) to assess the correlations between students' characteristics, school environment indicators, and the outcome variables (SoB and sense of respect).	6-item measure $\alpha = .82$ created from 18 items in exploratory factor analysis using Varimax Rotation.	<p>Sexual orientation – measure not provided – appears options included gay, lesbian, bisexual and undecided.</p> <p>Sense of respect from peers - 6 items, $\alpha = .82$.</p> <p>Outness - 1 item asking if they had not disclosed their sexual orientation to anyone, answered yes (1) or no (0). No reliability statistic. However, in another section of the paper it describes asking participants to whom they had disclosed their sexual orientation.</p> <p>Member of IGY - 1 item answered yes (1) or no (0).</p> <p>Homophobic remarks - 5 items answered on a range from 1-5, $\alpha = .81$.</p> <p>Homophobic atmosphere by location - 5 items rated on a scale of 1-5, $\alpha = .88$.</p> <p>Verbal abuse - 1 item on a scale of 1 -5.</p> <p>Physical abuse - 1 item on a scale of 1-5.</p> <p>Degree of comfort talking about lesbigay issues - 4 items answered on a range of 1-4, $\alpha = .83$.</p>	<p>Students' SoB had moderate negative correlations with homophobic atmosphere ($r = -.33$) and verbal abuse ($r = -.30$) and a low positive correlation with supportive teachers ($r = -.24$) but the statistic reported is negative? OLS regression analysis revealed. Participants who experienced a greater homophobic atmosphere and verbal abuse also reported lower SoB ($B = -.20, p < .01$ and $B = -.13, p < .01$ respectively). In addition, participants degree of comfort talking about lesbigay issues reported higher SoB ($B = .21, p < .01$). In model 2, again females, participants with experience of homophobic atmospheres and verbal abuse reported lower SoB ($B = -.27, p < .01$; $B = -.18, p < .01$; $B = -.13, p < .01$ respectively). Degree of comfort talking about lesbigay issues continued to predict greater SoB though with slightly reduced power</p>

					<p>Resources in school - 1 item each for books and information, internet websites, guest lecture in school, collaborative school and supportive teachers, answered yes (1) or no (0).</p>	<p>(B = .18, $p < .001$). None of the resources in school significantly predicted SoB (books and information, internet websites, guest lecture in school, collaborative school and supportive teachers).</p>
<p>Murdock, T. B., & Bolch, M. B. (2005). Risk and protective factors for poor school adjustment in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) high school youth: Variable and person-centered analyses. <i>Psychology in the Schools, 42</i>(2), 159-172.</p>	<p>10 101 LGBT youth. 84% in middle or high school. Remaining had either graduated or dropped out within the past 6 months. 63% male, 34% female, 3% transgender. 66% lesbian/gay/queer and 32% bisexual, 1 person bicurious and 1 person 'other'. Ethnically diverse sample. 78% had told at least one peer at school and 16% said they were 'possibly' out to some peers at school but they had not told anyone. 56% had told an adult at school, 22% had not told an adult but were 'possibly out' and 22% were sure than no staff knew their sexual orientation.</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p>Participants recruited through a local LGB organisation, adverts in places frequented by LGB youth, presence at local LGB event and snowball sampling. Surveys administered in person and only required youth assent. Multiple regression analyses, cluster analysis, MANOVA and post-hoc tests were conducted.</p>	<p>Five items on a 5-point Likert type scale adapted from Goodenow's measure of Psychological Sense of School Belonging (PSSB, Goodenow, 1993), $\alpha = .87$.</p>	<p>Sexual orientation – only states what participants identified as (no question or items provided).</p> <p>School environment - exclusion/inclusion - 8 items responded to on a 5-point Likert-type scale (0-4), $\alpha = .88$.</p> <p>School environment - personal victimisation due to sexual orientation - 8 items on a 5-point scale from 1-5, $\alpha = .93$.</p> <p>Teacher and external social support - used The Social Support Scale for Children and Adolescents (Harter, 1985). 24 item measure with a possible score of 1 to 4 for each item but did not include the 'support from classmates scale because it may overlap with other aspects of perceived climate. There are 6 items per subscale (teacher $\alpha = .87$, family $\alpha = .89$, close friend $\alpha = .80$).</p> <p>School achievement – asked to report their current school achievement on a 5-point scale from 5 (mostly As) to 1 (mostly Fs). They were also asked to report their previous achievement in middle school using the same scale.</p>	<p>Prior school achievement was not a significant predictor of school belonging [$R^2 = .015$, $F(1,99) = 1.51$, $p = .223$]. School exclusion of LGB students explained an additional 50% in explained variance [Fchange (1,98) = 102.57, $p < .01$]. Teacher support and personal LGB victimisation accounted for an additional 11% of variance [Fchange (2,96) = 13.77, $p < .01$], though personal victimisation did not make a unique contribution. Higher school exclusion and lower teacher support are related to lower school belonging. Parent or friend support did not moderate the effects of exclusion and victimisation on school belonging [$\Delta^2 = .01$, Fchange (2,94) = 1.02, $p = .12$]. A four-cluster solution was accepted from a k-means cluster analysis. The results suggest that the combined effect of negative school environment and poor support leads to a highly</p>

						<p>vulnerable group of students. MANOVA and Post-hoc Tukey pair-wise comparison indicated that the 'highly supported cluster' reported higher levels of school belonging than any other cluster ($M = 3.35, p < .05$) and the 'highly vulnerable group' reported lower levels of school belonging than all other clusters ($M = 1.62, p < .05$). The homophobic school climate cluster and low adult support cluster had similar school belonging. Students who identified as bisexual were two times more prevalent in the highly vulnerable cluster than their rates in the sample would predict. Authors concluded "that the highly vulnerable cluster were more psychologically vulnerable (not just negative school experiences).</p>
<p>Bos, H. M., Sandfort, T. G., De Bruyn, E. H., & Hakvoort, E. M. (2008). Same-sex attraction, social relationships, psychosocial functioning, and school performance in early adolescence. <i>Developmental psychology, 44</i>(1), 59.</p>	<p>10 866 participants, 55.3% boys. 74 participants were LGB. 12-15 years old, $M = 13.61$ years. 77% Dutch, 4.8% Surinamese, 4.4% Moroccan, 1.8% Turkish and 9.9% other. No outness measure or statistics.</p>	<p>The Netherlands</p>	<p>Computer based questionnaire administered to heterosexual and LGB participants at school (4 high schools). Multiple regression analyses and mediation analysis</p>	<p>Called 'school identification'. 16 item measure on a 4-point scale, $\alpha = .75$</p>	<p>Sexual attraction - 1 item rated from 1-5. Those who rated 5 (never) were categorised as heterosexual, participants who rated from 1-4 (very often to sometimes) were categorised as same sex attracted.</p> <p>Parent-adolescent relationship - Adolescent Disclosure Measure (Stattin & Kerr, 2000) separately for relationships with the father and</p>	<p>For all participants ... School identification was significantly predicted by disclosure to father ($B = .13, b = .21, p < .001$), acceptance among peers ($B = .06, b = .08, p < .001$), peer role strain ($B = -.06, b = -.09, p < .05$) and the perceived quality of the</p>

					<p>mother. 5 items with response categories from 1 to 4. Cronbach's alpha for the mother and for the father was $a = .84$ and $a = .83$ respectively.</p> <p>Relationships with peers - 2 aspects measured, social acceptance and peer role strain. Social acceptance was assessed with the Social Acceptance subscale of the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1982). 5 items where participants choose the answer on the left or right which are re-sorted on a scale of 1-4, $a = .61$. Peer role strain was measured with a subscale of the Early Adolescent Role Strain Inventory (Fenzel, 1989a, 1989b, 2000). 6 item measure rated on a scale of 1-5, $a = .74$.</p> <p>Class mentor-adolescent relationship - The Respect subscale of the Mentor Behaviour Rating Scale (de Bruyn, 2004) was used. 14 items and participants rated the frequency of their mentor's behaviours from 1 (seldom) to 6 (almost always), $a = .97$.</p>	<p>relationship between the participant and their class mentor ($B = .10$, $b = .20$, $p < .001$). After controlling for disclosure to father, social acceptance and peer role strain, sexual attraction no longer significantly predicted SoB. Bootstrapping method test for multiple mediations found disclosure to father, social acceptance and peer role strain were significant mediators of the effect of sexual attraction on school identification (SoB) (disclosure to father: $z = -2.30$, $p < .05$, CI 95%: low: $-.07$, high: $.00$; social acceptance: $z = -1.81$, $p < .05$, CI 95%: low: $-.05$, high: $.00$; peer role strain: $z = -1.99$, $p < .05$, CI 95%: low: $-.05$, high: $.00$).</p>
<p>Stewart, B. T., Heck, N. C., & Cochran, B. N. (2015). A comparison of sexual minority youth who attend religiously affiliated schools and their nonreligious-school-attending counterparts. <i>Journal of LGBT Youth</i>, 12(2), 170-188.</p>	<p>10 A subsample of 25 participants from religiously affiliated schools were matched with counterparts from non-religiously affiliated schools on the basis of age and gender (total sample 50). No age or gender statistics given for this subsample but would be aged between 16-19. Gay or lesbian 28% RA and 45.8% NR; bisexual 44% RA and 26.9% NR; straight 16% RA and 8% NR; unsure 8% RA and 7.1% NR; queer 4% RA and 6.9% NR; other 0% RA and 5.3% NR. Ethnically diverse.</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p>Groups connected with sexual minority youth were contacted including GSAs, social networking groups, community centres and others. Participants completed an online survey and could enter a raffle for \$10 or \$20 gift card. Means of 2 participant groups compared using t tests.</p>	<p>A 5-item measure by Waters and Cross (2010) adjusted slightly for administration outside of the school setting. Answered on a 5-point Likert scale. No reliability statistic reported.</p>	<p>Sexual orientation - asked to state their sexual orientation and then rate from 1 (heterosexual) to 5 (bisexual) to 9 (gay/lesbian). Participants were also asked about their sexual history and attraction. Participants who reported histories that were positive for same-sex sexual behaviour or attraction, were classed as SSA regardless of current identification.</p> <p>Religious affiliation - yes/no response for pupils that stated their school was private.</p>	<p>The mean score for school belonging for RA participants was slightly higher than for NR participants but this was not significant ($t = 1.31$, $df = 48$, $p = .195$)</p>

Appendix D

Outness 33.3% RA and 67% NR
but not used in SoSB analysis.

Appendix E Interview Schedule

Interview schedule

Descriptive data:

- What is your name? (they will provide their preferred name)
- How old are you? What year are you currently in at school? **Build rapport by talking about their specific year group, e.g. for Year 7s, how have they managed the transition from primary to secondary, if they're in Year 8 or if they're in Year 9 they're likely to be choosing their options, if they're in Year 10/11 they're likely to be taking some exams**
- How would you describe your gender? You can tell me in any way you'd like, or feel free to say that you do not want to.
- **Specific prompt: what pronouns do you use?*
- When did you begin your social transition, can you remember when you told your friends and/or family? What school year were you in?
- How did you first learn about Mermaids? Do you know when this was?
- **Provide a description of this study to the participant using the participant information sheet**
- Can I ask why you have decided to take part in this study?

In depth data:

- How is school going?
- **Specific prompts: Do you have a favourite teacher? Do you have a favourite subject? What are the other children like?*
- How do you feel about school?
- Can you tell me about when you first felt that you wanted to speak to someone about transitioning?
- Who did you tell at school about socially transitioning?
- What did they say?
- Tell me about the key factors that were involved in your transition at school?
- Tell me about your experience of transitioning?

If not answered from the above questions:

- What challenges did you experience?
- What do you think helped to resolve these challenges?
- Is there anything you think could have helped to resolve or reduce these challenges that wasn't implemented or available to you?
- Is there anything you would have done differently?
- Is there anything you'd have liked others to do differently?
- What went particularly well during your time at school since first telling people?
- What school factors were/are most important to you?
- What support did you receive?

Final question:

Appendix E

- Is there anything else you would like to add about your views and experiences of socially transitioning whilst at school that we haven't covered today?

General prompts:

- Tell me more about that
- What do you mean by that?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Summarise their comments to check understanding

Pause

Appendix F Ethical Approval ERGO II

ERGO II
Ethics and Research Governance Online

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

Home Submissions -

46544.A1 - Views and experiences of young people transitioning gender at school (Amendment 1)

Submission Overview | Submission Questionnaire | Attachments | History

Details

Status Approved
Category Category 4
Submitter's F... Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences (FELS)

The end date for this study is currently 24 July 2020

[Request extension](#)

If you are making any other changes to your study please create an amendment using the button below.

Latest Review Comments

16/07/2019 17:48:54 - RIG: Approved

Comments:

Dear Annie,

Thank you for your amendment, which I am happy to approve. Good luck with your research.

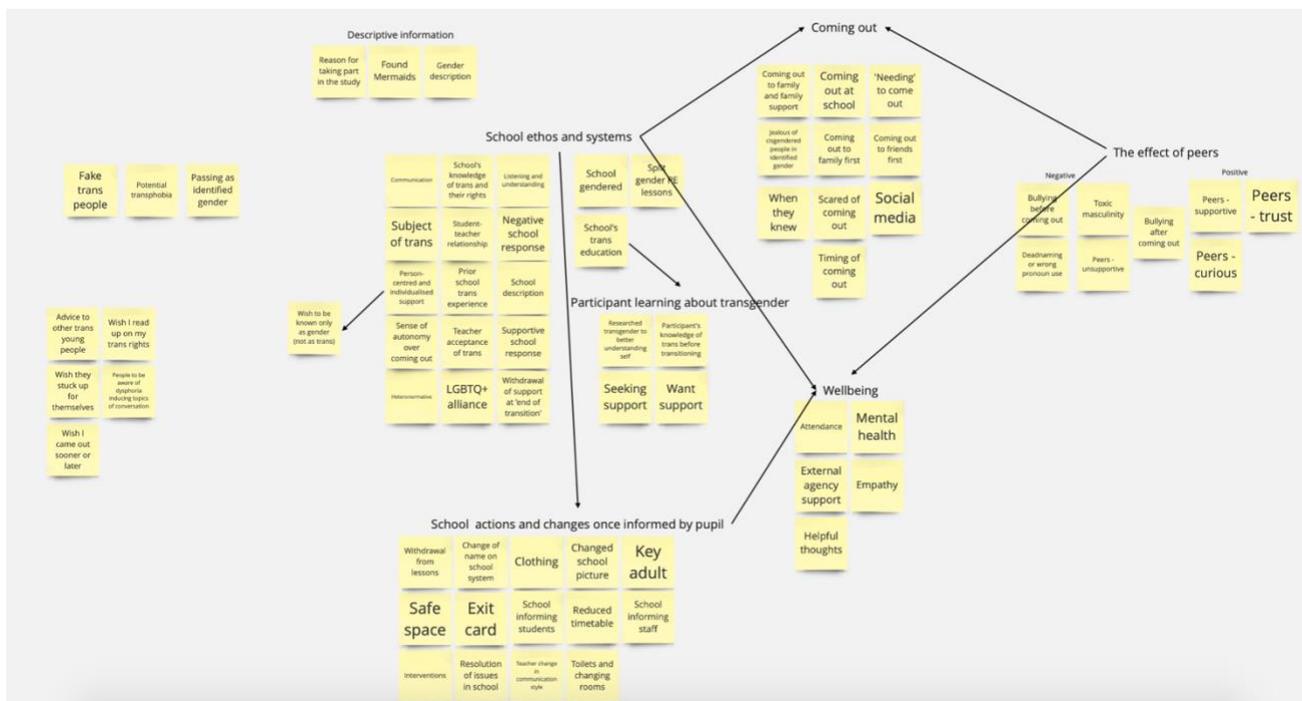
Appendix G Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria with

Reasons

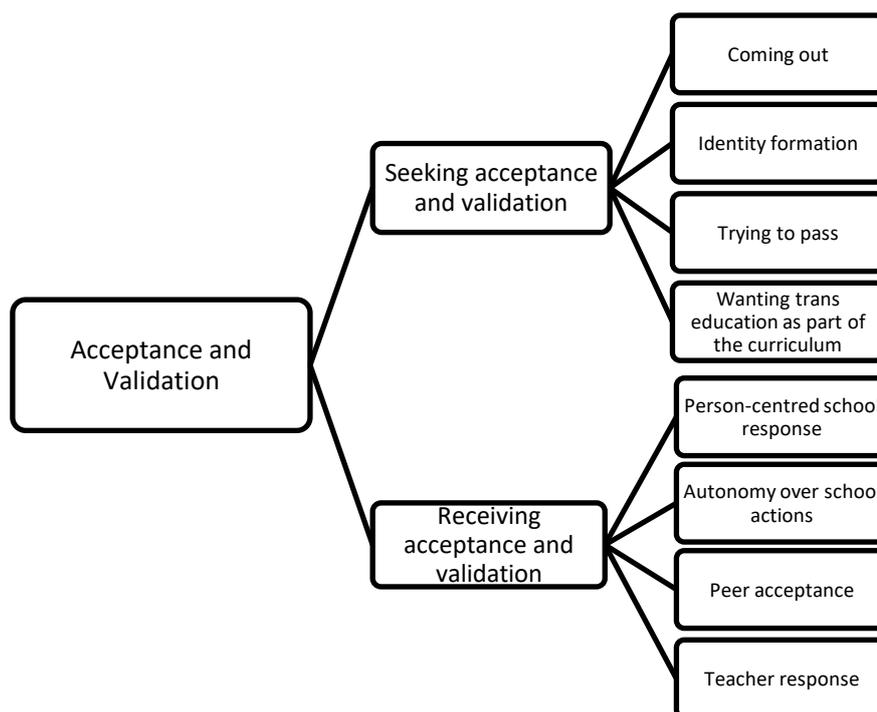
Inclusion Criteria	Reason
Must be published in a peer-reviewed journal	To ensure robust high-quality research was reviewed as this is a fairly new area of interest
Must be written in English	Due to time constraints, time was not available to have articles transcribed
Must include a measure of SoSB	To ensure SoSB was measured rather than a similar/different construct
Must study factors that affect SoSB	To ensure SoSB was used as a dependent variable in order to answer the review question
Must analyse data collected from participants identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, non-binary, or any other sexuality or gender that differs from heterosexual and cisgender	In order to answer the review question which focussed on the LGBTQ+ population
Must analyse data from participants in education (primary, secondary, college or university)	In order to answer the review question which focussed on children and young people in education
Exclusion criteria	Reason
If they only examined the effect of SoSB on other factors	In order to answer the review question which focussed on SoSB as a dependent variable
If they were unpublished theses or dissertations	To ensure robust high-quality research was reviewed as this is a fairly new area of interest
If they did not detail the sexuality and gender of participants	In order to answer the review question which focussed on the LGBTQ+ population

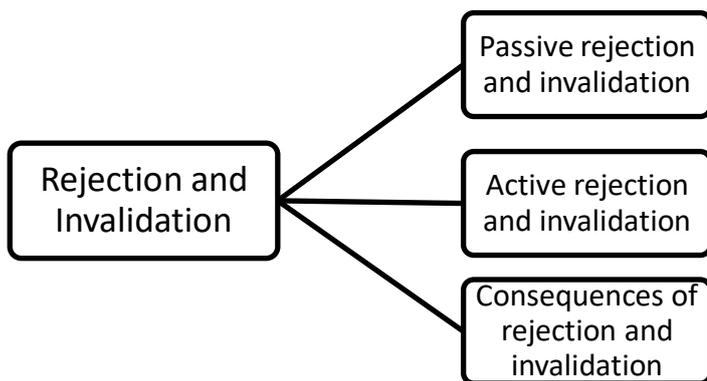
Appendix H Iterations of Thematic Maps

NVivo Map

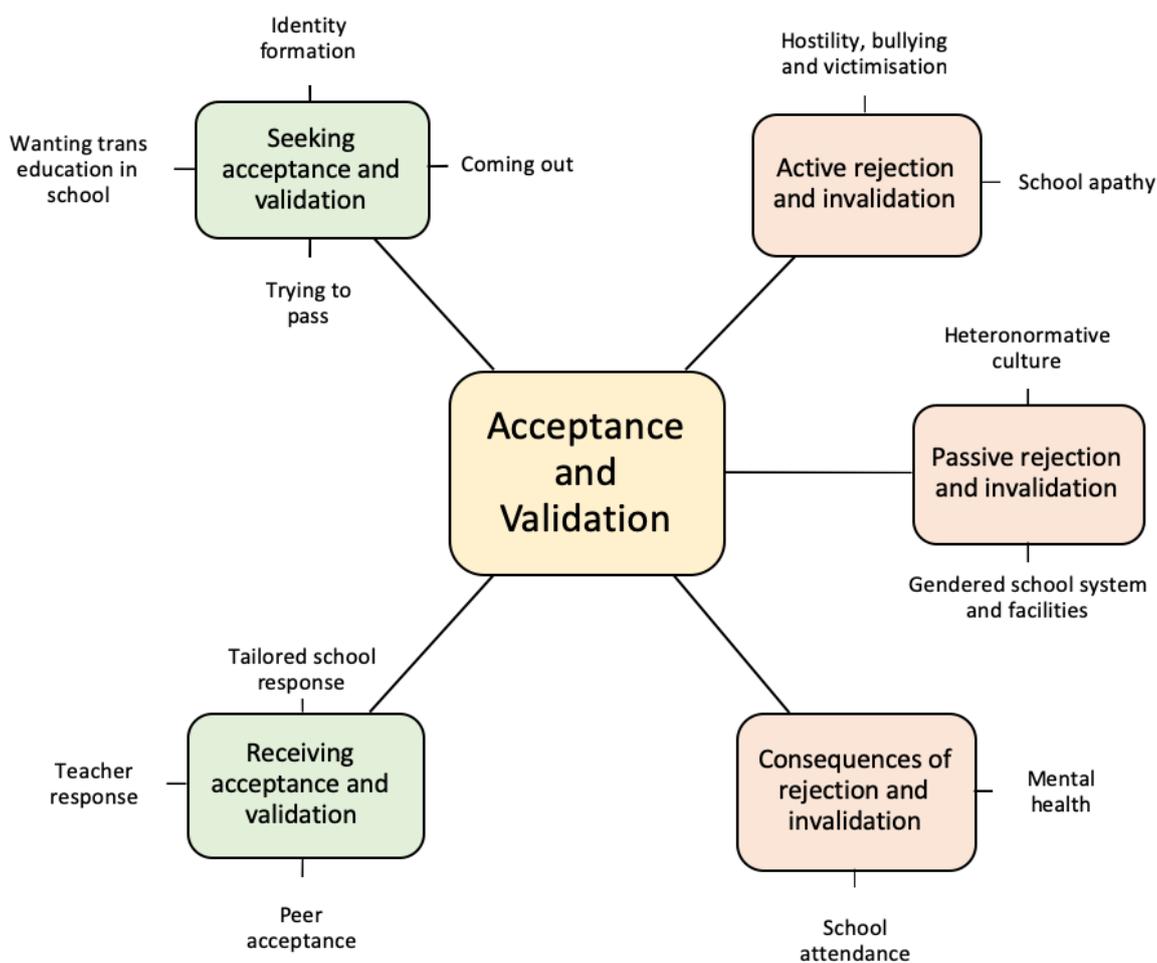


Antithetical Maps





Final Thematic Map



Appendix I Example Transcript

Interviewer: So, I'm going to start with what is your name?

Participant 2: PARTICIPANT 2

Interviewer: PARTICIPANT 2, PARTICIPANT 2...?

Participant 2: XX

Interviewer: XX, like XX XX?

Participant 2: yeah, with a different spelling

Interviewer: I bet you get that all the time, oh is it a different spelling

Participant 2: it's how I actually met one of my friends because her last name is, her name is XX XX

Interviewer: oh really?

Participant 2: uh huh, yeah

Interviewer: that's cool. So PARTICIPANT 2, how old are you?

Participant 2: 14

Interviewer: 14

Participant 2: I turn 15 next year

Interviewer: okay, so turned 14 this year, awesome. And what year are you currently in at school?

Participant 2: 3rd year

Interviewer: 3rd year

Participant 2: Just moved into that like, for like a week before summer holidays

Interviewer: oh yeah cool, what you went before summer holidays?

Participant 2: yeah because like after S4s S5s and S6s finish their exams, you just move into the next year because like they don't have anything else to learn

Interviewer: oh okay so you kinda got to experience it a little bit before summer

Participant 2: mm hmm yeah

Interviewer: how's it going

Participant 2: it's going pretty good, a bit stressful because like the work has sort of changed in a way that's like, because we use sort of practice exams in S3, which is the year before we do actual qualifications, so it kinda feels more stressful all of a sudden because people are like 'right you need to note down these things in a certain way or learn about things in a certain way because it will help you on your, like, test'. Because everyone gets tests and like, I think we get ours in January along with prelims

Interviewer: oh okay. So it's feeling quite real at the moment is it?

Participant 2: Yeah it's a bit stressful but it's fine

Interviewer: you'll manage somehow

Participant 2: yeah, I mean I chose my subjects so I chose the ones I was interested in or that are just really easy, like I took admin and it's so easy

Interviewer: admin?

Participant 2: yeah, it's just like typing, it's literally just like typing and stuff, it's it's very easy

Interviewer: what else did you take?

Participant 2: design and manufacture was like technology sort of based, maths, English, French which you have to take, what else, also took photography

Interviewer: oh cool

Participant 2: I was going to take, like, computing but there's like a thing with computing in out school, like it just doesn't work

Interviewer: oh, okay

Participant 2: like there's no computing teachers, like the only one who was left who was in my S1 classroom retired and no one's, like, there's a huge lack of computing teachers, like no one moved it, moved in

Interviewer: oh that's a shame

Participant 2: and, but we're doing like elective stuff and I'm hopefully going to take computing similar one, electives are like sort of classes you take for like a third of the year or like a term, the one I'm doing right now is Mandarin, which was stressful because our teacher almost never turns up, or I never turn up because I get, I have a lot, because it's only one period it's like one, once on a Friday, and I'm off a lot on Friday because lots of events and stuff, obviously there's the holiday that distracted this week so no one was in

on Friday, the week before that I did a sponsored hill walk thing for the music department. Because I'm in like music tech so that's like sort of pro tools and like those like push-pad things, like the school won as a competition, and we got like a bunch of those, which was really cool, and like students were able to get this sort of software for free and it's like really interesting, but I did this hill walk, the week before that I think I was, I was either sick or I was doing something else and then all the weeks before that no one turned up, like the teacher didn't turn up.

Interviewer: so how did you learn Mandarin?

Participant 2: I haven't, I haven't learned any Mandarin yet. I think there was a teacher in the very first week but she wasn't fluent in English

Interviewer: excellent

Participant 2: so it was really confusing, it was it was it was fun but it was fun because my friends and I were all bonding over the fact we have no idea what was going on

Interviewer: well at least you had each other in that situation

Participant 2: I think, I think that's rotating soon though so I think, I'm hopefully going to have, because like, there's like 14 or so electives you can choose from and you have to order them in which ones you'd rather do. At the top of my list I put Mandarin, astrophysics, drama I think was my number one, lifesaving and special effects make up because there's this person in our school who's a-, I think she's like an RE or a geography teacher and she's really really good with special effects.

Interviewer: wow that's really cool. So that kind of coincides with the drama aspect as well doesn't it the special effects, oh cool, that sounds amazing

Participant 2: yeah, there's a lot of cool stuff going on

Interviewer: yeah oh that's exciting, I want to do that. Okay so, how would you describe your gender, you don't have to if you don't want to but-

Participant 2: oh no that's fine, I just describe it as like male I guess, because like even though I like paint my nails which I've done today, I painted all smiley faces, I did it with like a pen like a thumb tack thing because I was really bored

Interviewer: oh not even like actual nail varnish

Participant 2: no, no because I have shaky hands, but like it was, I'd say, I'd just describe it as male I guess, just because like even though my gender expression is more sort of fluid I guess, like I'm not like 100% male, I'm not super super masculine all the time, I'd still say that my gender is just male and that's like how I describe it.

Interviewer: okay, excellent thank you. And, when did you begin to talk about your gender in a way that sort of informed people that you were feeling a bit different to how they might perceive you.

Participant 2: well I came out a lot, like, that happened like at least 3 time (inaudible) because I, like my primary school was a really horrible place, like I have like friends from that primary school who are now at my secondary school and they look back and they're so nostalgic and they miss it so much and I just think about how, oh sorry *dropped pen*, just think about how toxic the place was because there was a huge imbalance of boys and girls, so I was assigned female at birth right, and before I transitioned, because I transitioned second year of high school, there was like 11 girls at the end of primary 7, so like right before we move into high school, and I think 21 or 22 boys.

Interviewer: oh wow

Participant 2: and they were all like, I'd say most of them were very toxic-ly masculine, like a lot of them didn't grow up in households where they were taught in a good way about how to like act I guess, and a lot of them were very very toxic people, and I was only friends with them because I was forced to be with people who were in the same school, I didn't have any other options. So I like, didn't think about it, like I just chose to not think about it because I remember, all the way back in maybe like primary 1, I'd say, so like when I was 5 years old, I once said to someone who is like one of my closest friends now, this this guy who also got really badly bullied, because he was like a lot more feminine than like a lot people I know, he's just like acts very feminine and very sort of flamboyant, he's really really nice. But he used to get bullied for that and I used to get bullied because I acted like a boy, and I used to, we used to joke and say, or I used to say things like 'I was just a boy born in a girls body' and I had no idea that that was really affecting me, I was like 5 years old and I would still think like things like that, but I guess, I started really knowing about trans things and started considering my gender nothing to do with school because even though I grew up in a really like accepting place and like the place I grew up in is really really nice, it just, it wasn't talked about. People were like, they tried to be accepting of like different sexualities but like my primary, the closest thing we got was in our final like three lessons of sexual health sort of education, was a one-minute talk of the teacher asking the entire class 'does everyone know what gay means? And do you know not to be mean to people for it?' and that was it, just moving on. So it was, it was really indirect, but it was very clearly shown that it wasn't normal, like it wasn't a normal thing.

Interviewer: it was like a taboo subject? It wasn't to be discussed

Participant 2: yeah, uh huh, and my, in my house it was a lot more comfortable, like people were, like I know my parents would have been accepting but I guess it took me a lot longer to like think about it and accept that I like could of been trans because of how

my school life had been, and how that had affected me in a lot of different ways. So if I'd, if I'd transitioned younger, I would have been hurt a lot, like people would have physically abused me from school.

Interviewer: Physically

Participant 2: yeah mentally and physically, I know that they would have been horrible about it because there were some really not nice people. But like, a lot of them either go to a different school now or don't talk to me, like there in a completely different class or there not in any of my classes but, I guess, I started to really think about it sort of first year of high school.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: is when, because that was the first sort of chance I got to actually think about it more openly because this high school that I'm going to is a lot better than what my primary school was. It's a much more accepting place and it's much more open. And it's a much more diverse place as well, like it's, the first year that I went there was the year they started up an alliance group which I'm now in charge of

Interviewer: oh wow

Participant 2: so there like, I knew instantly that it was a much more accepting place, and they were nowhere near as constrictive and harsh and hurtful. So I like started considering my sexuality and my gender identity more sort of first year, first year I think I came out as gay like early first year to my parents, and then over the summer in between first and second year, so like I had just gone into second year, was when I came out as trans and it was really really difficult, that was a super difficult thing to do because it had been in my head for so many years because I couldn't talk to anyone until I'd moved into high school.

Interviewer: So was that, are you describing coming out to your parents or out to the school.

Participant 2: no, I came out to the school quite a bit later.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: and I came out to my parents first and it was stressful because there was other things going on with like other people in my family at the same time. It was like, and it all happened on the same day, it was it was really really stressful and but, I'm really happy with the way like my family reacted. Because I think they reacted in probably the best way possible.

Interviewer: and what was that?

Participant 2: they didn't, I'm actually happy they didn't just jump to instantly listening to me first because I was still at like a really sad point in my life, I was still really really confused about who I was, and what I was doing, and I mean I'd just moved into high school and I felt like my friends groups were changing like I'd, I was just in a really really tough place when I came out, and I wasn't in, and like my head wasn't in a good place. So I'm happy that they didn't just jump to listening to what I said instantly because if I had been someone else and it ended up that I wasn't actually trans, then I could've done something I regretted like going on blockers or going on hormones or doing something like socially transitioning like too early. So they decided the best thing to do was just talk to me about it more and try and really understand my point of view and like, and after like quite a few conversations, so maybe a month after I came out I think, my mum helped me to buy my first binder online and that was that was really really emotional for me. Because it showed that I was like, people were starting to listen because it felt like for a long time no one was going to listen because no one would understand because it just wasn't a think like I'd never heard about it, I only heard about it through the internet.

Interviewer: okay so just to have a quick think about that, you said that you came out as gay first about a year before you came out as trans.

Participant 2: yeah

Interviewer: did you know about transgender, transitioning when you came out as gay? Was that something that you actually knew about?

Participant 2: I think I might have, but I'd only ever heard it like, I'd only ever heard it in like youtube videos really

Interviewer: oh okay

Participant 2: and I'd never, like people in my life have never talked about it, like I'm the first trans student in my school ever, so it's just, it was never, it was never talked about in like my school because no one thought they needed to talk about it because our our school (inaudible) 'oh there's not going to be any trans students' but there is.

Interviewer: so it was very much about you having to go and find out that stuff for yourself

Participant 2: yeah I really had to sort of do my own research and figure things out and I guess that's how I sort of started to come to terms with it more because I did more research on like the science sort of side of being trans, like how your gender's developed and that sort of thing because it gave me a lot more confidence in myself and my own identity to know that there was scientific proof that I existed.

Interviewer: oh wow

Participant 2: that like I guess like, it's just, it's sort of how my brain thinks, like I find it a lot easier to understanding things if there's proof, that's why I don't believe in ghosts but I do believe in aliens.

Interviewer: okay, actually, that's very scientifically possible

Participant 2: Yeah aliens are more possible than ghosts.

Interviewer: I get that, I was a science teacher so. Okay wow, so when you eventually came out at school how how did you finally feel ready to do that?

Participant 2: I think it wasn't a sort of finally feeling ready, like finally accepting myself, it's more that I was so sick of being called my old name and being referred to as a 'she/her' pronoun. Like it literally felt like someone was punching me in the face every time I heard it. And the worst thing is that I'd come out to my friends before this, I'd come out to them over the summer holidays because I knew they were going to be accepting because like I'm very, a lot of people think that I'm antisocial but it's just I'm more very specific about making friends, because I don't want to call someone my friend if I can't trust them with my life, like that's weird for some people but I'm not going to call someone my friend if I don't think that I can trust them. So I came out to them like over the summer holidays, like maybe July-ish and I came out to my parents in June and it was just so hurtful that in school they had to call me by my old name and they had to refer to me in the wrong way, I guess that's like what really really told me that I had to come out.

Interviewer: so they they did that to try and protect you because you weren't may ready, or you hadn't decided at that point in time that you wanted to come out at school

Participant 2: yeah uh huh and then, but then there was this issue because there's like this thing in school, this award ceremony sort of thing, and like you have to go to a practice for it right, and the way I was planning on coming out was kind of difficult because I was too scared to go into school that day, so what they did is, in like a Friday morning or was it a Thursday morning, when everyone has maths, so all of, everyone in my year was all in the maths department, they like got a bunch of guidance teachers and our year of head and our head teacher to like go around classrooms and read out this note I'd prepared, this little short paragraph I'd written before and emailed off to the school and said 'hey can you read this out to everyone in my class and my brother's class.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: because like my brother has friends in that class already thought I was trans.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: and so it was, the mistake came about because there was this award ceremony and I was getting this award and I asked if it could be under my proper name

'PARTICIPANT 2' and they read out my new name, they read out PARTICIPANT 2 on the like list of people who needed to go to this practice, and then everyone in my class was super confused because like, 'who's PARTICIPANT 2 who's PARTICIPANT 2?'

Interviewer: before the note had been read out to them?

Participant 2: yeah like this was in registration, right before they went to first period and had the note read out. And I wasn't even in school but they texted me at break to like tell me how everything went.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: so like apart from that, I don't think there was like any other issues, but like

Interviewer: so you had been feeling scared to go into school sometimes, and so maybe hadn't gone in sometimes

Participant 2: yeah I'd felt really scared a lot of times because there's some not very likable characters in my school and I guess the way I sort of became more comfortable going to school was because I accepted that all these people who are hurting me, like it's really sad to think about, but most of them aren't going to do anything with their life, like all of them are planning on leaving in S4, like leaving as soon as possible and just not doing anything. Or they just feel like they're, they yell at everyone they possibly can, they're sexist, they're racist, they're probably homophobic and it just it doesn't matter, they don't matter, as soon as they think that like high school hierarchy is everything

Interviewer: and it will last forever

Participant 2: yeah, they think that, it's it's kinda scary because now I'm in S3 I can see that all these people who are P in high school and there just going to become worse and they'll be a high school has been and like work in a petrol station

Interviewer: and that kind of gives you a little bit

Participant 2: it gives me a sort of comfort because they're hurting me but I'm going to become something, I'm going to do something with my life and I'm going to make some sort of positive change for people

Interviewer: I like that, that's really positive I like that

Participant 2: yeah

Interviewer: but just to clarify then, so when sometimes you were feeling unable to go into school, was that before or after the school had told people that you'd transitioned

Participant 2: I'd say that was a lot more before.

Interviewer: a lot more before

Participant 2: because before is when things felt so difficult because people were, my friends were purposely deadnaming me, even though I know it wasn't to hurt me, it was to protect me

Interviewer: yes

Participant 2: it was, I was still just in such a bad mindset and I really tried hard to get off of school for a couple of days because I felt like I couldn't take going in and people calling me the wrong name and I was just, I was really sad

Interviewer: yeah

Participant 2: and I was just really really sad before I came out and I was a bit sad for a while after but I'm less sad now

Interviewer: well that's positive. So you said that you'd prepared a paragraph for them to read out and how you wanted to come out, how you wanted to let others know, how had that come about, so had you, had you gone to see a teacher or had like your parents gone in to support you and speak in a meeting with a teacher?

Participant 2: I'd gone to, I'd gone to the head of my year

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: and I talked to her and she'd, it had been difficult for her to understand a bit because I mean there's never been any sort of trans people in the school, in the school before. But I knew that they were going to be accepting and they really tried as hard as they could to take steps to make things easier for me. So they were really really listening to me and I really appreciated that, that they, because I had a much more solid idea of how I wanted to come out, when I wanted to come out, why I wanted to come out. Like all these different reasons and they listened to that and they understood that and took it in and, and were really really good about it. So they recommended for me to, or they offered me the option to stay off of school that day so I didn't have to be in and I didn't get marked as absent, I got marked as like away on a trip.

Interviewer: oh okay

Participant 2: So it didn't affect my attendance. But they were, they were really really good and they tried a lot to talk, like they tried to think more about how they were going to talk more about LGBT as a whole and they're doing steps to do that now like there's more LGBT education in like PSE and in our new SHRI unit that's coming out we're going to talk about like gender and stuff.

Interviewer: oh wow

Participant 2: do you know what SHRE is right?

Interviewer: no

Participant 2: its, I think it stands for sexual health and relationships education

Interviewer: oh okay

Participant 2: you get like, it starts in primary 5 till primary 7 and you get different ones every year in high school, well I think it's every year in high school. But they're hopefully going to talk about like a gender sort of thing and that's coming up soon. So they've improved a lot but in the beginning, they didn't really know what to do. Like they weren't the best with it, but they were still accepting.

Interviewer: did they ask you what you wanted to change?

Participant 2: they did, and they, I'm really happy that they did more than just change my name on the register, that they actually understood and they tried to like, they arranged sort of like changing rooms sort of stuff for me, like they, in this disabled bathroom they like made this sort of, I I nick-named it the cupboard, it was like, it was literally a cupboard that had a locker in it, that I would get changed in for gym in the sort of transition period before I came out. So like everything from summer holidays up to when I came out which was September weekend.

Interviewer: Okay yeah

Participant 2: so like actually like a year ago.

Interviewer: a year ago

Participant 2: so that's cool but but yeah they were, they were really really good about it. They took some time to understand but once they, as soon as they started to understand more and educated themselves more they were really good about it

Interviewer: so they did take steps to kind of find out more about it and how to help

Participant 2: yeah

Interviewer: so was, was the changing rooms something that you asked for a safe space to change or was that something they came up with?

Participant 2: it was, it was sort of, they-, it was a mixture I'd say, because I showed them, like I didn't feel comfortable continuing getting changed in the girls changing rooms and they were sort of like here's this option that you can use until you come out and then you can use the boy's bathroom and boys changing rooms which I do now.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: I use boy's changing rooms for gym and I use the boy's bathrooms in the school

Interviewer: and that's what you're comfortable with doing

Participant 2: yeah, that's what I felt I was comfortable with, because they not only researched being trans in general but also like the rights that I have and my mum's really really good about it, she's now a sort of activist I'd say

Interviewer: oh amazing

Participant 2: so she like talked to the school about the rights I have now and how that affects changing rooms and toilets and things like that.

Interviewer: was there anything else in school that they adjusted or that you asked for some sort of support with?

Participant 2: I, like around the sort of time of coming out, not really I think, there's been like things that have come up though that they've handled really really well, like there was this sort incident in my choir group thing, and like it's called Soul Voices in our school, we have like this cultural evening thing and in the practice these two, these two girls were talking a lot and being really really annoying so I like told them to stop, I like shouted at them and told them to stop because they were really getting on my nerves, I already have a history with one of them from being, she was just a very very toxic person and that wasn't good as a human being, but then one of them, this was like before the summer holidays.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: so like I'd come out, this was this year

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: they like, one of them used my old name against me and I tried to say hey you can't call me that, like literally, legally you can't call me that, it's not even my name anymore, like I got a statutory declaration, dec-la *trying to say word correctly*

Interviewer: declaration

Participant 2: declaration and I I changed my name on like my passport, like on my scot card and all that sort of stuff, and I tried to say that to them 'you can't call me that', she was like 'I'm going to call you whatever I want', and then they tried to turn it on me and say it was all my fault for insulting them but the school handled it in a really good

way, and again like stood for me and sort of tried to understand like my rights and things like that, and tried to educate them as well.

Interviewer: do you think that is something that is particularly useful is that they've educated themselves and they're educating the other young people around you

Participant 2: yeah, they continue to educate other young people, like there's been, I don't think there's been many big things, there was only that and the thing with Duke of Edinburgh recently

Interviewer: oh okay

Participant 2: which was a bit stressful because I'm doing like a bronze award and I

Interviewer: good luck

Participant 2: it's tiring

Interviewer: I know, I did it

Participant 2: it's really really tiring, but there was like an issue with tents apparently, there was like an issue one of, because I was supposed to be in a tent with these two other boys and apparently one of them had complained and said they didn't want to be in a tent with me. Which to clarify isn't the bit I was worried about, like I wasn't worried about that. I was more worried because of my instructor, and like my instructor felt like, like I thought that he was transphobic, I was really really worried that he was going to be transphobic because the school, like when someone had complained, the school hadn't dealt with it in an ideal way like they didn't tell Duke of Edinburgh like that I was trans, they didn't tell them that because, I mean, they're not supposed to, but they did, instead of moving that one boy out of the tent they moved me out of the tent.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: and sort of isolated me and separated me, and then, since they, I was really really worried because they didn't tell the Duke of Edinburgh instructor anything but he assumed it was because of my sexuality.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: and then when I told them 'oh it's because I'm trans' he thought that I was born male and transitioned to female, which wouldn't make any sense because I was really close friends with all of the girls who were in my group, so I felt really really nervous because he felt, I thought that he was really really uneducated and that he was going to like be transphobic or something. But the school want to talke to them about that, they went back and sort of fixed things and like now I've I've changed groups, I'm in, I'm in a tent with this other guy who is really really nice, so it all got solved but it didn't

handle the best to begin with but then again, I know that it wasn't their intention to isolate me or hurt me like that, that it was just coincidence

Interviewer: so it would be quite useful for future reference for schools to know that, how to cope with, or deal with those challenging situations

Participant 2: definitely

Interviewer: and to perhaps get your perception and your views a bit before they make a decision?

Participant 2: mm hmm because the worst thing is that I wasn't given any warning that I wasn't moving tents because I thought, because I thought that I wasn't moving tent, I talked to the guys I thought I was in a tent with, and then 15 minutes before we get on the bus to leave, while another instructor was yelling at me to unpack my bag because apparently I had too much stuff in it then didn't understand because I was like 'oh the only thing I'm putting in there is a cooker because I'm in a tent with these other 2 guys', someone just pulls me aside and says 'hey your in a tent with yourself because someone complained', and then blamed it all on school and then just sent me back to continue packing my bag, and then we left.

Interviewer: So you didn't get a chance-

Participant 2: I didn't get a chance to process it or talk to them or understand what was going on.

Interviewer: how did that kind of make you feel at that point?

Participant 2: it made me super stressed and I think it would have been a lot better if the school had talked to me at least a bit beforehand

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: just more like considering how it would affect me and how it would feel because isolating me is like really really hurtful in a lot of ways and I wouldn't just say just for Duke of Edinburgh, I think schools should talk more about like arrangements for things like school trips and stuff like that

Interviewer: okay yeah, yeah

Participant 2: because I'm planning on going on a trip to Iceland next year

Interviewer: oh wow

Participant 2: in the Geography department, so that's a point, so I'll have to get, ill have to get rooms arranged for that as well

Interviewer: and is that something that you feel is going to be a bit more challenging than it would be..

Participant 2: err no, I mean it's not going to be as challenging because it's not like I'm going to have to figure out how I'm going to cook food and put up a tent. I'll have to see because it's like a mixture of S2s and S3s going.

Interviewer: oh okay, yeah. Oh thank you so much for, for telling me so much about your story

Participant 2: no, it's, it's fine, I mean I think this sort of information should like get out there

Interviewer: yeah I'm hoping it will help, help other young people. And just thinking, is there anything we haven't covered because you covered so much in there, I guess, the key things that were involved in making your transition, which sounds mostly successful in terms of feeling very included and involved with the school and quite supported, am I right in saying that?

Participant 2: yeah

Interviewer: the key things were that they listened, that they went off and did their own research, that they're trying to educate the others that they've spoken to you about things like changing rooms and toilets and, and mostly they they are trying to understand as much as they possibly can, would you say that's...

Participant 2: yes, I'd say above all else though, listening is one of the most important things

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: and educating, listening and educating themselves and educating people at school and trying to push for more, not just trans rights but LGBT rights. Like it's just in general

Interviewer: oh and also you're part, head of your, what is it the...

Participant 2: we call it the alliance

Interviewer: the alliance

Participant 2: it's very dramatic yes

Interviewer: I like it, but purposefully dramatic?

Participant 2: it sound like a club or like a gang but it's not it's just like a bunch of people running around screaming. We played cards against humanity this week

Interviewer: did you?

Participant 2: it was fun, it was really fun. Yeah it's been running really well.

Interviewer: excellent

Participant 2: it's, it was set up like 2 years ago, and there was like some falling out stuff inside the group because of like outside drama which was difficult, so I had to like sort of had to become the leader and also I did it for Duke of Edinburgh, but I'm going to keep on being the leader after that

Interviewer: oh excellent

Participant 2: but yeah

Interviewer: do you think that that helps promote, is it, is it just for trans or is it for LGBT the alliance?

Participant 2: it's LGBT+

Interviewer: LGBT+ do you think it helps promote your-

Participant 2: definitely, we've, or I've been, like the whole sort of thing I want to do is try and get knowledge of the group out there and try and educate people more on rights and homophobia and statistics mostly because I know that people listen more, like from experience, people will listen more if they have statistics to back it up. Or at least that's what I've found

Interviewer: okay, yeah, excellent, so having a think back, is there anything that you would have done differently? It's a tough question

Participant 2: It's difficult question, not getting my haircut so bad, I had a really bad haircut

Interviewer: oh

Participant 2: nightmarish haircut when I was like 9 years old, it was a full on emo fringe, it went all the way round to the side

Interviewer: oh yes

Participant 2: to my chin, and I have brown hair so it looked just ugly, and like if I, if I tuned it the other way I just had a bob and (inaudible) I was like no. And that was like when I was 9 so way before I came out.

Interviewer: yeah interesting

Participant 2: but yeah I had a lot a lot of bad haircuts

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Both: ha ha ha

Interviewer: are you happy with the style at the moment?

Participant 2: kind of, I cut my hair a bit short but like I like having hair a bit longer, but, you're not to use this, you're not to use this, probably talking to my parents a bit sooner I think

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: because if I'd, because I was, because of the primary school I was in, I felt like I didn't have a safe space, but my parents would have been accepting. And it would have been also easier to get on blockers and maybe get on the waiting list for hormones through the NHS because, it was just so coincidental that the year I came out was also when there was a huge increase in people coming out and now the waiting list is like a year and half. I mean at least it's not as bad as the Tavistock. Tavistock is, Tavistock is, it is in it's not very good. But yeah, I probably would have talked to someone about what was going on in my head sooner because I was really, I was just very sad for a long time, and I hate when people would say 'you just have to choose to be happy', and I was like 'I can't just choose to be happy'. And it's like my dad would say that to me and I know he meant the best but it would just feel so stupid like I can't just choose to be happy because in order to choose to be happy I have to live my truth. Which is a great quote by the way, 'the only way to achieve true happiness is by living your truth'. But I couldn't do that because I was in a homophobic and probably transphobic primary school who would have not accepted me and wouldn't have let me transition.

Interviewer: so it, if, if there was anything that others could have done differently

Participant 2: I think take more time and listen more before jumping in with your own opinions because like, I love my friends, don't get me wrong, I think they're some amazing people, but when I first came out I remember my friends would just would complain about how tough it was trying to call me by a new name, I went through a lot of names, like at least, I had like a list of names and it had like at least 15 on or something, and I nearly had a middle name but I decided against it because I don't like middle names

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: but

Interviewer: is it quite tough choosing your name

Participant 2: yeah, I think, and when I, I think the name I had at the time was like Connor maybe

Interviewer: okay

Participant 2: and I tried asking my friends 'hey can you try call me by this new name' and they said something along the of 'oh but I've known you for so long it's so difficult' and I found that annoying because my mum who chose my name, like was able to start using my new one really quickly, and it was really really good. All my relatives were really good with that but I mean my family is a very accepting group of people because I, my aunties are together and they're both really really nice and they were really accepting. So yeah

Interviewer: excellent, well thank you so much for everything you've told me

Participant 2: what time is it (inaudible)?

Interviewer: it is 1, just 5 past 1, I've just got one last question which is, is there anything else you'd like to add that you haven't already said?

Participant 2: I can't think of anything serious, I can only think of jokes

Interviewer: well I'm happy to listen to them, okay shall I turn this off

Participant 2: yeah

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