A mixed methods study exploring the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of school staff and educational psychologists in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

Schools in the United Kingdom have been consistently identified as heteronormative organisations within which lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) identities are marginalised. Previous research findings suggest school staff can improve school experiences for LGBTQ+ young people by altering their practices, and that Educational Psychologists are ideally placed to support such efforts, however despite years of social and political change, LGBTQ+ young people still experience ‘othering’ within schools. Exploring the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of school staff and Educational Psychologists provides insight into how able they feel to take action to support the successful education of LGBTQ+ young people.

In this mixed-methods study, school staff (N=62) and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) (N=67) participants completed an online questionnaire comprising an LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scale and open-text boxes gathering qualitative reflections. The findings identified that for both school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified), LGBTQ+ self-efficacy was supported by continuing professional development and direct or indirect LGBTQ+ lived experience, and that a lack of mastery experiences and fears about meeting resistance from others negatively impacted LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. For school staff participants, LGBTQ+ self-efficacy was lower amongst those who taught at primary school than those who taught in secondary schools, and the political context surrounding gender diversity in schools was a concern for Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified). The findings are discussed in relation to self-efficacy theory and implications for educational psychology practice are identified.

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Key terms and definitions

LGBTQ+ - a composite term encompassing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (or questioning). The '+' acknowledges other identities which may not be captured within those terms (Thelwall et al., 2023).

Heteronormativity - "a hegemonic system of norms, discourses, and practices that constructs heterosexuality as natural and superior to all other expressions of sexuality" (B. A. Robinson, 2016, p. 1)

Homotransphobia – the interconnectedness of marginalisations LGBTQ+ people experience: this term describes that negative societal responses to gender and sexuality diversity "are not distinct, but rather entangled moral panics" (Saketopoulou & Pellegrini, 2023, p. xxxv) deriving from heteronormativity.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.0 Introduction

The number of young people with diverse gender and sexuality identities is increasing within the United Kingdom and elsewhere (Office for National Statistics, 2023; Paechter et al., 2021) and supportive school environments serve as a resilience factor for these young people (Leonard, 2022). Supporting LGBTQ+ young people in schools in the United Kingdom (UK) is an area of practice which has a specific cultural, social and political context (Ellis, 2007; Greenland & Nunney, 2008; C. Lee, 2023a). Prior to 2003 in England and Wales (and 2000 in Scotland) such work was effectively restricted by government legislation, Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 (C. Lee, 2019; Baker, 2022; Lee, 2023a). This context is not only important in considering the legacy of such legislation, but upon the extent of available literature, as openly supporting LGBTQ+ young people has become more possible in UK schools in the past 20 years.

The present literature review is thematic, it supported the researcher's exploratory understanding of the existing research available in the areas of teachers and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) supporting LGBTQ+ young people in UK schools, and self-efficacy theory to inform the development of the researcher's exploratory research question.

1.1 Literature search strategy

Extensive searches of the literature were completed in the period between September 2022 and March 2024, via the university library catalogue and Google scholar to establish a foundational understanding of the existing research completed within the United Kingdom. Specific searches were carried using relevant databases available within the university library catalogue, such as Education Research Information Centre (ERIC) and EBSCO (PsycINFO) using key terms. The range of terminology relevant to LGBTQ+ research required the use of multiple terms, including "lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer"; terms relating to gender diversity such as "gender questioning" "gender diverse" and "non-binary" terms relating to the legislative context including "Section 28". Further searches combined these terms with a comprehensive range of terminology for educational-based literature, including "school" "classroom" and "teaching" and to ensure that relevant research from the

United Kingdom was captured, geographical terms were also included in later searches, including "England", "Wales", "Scotland" and "Northern Ireland". These searches provided a general overview of LGBTQ+ education research within the United Kingdom and internationally.

To develop an understanding of research relating to the theoretical framework of self-efficacy, separate literature searches were completed, initially focussed on self-efficacy theory broadly, and then specifically in relation to LGBTQ+ within education and psychology. Searches included LGBTQ+ terms as described above, combined with terms such as "self-efficacy theory" "self-efficacy in education" "teacher self-efficacy" "self-efficacy and psychologists or counsellors or therapists". This identified a broad range of foundational research from which the researcher could establish their understanding of self-efficacy theory within education and psychological professions, and how this may relate to working with LGBTQ+ young people, through research conducted mostly within Europe and North America.

Searches were completed for relevant research conducted within the field of educational psychology in the United Kingdom, using terms such as "educational psychologist self-efficacy" and "educational psychologist LGBTQ+". Educational psychology journals were also searched for relevant literature, including the Division of Educational and Child Psychology journal published by the British Psychological Society; and Educational Psychology in Practice published by the Association of Educational Psychologists.

Further searches sought to bring the topics together by combining search terms relevant to teachers, educational psychologists, self-efficacy and LGBTQ+, and snowball searches were conducted by examining the reference lists of articles and relevant books, to ensure a more exhaustive exploration of the literature.

1.2 The scope of the review

The focus of present literature review is LGBTQ+ research conducted within education and educational psychology in the United Kingdom, to reflect the specificity of the social and political context that has shaped how LGBTQ+ identities are responded to within education, and to the context and role of educational psychologists within the United Kingdom.

A small pool of research exists in the area of psychological and education staff self-efficacy for supporting LGBTQ+ young people, although existing studies were conducted outside of the United Kingdom, they are discussed within this literature review due to their theoretical and methodological relevance to the present thesis.

Literature relating to self-efficacy theory included research from North America and Europe, as this theoretical framework has been explored for several decades internationally within education and the researcher considered that restricting the review to research conducted within the United Kingdom would provide a limited overview of the development of the theory.

1.3 Structure

This review is structured in three sections. Section one introduces the theoretical framework of self-efficacy and how LGBTQ+ self-efficacy has been examined within education and the psychological professions. Section two explores the contemporary social, political and historical context relating to LGBTQ+ identities within schools in the United Kingdom, including a discussion of relevant legislation and policy initiatives, beginning with the introduction of Section 28 and arriving at the present day. Section three examines relevant literature on the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in United Kingdom schools, and the role of teachers and educational psychologists within this.

2.0 Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-Efficacy Theory, a component of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986) is the theoretical basis for the current study. SCT posits that learning takes place within a dynamic context, through social influence and reinforcement in a complex, reciprocal interplay between individuals, their behaviour, and their environments. Bandura (1986) emphasises the role of the individual in this triadic relationship, asserting that people can actively shape (for example) their environments through their behaviours, which are in turn influenced by the environment.

Self-efficacy is a key construct within SCT, and relates to an individual's belief in their ability to complete actions towards desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 2006). Self-efficacy has been defined as "task-specific self-confidence" (Artino, 2012, p. 76) and "confidence in their skills and capabilities to succeed in certain tasks – irrespective of their actual performance" (Zander et al., 2020, p. 1). In this way, self-efficacy beliefs are inherently subjective: they represent a person's own evaluations of what they may be able to achieve, based on the skills they consider they possess, and is not an assessment 'objective' competence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Bandura (1997) identified four sources from which self-efficacy beliefs are derived: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. Mastery experiences are previous experiences of successes at the task, which can support a belief that it can be repeated. Vicarious experiences are those derived through observing other people's performances and evaluating one's own efficacy through social comparison. Verbal persuasion, such as encouragement from others, can influence self-efficacy evaluations: particularly if the source of encouragement is an admired person or seen as credible. Finally, physiological and affective states, such as stress or anxiety, provide internal feedback that individuals can interpret as a reflection of their abilities (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015). Mastery experiences are most strongly linked to subsequent self-efficacy beliefs, as they can be interpreted as providing direct evidence of a person's capabilities (Usher & Pajares, 2008), although self-efficacy beliefs are also influenced by other factors, such as feedback from the other three sources and task difficulty (Bandura, 1997). Bandura emphasised the important role of cognitive evaluations in the process of integrating potential sources of efficacy beliefs, as how a person understands and reflects upon their experiences is critical to the influence of these experiences upon self-efficacy evaluations (Usher & Pajares, 2008).

Self-efficacy beliefs regulate a person's behaviour, such as the level of effort they may give to a task, and the extent to which they will persevere if a task becomes challenging (Bandura, 1997; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2015; Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). In this way, self-efficacy beliefs can influence the choice of task itself, as individuals tend to gravitate towards activities they perceive that they will be able to complete, and can set themselves higher goals for tasks towards which they feel a strong sense of self-efficacy (Zimmerman et al., 1992). Self-efficacy is distinct from outcome-expectation, as it relates to beliefs about the process of making something happen, not necessarily the results of any such process, however Bandura theorised that efficacy beliefs can shape a person's perception of possible outcomes, which in turn, can influence their efficacy beliefs (Dimopoulou, 2016).

Self-efficacy beliefs are understood to be 'domain specific', and not a fixed state, in that it relates to the context and the task in question (Artino, 2012). This means that beliefs about one's ability in one task or situation may not transfer to another context (Bandura, 1997). Reflecting the domain-specific nature of self-efficacy, teacher efficacy has been developed as a distinct area of research. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) defined this as: "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (p. 233). Higher levels of teacher efficacy can support increased effort, which can lead to improved performance and outcomes, and these (mastery) experiences can lead to increased self-efficacy for the task (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Malinen et al., 2013). Self-efficacy has been linked to many areas of teaching practice, including teaching effectiveness and student outcomes (Klassen & Tze, 2014), attitudes towards inclusion (Savolainen et al., 2022), job satisfaction, and burnout (Zee & Koomen, 2016).

2.1 LGBTQ+ teacher efficacy

Brant (2017) argued that within teacher efficacy theory, a specific domain can relate to a particular teaching practice or to working with a defined population, such as LGBTQ+ young people. LGBTQ+ teacher efficacy was defined by M. Jones et al. (2021) as:

> "The self-perceived competency of working with LGBTQ students, or LGBTQ teacher efficacy, includes the self-perceived ability for successfully educating LGBTQ students. Self-efficacy for teaching LGBTQ students also includes the perceived self-capacity to understand interpersonal, school, and societal factors that affect students with diverse sexual and gender identities." (p428)

Teachers' LGBTQ+ self-efficacy has been explored within a small number of studies in the United States of America (USA). In a study of Gender and Sexuality Alliance advisors, Davis et al., (2022) examined relationships between levels of self-efficacy for working with LGBTQ+ young people and length of service as a GSA advisor, participation in professional development, and social-emotional competence. The study found positive relationships between these variables, with social-emotional competence strongly relating to levels of self-efficacy for working with LGBTQ+ young people, suggesting that training which includes developing social-emotional competence may be especially important for increasing LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. However, as some items on the self-efficacy scale had been developed by the researchers without validation in a larger sample, this link may require further exploration.

Brant (2017) identified higher self-efficacy amongst pre-service teachers for working with LGB students and lower self-efficacy for working with transgender individuals. As such, self-efficacy for supporting LGBTQ+ young people may link to the extent to which an individual has relatable life experiences or contexts and may therefore be specific in nature. Indeed, M. Jones et al. (2021) found that general teacher self-efficacy was not shown to predict the self-efficacy of pre-service teachers for working with LGBTQ students, but participants who held heterosexist beliefs had lower levels of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy.

LGBTQ+ self-efficacy may be affected by an interaction between the personal characteristics of the teaching staff and the young people staff are working with. In the USA, the sexual orientation of education staff has been shown to link to LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, with LGBTQ+ individuals reporting higher levels of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy than their heterosexual counterparts (M. Jones et al., 2021; Poteat & Scheer, 2016). Poteat and

Scheer (2016) found that LGB participants had higher self-efficacy for supporting trans young people (in comparison to heterosexual participants) and suggested that this could be linked to LGB participants relating to gender diverse young people by drawing upon their personal experiences as an LGB person, but identified that self-efficacy amongst LGB Gender and Sexuality Alliance advisors was not higher when compared to heterosexual advisors for supporting LGBTQ+ youth of colour. The authors suggested that the homogenous demographic characteristics of the mostly white and cisgendered sample may mean they have limited experience of the intersections between race, sexual orientation, and gender identity, but that LGB participants' direct involvement with the LGBTQ+ community may provide them with increased access to resources or a deeper understanding of trans young people's experiences and challenges, In this study, however, data relating to participants' links to LGBTQ+ communities was not gathered and therefore this may represent an assumption about LGB participants' lives and personal connections.

Whilst some USA studies have found that LGBTQ+ self-efficacy may link to personal identity or beliefs, other research has highlighted that levels of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy may vary depending on the nature of the task. Studies of pre-service teachers (Brant, 2017) and staff who train pre-service teachers (Brant & Willox, 2021, 2022) identified that whilst in general, participants had strong self-efficacy for working with LGBTQ+ individuals, self-efficacy was lower for teaching LGBTQ+ content, making curriculum adaptions, or working to reduce LGBTQ+ prejudices in others. The discipline within which teachers work could also be relevant: M. Jones et al. (2021) identified small but significant differences in levels of heterosexism based on participants' teaching level and subject, and Brant and Willox (2022) found maths and science pre-service teacher educators reported the lowest self-efficacy for integrating this topic within their curriculum, with literature and social studies staff reporting the highest levels. The authors found "many math, and science teacher educators did not believe that the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people and events was relevant to their courses in teaching pre-service teachers how to teach science and math" (p. 6) suggesting that subject-specific support may be necessary when integrating LGBTQ+ matters into teacher training courses. To address the discrepancies and variability in self-efficacy levels, all studies highlighted the need for compulsory training for teachers with mandated and specific content (Brant, 2017; Brant & Willox, 2021; 2022; Jones et al. 2021).

2.2 LGBTQ+ self-efficacy within the psychological professions

Studies in north America have explored the self-efficacy levels of psychological professionals for working with LGBTQ+ people, identifying that increased counselling experience (Ali et al., 2017), holding more advanced counselling qualifications (Dillon & Worthington, 2003) and participating in training is linked to higher levels of affirmative counsellor self-efficacy when working with LGB clients (Alessi et al., 2016). Previous studies have used self-efficacy as an outcome measure for counsellor or mental health worker training and development programmes. In a study of school counsellor trainees in the northeast region of the United States, Luke and Goodrich (2017) found that participants reported increased knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy in working with LGBTQ+ students following participation in an LGBTQ+ training programme and co-facilitating LGBTQ+ groups within a school setting.

Boekeloo et al. (2024) developed a training and skills development programme for therapists and administrative staff working in mental health organisations, finding increases in both individual self-efficacy and that participants reported changes in practice at a systemic level, including increased LGBTQ+ affirming organisational practices and resources. Similar findings about the importance of practical experiences as well as theoretical understanding for counsellors' LGBTQ+ self-efficacy has been identified by O'Shaughnessy & Spokane (2013) in a study which found levels of self-efficacy for working with LGB clients to be positively linked to both the number of training courses they had completed on the topic and the number of LGBTQ+ clients they had previously worked with; and in Canada, McInnis et al. (2022) identified that counsellors self-efficacy to work with transgender clients was positively related to their self-assessed skills and competencies in working with trans clients, and their understanding of trans healthcare terminology.

The studies discussed have limited generalisability, as they draw on participants from a specific geographic region with a particular sociopolitical context relating to LGBTQ+ individuals, their sample sizes were small (Luke & Goodrich, 2017), used convenience sampling (Moses & Cole, 2023), or non-probability-based recruitment methods (Alessi et al., 2016). Participants' attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people may also be relevant to the results of these studies, as self-efficacy for working with LGB clients has been shown to relate to counsellors homophobic (Dillon & Worthington, 2003) and heteronormative beliefs (Moses & Cole, 2023). However, across these studies, a link has been identified between LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, training and practical experiences in working with LGBTQ+ people, and there is some evidence to suggest that increased LGBTQ+ self-efficacy may support

individuals to create change organisationally as well as within their direct work with clients (Boekeloo et al. 2024). SCT would suggest that such changes are likely to be self-reinforcing, where environmental changes can both be caused by, and influence, the behaviour and beliefs of individuals.

As self-efficacy is derived from, and in relationship to, the social context as well as being domain-specific (Bandura 1986), these theoretical assumptions point to the importance of considering wider factors when exploring self-efficacy through research. M. Jones et al. (2021) highlighted that "due to the evolving nature of knowledge, beliefs, and culture, a study of LGBTQ teacher beliefs is most meaningful when considered in the context of the time and place the data were collected" (pg. 439) and therefore when considering how LGBTQ+ self-efficacy may be relevant to the practices of teachers and educational psychologists within the UK, the political and social context of LGBTQ+ identities within education should be examined.

3.0 Political and social context of LGBTQ+ identities in UK schools from 1988 to the present day

3.1 Section 28 (1988 – 2003)

Section 28 was legislation introduced in a specific socio-political context (Ellis, 2007; Greenland & Nunney, 2008). Against the backdrop of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, gay and lesbian people were positioned in the media as a threat to British society and the Labour-led Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) came under criticism by the media and MPs for making available in its resource library a book about a child of two male parents, leading to a 'moral panic' in the right-wing press about the 'dangers' of lesbian and gay people (Baker, 2022; Clarke, 1996; C. Lee, 2019, 2023a; Simpson, 2020). The Conservative government had established 'traditional' (heterosexual) family values as central to their upcoming election campaign (Clarke, 1996; C. Lee, 2023) and following their successful re-election, put forward an amendment to the Local Government Act, in December 1987: Clause 28. Under the Clause, local authorities were prohibited from any activity which would "intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (Local Government Act, 1988; Nixon & Givens, 2007).

Section 28, as the legislation was commonly known, was subsequently introduced into law in 1988, met with opposition including large protests in Manchester and London (Godfrey, 2018). The LGBTQ+ charitable organisation Stonewall was founded in 1989 in response by fourteen volunteers who sought to consolidate efforts to secure LGBTQ+ human rights in the United Kingdom (Stonewall, 2019). Section 28 has been described as "state-sanctioned homophobia" (C. Lee, 2023a). Researchers have identified that, although the legislation had no legal basis to influence actions of individual teachers or schools, its ambiguous wording and the confusion it generated led to a pervasive climate of silence about LGBTQ+ identities within schools, where LGBTQ+ experiences were largely absent from curricula, homophobic bullying went unaddressed, and support for LGBTQ+ students was scarce, if provided at all (Baker, 2022; Clarke, 1996; Douglas et al., 1999; Ellis, 2007; Epstein et al., 2003; Stones & Glazzard, 2020; C. Lee, 2019, 2023; Nixon & Givens, 2007; Simpson, 2020; Warwick et al., 2001).

There is some dispute, however, about whether Section 28 restricted what would have otherwise been a culture of support and inclusion from teachers towards LGB young people. In a study of the experiences of 384 LGB young people, Ellis and High (2004) reported that many participants described experiencing anti-gay behaviours or language from teachers. Although the precise number of such responses is not reported in the research and therefore the frequency cannot be assessed, participants reported experiencing homophobic practices from teachers. The authors conclude that their study challenges the assumption that all teachers were concerned about the consequences of Section 28: "On the contrary, some curriculum treatments of homosexuality may have actually reinforced the marginalization of young people who identified as lgb [sic] and framed this as a 'problem' over which they have some control" (p. 223). In a later article, Ellis (2007) suggests that the study points to some people working in schools at the time feeling justified to share personally held negative views about gay or lesbian people because of Section 28.

Whilst research regarding the impact of Section 28 upon teachers, schools and the young people educated within them has grown over time, there are fewer accounts of how the legislation affected educational psychology. In 2001, while Section 28 remained in force, the Division of Child and Educational Psychology (DECP) at the British Psychological Society published an issue of its periodical *Educational and Child Psychology* relating to sexuality diversity, the first in its history, arising from a conference at University College London. The editorial describes that the conference met its objectives, that 35 EPs

attended, and that a special interest group was established, however it also discusses that the initial response from educational psychologists to the call for papers was ‘disappointing’ and conference organisers received calls and letters in opposition to the event, some of which were described as “abusive and highly offensive” (Monsen, 2001a, p. 6).

Within the DECP publication, Robertson & Monsen (2001) outline that Section 28 had been identified as not legally enforceable within schools, but their experience in practice was that the legislation was often used by schools as an excuse not to approach work relating to lesbian or gay identities. In the same year, one local authority educational psychology service published a paper describing their work to support lesbian and gay young people. Imich et al. (2001) reported that although their local authority legal department considered that educational psychology practice to directly support LGBTQ+ young people would not breach Section 28, they cautioned that such legal interpretations could differ by local authority. However, the authors found this difficult to confirm as they could not identify another educational psychology service who had completed work in relation to lesbian and gay young people, from whom to seek advice. The authors attributed this dearth of practice to the influence of Section 28, and low visibility of lesbian and gay populations, rather than to any reluctance on the part of educational psychologists to address LGBTQ+ bullying, although there is the possibility of other influences: Robertson & Monsen (2001) highlighted that heterosexism is pervasive across society, and educational psychologists “are liable to this form of prejudice and need to take steps to reduce the risk of discrimination” (p. 26).

3.2 From the repeal of Section 28 towards The Equality Act (2010)

The early 2000s in the England, Scotland and Wales saw an increase in legislation to support LGBTQ+ rights, which broadly tracked a societal shift towards more positive attitudes about LGBTQ+ people (Curtis et al., 2019). The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003) was introduced, prohibiting discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation. The following year, civil partnerships were made available to same-sex couples (Civil Partnerships Act, 2004) and the Gender Recognition Act (2004) was passed, providing transgender people legal recognition in their identified gender through application for an updated birth certificate, within the options of ‘male’ or ‘female’. The following year in 2005, legal rights for same-sex adoption were recognised through the implementation of the Adoption and Children Act (2002).

It is within this sociopolitical context that attempts to remove Section 28 from the statutes began. The New Labour government first introduced a bill for repeal in 2000 which was defeated in the House of Lords (Baker, 2022; C. Lee, 2019; Nixon & Givens, 2007). The potential repeal of Section 28 was not overtly welcomed: in 2001, the Education Secretary warned that taking action to remove Section 28 would put the Labour government "in real danger of getting on the wrong side of the argument in relation to the family" (Grierson, 2022). C. Lee (2023a) has argued that repeal of Section 28 was not enacted by government sooner due to concerns not to alienate voters who supported it.

Section 28 was first repealed in the UK in Scotland, following the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, and the introduction of Ethical Standards in Public Life Act (2001). Three years later in 2003, Section 28 was repealed in England and Wales, but the change received little attention in the press and schools were not directly advised that the repeal had taken place (C. Lee, 2023). This may have led to schools operating under the assumption that the law still applied: in a study conducted in the two years following the repeal of Section 28, Greenland & Nunney (2008) found that just under half of participants were unaware that this change had been made. The authors assert that although the legislation was removed, it was not accompanied by significant change in the cultural context from which Section 28 was made possible, such as homophobic suspicions around the 'dangers' of including non-heterosexual identities within education (Clarke, 1996; Epstein et al., 2003; Greenland & Nunney, 2008; C. Lee, 2021). Similarly, Ellis (2007) described that although the repeal of Section 28 brought with it the introduction of school guidance from the Department for Education to address homophobic bullying, the materials did not address how homophobia is enabled by heteronormative school cultures, and that as a result, "those young people in schools who do not identify as straight or are not identified as heterosexual are simply victims or, more precisely within the English policy context, subjects "at risk"." (p. 23).

In 2010, the Coalition government introduced the Equality Act (2010) which provides legal safeguards for nine protected characteristics, including against discrimination based on sexual orientation, marital status (including same-sex marriage and civil partnerships), and gender reassignment. This legislation, still in force today, prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation and the associated Public Sector Equality Duty mandates schools to actively promote equal opportunities for all and to foster positive relationships between groups. Six years after its introduction, the Government Equalities Office commissioned a review of the effectiveness of the legislation in addressing inequality

experienced by LGBTQ+ people in the UK (Hudson-Sharp & Metcalf, 2016). The authors concluded that pervasive heteronormativity within schools continued to marginalise LGBT young people, and that homophobic and transphobic bullying remained a concern. The review acknowledged a limitation that some of the evidence it relied upon was not peer reviewed or based on representative samples. These findings were corroborated in published by research by Stonewall and the University of Cambridge (Bradlow et al., 2017) which found 45% of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people and 64% of transgender young people had experienced bullying at school.

3.3 The role of devolution

Where the Equality Act (2010) applies to England, Scotland and Wales (with separate provisions made for Northern Ireland) (Devine et al., 2022), education in the United Kingdom is devolved, meaning the governments of Scotland and Wales and the executive of Northern Ireland are responsible for the education systems within their respective nations, and the English education system is overseen by the UK government. This has led to "a gradual divergence across all four nations of the UK on schools policy, partly reflecting different policy motivations and priorities" (Sibieta & Jerrim, 2021, p 5), including the guidance offered on LGBTQ+ inclusion and support in schools.

3.3.1 England

In 2018, the UK Government launched its LGBT Action Plan, outlining commitments to reduce LGBTQ+ bullying in schools, and to update guidance to schools to ensure relationships and sex education is inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities (Government Equalities Office, 2018). The following year, the relationships and Sex Education statutory guidance (RSE) was introduced for schools in England (Department for Education, 2019a) and contained a requirement for RSE to be inclusive of LGBTQ+ relationships at secondary level, or to risk an OFSTED judgement of 'requires improvement'. At the same time as this guidance was published, high-profile parental protests began outside a primary school in Birmingham, where teaching on equality and diversity (including LGBTQ+) had previously received awards. Parents and activists held large gatherings outside of the school with placards, where some protesters shared religious objections to the use of children's books where same-sex parents were featured. Homophobic graffiti was written on the school wall targeting a particular member of staff who had been instrumental in the introduction of the

school’s No Outsiders programme, their approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (Lightfoot, 2019).

The protests resulted in further government guidance for primary schools (Department for Education, 2019b), with advice for schools to follow, designating local authorities and academy trusts as responsible for supporting schools in navigating any disruptions. The government’s approach to introducing LGBTQ+ RSE has been criticised for not offering sufficient support to schools, leaving school staff in the difficult position of potentially navigating complex situations between communities without sufficient clarity (Holt, 2023). As teachers delivering RSE in accordance with the guidance are not required to complete training, they may feel unprepared and lacking in knowledge to ensure it is LGBTQ+ inclusive (Cumper et al., 2023). Setty and Dobson (2023) describe that the guidance appears constructed to pre-empt backlash towards LGBTQ+-inclusive RSE, as it states that discussions of non-heterosexual relationships should be introduced when schools consider it appropriate, thus “LGBT topics are, essentially, to remain taboo or secret until some unspecified time, while, presumably, heterosexual relationships are safe and acceptable at any age” (p.88). A similar critique has been made regarding the optionality of LGBTQ+-inclusive RSE at primary school level, and that the guidance contains loopholes whereby schools could avoid teaching about LGBTQ+ relationships on religious grounds (Glazzard & Stones, 2021).

At the time of writing, the UK government had recently closed a consultation on draft non-statutory guidance for gender questioning children in schools and colleges in England (Department for Education, 2023). The guidance received criticism that it would reproduce some of the effects of Section 28, where teachers become concerned about providing support for gender non-conforming young people (C. Lee, 2023b). The Equality and Human Rights Commission identified that although schools required guidance in this area, the draft did not sufficiently integrate existing UK law, such as the Equality Act and the Human Rights Act, and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2024).

3.3.2 Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland

In 2021, the Scottish Government announced it had “become the first country in the world to embed lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) inclusive education across the school curriculum” (Scottish Government, 2021) as it launched a centralised LGBTQ+ education resource and training platform for schools, linked to the Scottish Curriculum. The

approach applies to all maintained schools in Scotland, and includes a commitment to provide LGBTQ+ training to teachers and school inspectors to support its implementation (McBrien et al., 2022). Under Scotland's revised relationships, sexual health and parenthood education guidance, schools are required to ensure the content is LGBTQ+-inclusive, and resources are provided to schools to support this (Scottish Government, 2023). The guidance advises that parents are able to withdraw their children from these lessons, an approach which is consistent with England but diverges from the stance taken in Wales.

Since 2022, LGBTQ+ RSE has been mandatory for all maintained schools in Wales, through the introduction of Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2024b). The RSE curriculum has been described as following a rights-based approach, in contrast to a focus on risk management within England (Rudoe & Ponsford, 2023). Parental opt-out is not permitted under the guidance, a decision which was subject to unsuccessful challenge in the high court by a campaign group opposing the inclusion of LGBTQ+ relationships and family structures within the curriculum (BBC News, 2022a, 2022b). In 2023, the Welsh Government launched its LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, described as a "plan to make Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe" (Welsh Government, 2023, p. 1). The plan includes commitments to provide LGBTQ+ training during initial teacher training and for ongoing professional development, to the development and implementation of whole-school approaches to LGBTQ+ inclusion, and to provide local authorities and schools with guidance relating to trans young people (Welsh Government, 2024a).

The unique sociopolitical context of Northern Ireland influences the lives of LGBTQ+ people within the nation, where religious, socially conservative politics has led to legislation against LGBTQ+ rights, for example, preventing same-sex couples from adopting or from accessing marriage (Duggan, 2024; Travers et al., 2020). Heteronormativity in Northern Irish schools also relates to conservative Christian values, and this has been shown to limit the freedoms of young people who attend them, particularly trans and gender non-conforming youth (McBride & Schubotz, 2017). RSE is mandatory for schools, although there is no requirement for this to be LGBTQ+-inclusive (Department of Education, n.d.). In 2023, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission published a report reviewing the provision of RSE in schools, finding that the majority of schools in their sample had policies which referenced zero-tolerance approaches to anti-LGBQ+ bullying, but that these policies often implied that prejudiced opinions towards LGBTQ+ people were permissible if they were not accompanied by prejudiced behaviour towards others (Northern Ireland Human

Rights Commission, 2023). The report also identified that "approximately one third of schools explicitly stated that their school would teach pupils that heterosexual relationships was the "main" or "ideal" context for sexual intimacy, with one school stating that it was "the most desirable option for a person's psychological development"." (p.57).

The contemporary and historical circumstances surrounding LGBTQ+ identities within UK schools provides important context when seeking to understand the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in schools, and the influences teachers and educational psychologists may have upon this.

4.0 Influences upon the educational experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in UK schools

4.1 Heteronormativity

The effect and reinforcement of heteronormativity within UK schools, and therefore upon the children attending them, has been shown to begin from early years onwards and to lead to negative consequences for LGBTQ+ children and young people (Abbott et al., 2015; Atkinson, 2021; Carlile, 2020; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009, 2010; DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Harris et al., 2022). Heteronormative cultural norms in schools can be understood as creating the conditions for anti-LGBTQ+ behaviours, because as LGBTQ+ sexualities and gender identities do not align to the expectations of heteronormativity, they are constructed as being 'different' and can be targeted as such, through stigmatisation based on their perceived or actual nonconformity (DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Ellis, 2007; Epstein et al., 2003; Formby, 2015; Jadva et al., 2021). LGBTQ+ children are more likely to experience or witness bullying than their non-LGBTQ+ peers (Just Like Us, 2021) and experience anti-LGBTQ+ name-calling, verbal abuse and physical violence (Bower-Brown et al., 2021; Harris et al., 2021; Jadva et al., 2021).

Heteronormativity operates all key stages, including in early years settings where gender roles are reinforced through play and in staff expectations of children (DePalma, 2013). Primary schools have been identified as sites of heteronormativity where the age of children taught in these schools becomes relevant: homotransphobic narratives have been drawn upon to position LGBTQ+ people as a threat to 'childhood innocence' (Llewellyn, 2022; Meyer, 2007) and can silence discussions of LGBTQ+ identities or families (Atkinson, 2021; Carlile, 2020; DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Johnson, 2022). This was demonstrated in

England in 2019 when primary schools were at the centre of protests and 'moral panic' against the introduction of LGBTQ+-inclusive RSE (C. Lee, 2021). Some protesters objected to these lessons on religious grounds, speaking to the tensions which have been identified between LGBTQ+ inclusion and religious belief (Glazzard & Stones, 2021) although Carlile (2020) identified a diversity of practice within faith schools and identified how aspects of religious belief such as acceptance, love and respect, have been drawn upon by staff to support LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Heteronormative school practices can be particularly acutely experienced for LGBTQ+ young people who are gender diverse: in a UK study into the experiences of 13-18 year old non-binary young people in school, Paechter et al., (2021) identified that school curricula and uniform practices promote heteronormative gender binaries, and silence around non-binary identities leave young people without sufficient support to develop self-understanding or access to support for the transphobia they experienced. Bower-Brown et al., (2021) identified similar findings, concluding that within the UK, schools are "ill-equipped" to effectively support young people who may be questioning their gender or identify as non-binary (pg. 89).

4.2 Consequences for mental health

As described by Semlyen (2023) "at minimum, growing up and navigating an identity that is marginal and stigmatised in a society with a strong social desirability bias i.e., heteronormativity, will bring challenges." (pg. 20). Research demonstrates that LGBTQ+ people have higher rates of poor mental health and wellbeing and this is consistent within the youth population (McDermott et al., 2023) . This is understood to result from the frequent social stressors that LGBTQ+ people experience relating to how their identities are responded to in the social world, known as Minority Stress (I. H. Meyer, 2003). Semlyen (2023) outlined the psychological processes encapsulated within Minority Stress Theory which lead to poor LGBTQ+ mental health, including: anticipation of rejection, where constant vigilance for potential negative reactions from others can create a heightened state of anxiety and erode feelings of safety (Pachankis et al., 2020; Walch et al., 2016, as cited in Semlyen, 2023); active concealment of one's sexual identity requiring constant self-monitoring, management of self-presentation and limiting opportunities for authentic self-expression (Pachankis et al., 2020, as cited in Semlyen, 2023); and the internalisation of homophobic and transphobic beliefs through either direct or indirect experiences of discrimination. Other factors include experiencing bullying or rejection, and difficulties

accessing support and health services such as gender-affirming healthcare (Testa et al., 2015; Barras & Jones, 2024).

For LGBTQ+ young people at school, the effects of a negative school environment cannot be easily avoided, as they are required by law to attend school and are not able to change schools without the involvement of their parents / carers, with whom they may not be able to share their LGBTQ+ identity (Walls et al., 2010). LGBTQ+ young people may be 'stuck' in a negative or potentially dangerous schooling situation, which may involve bullying, and the mental health difficulties which can arise from this situation may also be compounded by difficulties seeking support through mental health services, which lack appropriately LGBTQ+ experienced and trained staff, and can require for parental consent to access (Willis & Westwood, 2023). However, LGBTQ+ research in education has been criticised for focusing more significantly on the negative experiences of LGBTQ+ people, leading to an impression of LGBTQ+ lives as being defined hardship (Brett, 2024). Formby (2015) argues that this notion has real-life consequences for LGBTQ+ young people, as where supporting LGBTQ+ youth is conceptualised as 'just' reducing bullying, LGBTQ+ young people are positioned one-dimensionally as victims, leading to work which focuses upon the individual instead of considering wider influences which lead to LGBTQ+ identities being othered, or in understanding LGBTQ+ young people as multi-faceted individuals.

In 2021, the LGBTQ+ Youth Manifesto was published (Jones, 2021). Based on interviews with over 70 LGBT+ young people, the manifesto shares their "vision for a world in which LGBTQ+ youth can live safer, more confident, happier lives". For schools, LGBTQ+ young people wanted to see mandatory training in LGBTQ+ inclusivity; more discussion of LGBTQ+ identities; a rethink of gendered spaces; that harassment of LGBTQ+ young people be taken seriously; provision of LGBTQ+ groups; and improved inclusivity for trans and non-binary people. These suggestions align to the findings of a realist review of school-based interventions to address inequalities in LGBTQ+ mental health which identified a range of factors that were important for these interventions to be successful (McDermott et al., 2023). These included: resources for LGBTQ+ support and activism; policies that explicitly promoted LGBTQ+ equality and addressed LGBTQ+ bullying and discrimination amongst staff and students; inclusive curricula; school staff whom LGBTQ+ pupils can trust and confide in; and staff training and support. The suggestions made by LGBTQ+ young people through the Youth Manifesto and the outcomes of the realist review by McDermott et al. (2023) highlight both the need to take a

systemic approach and for individual staff to take action to improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in school.

4.3 The role of school staff

Research in the UK has consistently highlighted the importance of school staff and school staff in contributing to a LGBTQ+-supportive school environment, showing that staff have a significant impact upon the school environment for LGBTQ+ young people both positively and negatively depending on the nature of their engagement (Brett, 2024; Carlile, 2020; Harris et al., 2021, 2022; C. Lee, 2020; Leonard, 2022; McBride, 2021). Training for school staff in LGBTQ+ matters offers an important aspect of ensuring a safe and inclusive school environment for LGBTQ+ young people (Cumper et al., 2023; Johnson, 2022; McDermott et al., 2023).

Harris (2021) explored teacher and LGBTQ+ student perceptions of school culture and climate, finding that all teachers interviewed attributed difficulties experienced by LGBTQ+ young people to the ignorance of other students who engage in bullying behaviours, and did not describe any teacher behaviours or systemic factors which might contribute to this. Teachers were not routinely aware of the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in their schools, and often considered their school culture to be more supportive of LGBTQ+ young people than was reflected in accounts from LGBTQ+ young people attending those same schools, concluding that teachers' practises (or lack of) can maintain heteronormativity within these environments.

Relationship and sex education (RSE) is an area where LGBTQ+ young people feel excluded, as children and young people are often assumed to hold heterosexual identities, which acts as a consistent barrier to LGBTQ+ young people benefitting from RSE at school (Epps et al., 2023), Cumper et al., (2023) identified a range of professional development needs for teachers in this area, as teacher participants in the study shared uncertainties about how to appropriately address questions about LGBTQ+ relationships, particularly in navigating inquiries related to adolescents 'coming out'; how to provide information in a manner that would not provoke parental objections; and a concern regarding balancing discussing LGBTQ+ relationships with the religious beliefs of parents and families, due to a perception that these parents hold negative views toward non-heterosexual relationships. The authors discuss that the concerns could reflect a cautious approach on behalf of teachers, or as indicative of the 'legacy' of Section 28 and share concerns that schools

have not received sufficient support from government to implement their obligations as described under the Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations (2019).

4.5 LGBTQ+ teachers

Responsibility for the creation of inclusive cultures for LGBTQ+ young people within schools is frequently given to (or assumed by) LGBTQ+ teachers (Carlile, 2020; Llewellyn, 2022; Stones & Glazzard, 2020). Holding an LGBTQ+ identity as a teacher within school can require significant emotional labour. Such labour may be derived from a perceived need to 'come out' and serve as visible advocates or role models for LGBTQ+ young people in school (Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021) or for opposing reasons in schools where sharing one's LGBTQ+ identity feels unsafe due to heteronormative or homophobic cultures, concerns about experiencing direct discrimination, or working within a faith school context (Carlile, 2020; C. Lee, 2019; Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021), although other studies have identified that LGBTQ+ teachers can feel a sense of empowerment from their visibility (Brett, 2024).

The experience of LGBTQ+ teachers in schools has been shown to relate to whether they taught during the time of Section 28. C. Lee (2019) found that 15 years after its repeal, LGBT+ who worked under the Section 28 were far less frequently open with their colleagues and students about their identity than those who had not worked under Section 28. Lee described for 'Section 28 teachers' the data suggested that their experiences of working in schools under the legislation led to them engaging in 'protective behaviours' which continued despite the legislation no longer being in force.

4.6 The role of educational psychologists

There exists only a small body of UK-based research regarding educational psychologists' work in relation to LGBTQ+ young people in schools, mostly published since the 2000s. Since this time, literature published relating to the role of educational psychologists has consistently identified that they are well-placed to support systemic work in this area, to take an holistic view of support for LGBTQ+ young people and make a positive difference at the individual, school, family and policy level (Bowskill (Nee Holdsworth), 2017; Court, 2019; Marks, 2010; Robertson & Monsen, 2001; Yavuz, 2016).

The first issue of the British Psychological Society's Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) publication, Educational and Child Psychology, to cover topics of diverse sexualities was published in 2001 (Monsen, 2001b). Papers explored a range of topics, including identity development (Robertson & Monsen, 2001); disabled children's' constructions of sexuality (Corker, 2001); suicide among lesbian and gay young people (Walker, 2001) and bullying of sexual minorities (Rivers, 2001). This publication was critiqued by Marks (2012), who argued that many of the papers constructed young people with sexual minority identities as victims, and often advocated for intervention at the level of the child without sufficient consideration of wider societal and systemic influences upon LGBTQ+ young people's experiences at school.

However, Robertson & Monsen's (2001) paper within the DECP publication identified that whilst educational psychologists should consider that sexuality may be relevant to the difficulties a child is experiencing at school, they should identify these problems as relating to the "unique pressures" that those who have a minority sexual identity can experience at school. The authors clearly described that educational psychologists had a potentially important contribution to make to creating change within the environments in which LGBTQ+ young people found themselves, rather than taking a 'within-child' focus: "interventions by educational psychologists need to be related to reducing the negative experiences of young gays and lesbians and need to take place at a number of different levels within the educational establishment" (p. 26), and called upon educational psychology services to ensure their psychologists have access to suitable support to do this. Robertson & Monsen (2001) also argued that there was a need for more educational psychology research in this area, a call echoed by Imich et al., (2001) who identified that this area of practice was not often addressed within the educational psychology literature, and that practising educational psychologists rarely published research on the topic.

In their paper examining the implications for educational psychologists when working around lesbian and gay young people, Imich et al., (2001) described that gay and lesbian young people are often mostly understood as victims and cautioned against this, however the paper's subsequent recommendations for practice related to addressing bullying and discrimination, which could align to the very notion of lesbian-and-gay-victims. The recommendations included to address bullying vulnerability amongst gay and lesbian young people; to challenge homophobia; to support lesbian and gay young people to develop coping strategies; to advise on resources to support schools to understand discrimination; and when working with schools "to raise the possibility that behavioural, educational self-

esteem, social skill and emotional difficulties may be related to lesbian and gay issues" (pg. 380). The paper also suggests that educational psychologists could work on whole school approaches in relation to bullying and equalities, concluding that educational psychologists could support environments where lesbian and gay pupils and teachers can be accepted and unafraid.

A decade later, Marks (2012) interviewed seven educational psychologists and examined their constructions of sexuality. The paper identified that two participants shared an implicit awareness of the way heteronormativity can 'other' sexual minorities and reflected upon differences between positive and negative school cultures. Several participants saw the potential for the educational psychology role having a systemic focus in relation to sexual diversity, and that educational psychologists have a sense of responsibility to act in this area, but participants also reflected an uncertainty about what such work would entail, and concerns about how it might be received by others. The study concluded that educational psychologists need greater awareness of the systemic and cultural nature of discrimination that sexual minorities face, and theorised that this could support educational psychologists' confidence to engage in such work.

In recent years, a growing body of educational psychology research has focused on support for gender diverse young people in schools specifically. In a paper of three case studies, Yavuz (2016) argued that educational psychologists are ideally placed to offer support because they work across multiple levels of the system around the child: with families, schools and local authorities, and agencies such as social services. The author describes the potential of the educational psychologist to contribute to several areas of practice, including support for families; professional development for schools through training; and supporting policy development at the school and local authority level.

Similar findings were identified by Bowskill (Nee Holdsworth) (2017) who explored how educational professionals can improve outcomes for trans children and young people. The educational psychology participant group was small (three participants) which limits generalisability, however the study identified that most participants across the groups most frequently encountered problems deriving from that school curricula focused on "hegemonic gender roles" with a lack of diversity, and staff who were ill-equipped or untrained in the area of gender diversity. The author identified that to address this schools needed support to become aware of how the curriculum and other practices can be oppressive towards trans young people, and that educational psychologists are ideally placed to support

systems-level work, but that professional development for educational psychologists around this was lacking.

A paucity of professional development for educational psychologists in the area of gender identity was also identified by Court (2019) In a small qualitative study, five of the seven educational psychologists participants reported having undertaken no training in gender identity. The author calls for educational psychologists to “actively re-position themselves with LAs [local authorities] and in respect to schools” (p. 94) to promote the support they could offer. The findings also pointed to several barriers to educational psychologists practising in this area, including local authority priorities, the positioning of the educational psychology role, and the reactive nature of educational psychology work in the contemporary climate.

In 2022, the DECP published an issue of the Educational and Child Psychology journal dedicated to the topic of gender, sexuality and society; its editorial described that: “the struggle to advocate for the needs and protect the rights of trans and gender diverse people, including children, has become very real for many educational psychologists” (Sargeant et al., 2022, p. 5), identifying a shift in the political climate and a polarisation in the public discourse (P. E. Jones & Brewer, 2020, as cited in Sargeant et al., 2022). Papers within this publication identified that educational psychologists require frameworks and policy guidance in order to support their confidence to do this work (Allen-Biddell & Bond, 2022) but that they are well-positioned to work collaboratively to develop guidance for local authorities and schools, as well as supporting trans young people at an individual level (Connor & Atkinson, 2022; Leonard, 2022).

In a systematic review of educational psychologists’ work to support gender diverse young people in schools, New-Brown et al., (2024) reviewed eighteen papers, including five from the UK. Although the majority of the papers included within the review were from the United States, some commonalities were identified in the experiences of UK educational psychologists and school psychologists in the US, Australia and Cyprus. These included a dynamic and changing context of working with gender diversity, a desire for greater understanding and guidance from their profession and using of personal principles and values to advocate for gender diverse young people within their professional practice. The specific context of each country (and in the case of the United States, each state) is different, and the review did not highlight findings specific to the UK, however psychologists in all countries experienced political, legal, and religious challenges relating to working with gender diversity, difficulties which may explain their desire for guidance and support. The

review also found disparities in the knowledge levels among practising psychologists relating to gender diversity, associating this with an inconsistent approach to how the topic is covered in psychologist training programmes.

5.0 The present study

This literature review has shown that school staff and educational psychologists have been consistently identified within the literature as having the potential to create positive change for LGBTQ+ young people at school. Although social and legislative progress has been made within the past two decades, schools remain heteronormative environments and research continues to conclude that more work needs to be done. Existing studies from north America suggest that the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of psychological and educational professionals supporting LGBTQ+ people is influential upon the actions they may take in this domain, and may relate to prior training, beliefs, experience of working with LGBTQ+ people, and personal characteristics such as identifying as LGBTQ+.

LGBTQ+ self-efficacy has not been explored with school staff or educational psychologists within the UK, a specific context, with its own legal, social and political frameworks. The present research seeks to address this research gap, by exploring the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of school staff and educational psychologists.

The current study adopts M. Jones et al. (2021) definition of LGBTQ+ teacher efficacy: “LGBTQ teacher efficacy, includes the self-perceived ability for successfully educating LGBTQ students [and] the perceived self-capacity to understand interpersonal, school, and societal factors that affect students with diverse sexual and gender identities.” (p. 428). This definition relates to interpersonal and systemic factors, both of which are necessary to creating supportive school environments for LGBTQ+ young people (Carlile, 2020; Yavuz, 2016).

Building upon M. Jones et al. (2021) definition of LGBTQ+ teacher efficacy, the current study defines LGBTQ+ self-efficacy for educational psychologists as: educational psychologists’ belief in the ability to facilitate LGBTQ+ inclusive practice in schools, by supporting the identification and reduction of teaching, pastoral and social practices which may marginalise LGBTQ+ young people.

Chapter 2: Empirical Paper

1.0 Literature Review

1.1 LGBTQ+ identities within UK education

Supporting LGBTQ+ young people in UK schools is situated within a specific contemporary and historical socio-political context. Following decades of campaigning and activism by LGBTQ+ organising groups, the legal framework of the United Kingdom has progressed since the mid-1990s and LGBTQ+ people have been afforded more rights, although at a rate behind other Western European nations (Kollman & Waites, 2011), and which is unevenly distributed across the identities which comprise the collective acronym (Bower-Brown & Zadeh, 2021).

A significant legal change for schools and LGBTQ+ people was the repeal of Section 28, legislation introduced by the Conservative government of the 1980s prohibiting local authorities from actions which would "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (Local Government Act, 1988). Section 28 was repealed in Scotland in 2000 and England and Wales in 2003. The impact of the Section on education has been examined elsewhere, demonstrating that during this time schools were, at best, deserts of support for LGBTQ+ young people, and at worst, hostile and homophobic (Clarke, 1996; Douglas et al., 1999; Ellis, 2007; Ellis & High, 2004; Greenland & Nunney, 2008; Simpson, 2020). Although the legal framework of the UK changed when Section 28 was repealed, this was not directly communicated to schools (C. Lee, 2023a) and as such did not have an immediately liberalising or positive impact upon their approach towards LGBTQ+ identities (Greenland & Nunney, 2008). Despite significant progress in the intervening two decades in terms of how LGBTQ+ inclusion is approached within schools, Section 28 has been shown to have an enduring impact (C. Lee, 2019) and the homotransphobic stigma it articulated is contemporarily realised within, for example, the 'moral panic' which surrounded the introduction of LGBTQ+ inclusive relationships and sex education in England and Wales (Glazzard & Stones, 2021; C. Lee, 2021).

1.2 Heteronormativity

Schools in the UK have been repeatedly identified as heteronormative (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Ellis, 2007; Johnson, 2023; Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021). Within Queer Theory, heteronormativity describes the beliefs and social structures which uphold heterosexuality as default and preferred, (re)enforce gender binaries, and which have the effect of 'othering' those who do not conform to its expectations (Allen & Mendez, 2018; Regan & Meyer, 2021).

As heteronormative ideals are internalised by people living within heteronormative societies (Kitzinger, 2005, as cited in Pollitt et al., 2021), it is perhaps unsurprising that teachers have been shown to experience and reproduce these practices within schools (Abbott et al., 2015; Atkinson, 2021; Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2021). Institutional heteronormativity means LGBTQ+ young people are positioned as 'different' and are therefore marginalised and at increased risk of being targeted through anti-LGBTQ+ bullying and harassment (Ellis, 2007; Harris et al., 2022; McDermott et al., 2023). The experience of navigating heteronormative environments has been shown to induce minority stress for LGBTQ+ people, negatively impacting their mental health and wellbeing . This effect is particularly acute for LGBTQ+ youth and can have lasting harmful consequences throughout the life course (Semlyen, 2023; Willis & Westwood, 2023).

Schools can address this by implementing whole-school approaches to reducing practices which marginalise LGBTQ+ young people, and research has called upon school staff to advance such work (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009, 2010; McDermott et al., 2023). Supporting systemic change in schools is a function of educational psychologists, who have been identified as being ideally placed to help reduce the inequalities LGBTQ+ young people experience at school (Leonard, 2022; Marks, 2010; Sargeant et al., 2022; Schulze, 2017; Yavuz, 2016). However, the extent to which either school staff or educational psychologists believe they *can* take such action - their self-efficacy - is unexplored within the UK.

1.3 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (Bandura, 1986, p. 94) or “task-specific self-confidence” (Artino, 2012, p. 76). Self-efficacy beliefs have been shown to relate to a range of other beliefs and behaviours; individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy will set more ambitious goals, choose tasks which develop their knowledge and skills, and demonstrate greater persistence when faced with challenges than those with lower levels of self-efficacy (Artino, 2012; Schunk, 1991; Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

Self-efficacy beliefs are theorised as deriving from four sources: mastery experiences (previous success or failure at a task); vicarious experiences (observing another person’s successes or failures); social persuasion (feedback from others); and physiological and affective states (emotions and feelings) (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences have the strongest impact upon a person’s self-efficacy, where generally previous success supports self-efficacy and past failure reduces it, although repeated successful experiences can protect self-efficacy beliefs from the negative impacts of intermittent failures (Artino, 2012). As self-efficacy beliefs develop, they do so in relation to a particular domain, and therefore beliefs regarding one’s ability to perform actions in a task or circumstance do not necessarily transfer to a different situation (Bandura, 1997). Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) has been defined as “the beliefs teachers hold about their ability to influence students and includes domains such as learning, motivation, and building trusting relationships” (Narayanan et al., 2023, p. 176). TSE has been shown to link to commitment to teaching (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001); job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012; Fisher, 2011); student outcomes and teacher burnout (Zee & Koomen, 2016).

1.4 LGBTQ+ self-efficacy

Reflecting the domain-specific nature of self-efficacy beliefs, M. Jones et al. (2021) defined LGBTQ+ teacher efficacy as relating to one’s “self-perceived ability for successfully educating LGBTQ+ students” including the ability to “understand interpersonal, school, and societal factors that affect students with diverse sexual and gender identities” (p. 428).

In the United States, a small body of research has explored teacher and education staff self-efficacy for working with LGBTQ+ students. Studies have identified generally robust levels of LGBTQ efficacy amongst preservice teachers for working with LGBTQ+

young people (Brant, 2017), and that LGBTQ+ self-efficacy may be impacted by length of time in role and participation in LGBTQ+ professional development (Davis et al., 2022), the subject area within which they teach (Brant & Willox, 2021), and differences between teachers' personal characteristics and those of the LGBTQ+ young people they work with (Poteat & Scheer, 2016). M. Jones et al. (2021) found that heterosexist beliefs to be a strong predictor of LGBTQ+ efficacy, with higher LGBTQ+ efficacy associated with lower heterosexist beliefs. The study also found that participants who identified as LGBTQ+ had on average higher levels of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy and lower levels of heterosexist beliefs than heterosexual participants. This finding could offer further insight into why work to support LGBTQ+ young people is often undertaken by LGBTQ+ teachers in UK schools (Brett, 2024; Carlile, 2020; Stones & Glazzard, 2020).

Outside of the UK, LGBTQ+ self-efficacy amongst the psychological professions has been explored in previous research (e.g. Alessi et al., 2016; Ali et al., 2017; Dillon & Worthington, 2003), however, studies have examined self-efficacy for direct work with LGBTQ+ young people, and not the dimension of enabling systemic changes that research has identified UK educational psychologists as needing to support (Yavuz, 2016). Within the UK, studies exploring the potential and actual role of educational psychologists in relation to LGBTQ+ young people have made similar conclusions in over two decades of research: that educational psychologists are ideally placed to support schools to be more LGBTQ+ inclusive but such work is rare (Marks, 2012; Robertson & Monsen, 2001).These findings might suggest that educational psychologists lack LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, but research is yet to explore this.

As efficacy beliefs can impact upon whether individuals engage in particular tasks or not (Bandura, 2006) the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of school staff and educational psychologists could be instrumental in whether LGBTQ+ inclusion work takes place. As such, research is necessary to explore the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of both school staff and educational psychologists, to better understand the influences upon these beliefs, and develop implications for practice.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research objectives

The objective of this exploratory study was to explore the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of school staff and educational psychologists working within the United Kingdom to develop an understanding of factors which may be supportive or inhibitive. A convergent mixed methods study was designed to allow the researcher to compare and explore similarities and differences between quantitative and qualitative survey data to build a broader understanding of the topic than would be possible using one method alone. The aim was that findings from this research could be of practical use to educational psychologists, both in their work with schools and to support the development of the educational psychology workforce.

2.2 Research Question

The exploratory research question that this study sought to answer was:

> What promotes or inhibits the self-efficacy of school staff and educational psychologists to support LGBTQ+ young people at school in the UK?

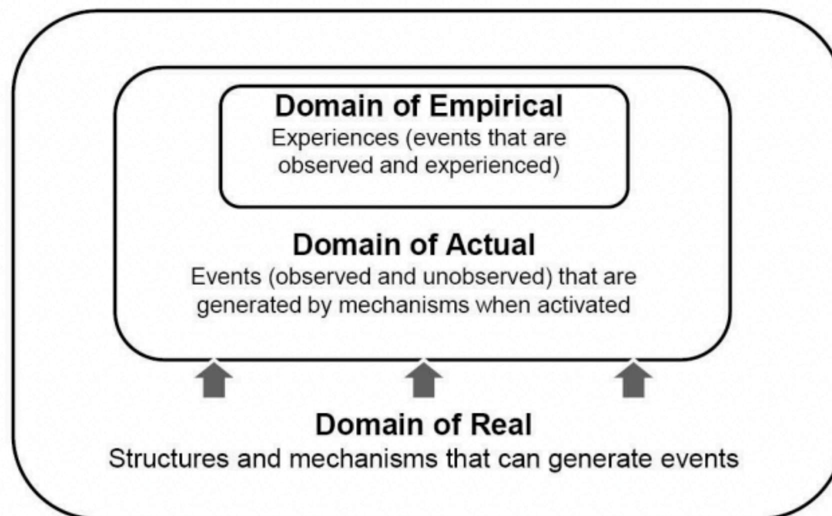
2.3 Ontology and Epistemology

This research was conducted within the Critical Realist paradigm, one which holds that a definable reality exists, but that individuals have their own conceptualisation of this reality based upon their own lived experiences, values, language and culture (Ussher, 1999). Critical Realism describes how mechanisms within different domains of reality may interact to produce observable phenomenon (Bhaskar, 2008). Within this paradigm, social reality is understood as having three domains: the Real, the Actual and the Empirical (Figure 1). Within the Real domain are social structures which ascribe resources and power to individuals, and these are understood to have an influence over the actions individuals can undertake. The Actual domain is where events occur: these events are considered to exist because of the actions taken within the Real domain. Where events in the Actual

domain are observable, such observation is understood as taking place within the Empirical domain. Considering the application of this paradigm to research, critical realism seeks to explore underlying mechanisms that potentially influence a research question (Bhaskar, 2008; Booker, 2021).

Figure 1:

Three Domains Within Critical Realism (Raduescu & Vessey, 2009)



2.3.1 Critical Realism and Mixed Methods

A mixed methods approach was chosen to address the research question. Mixed methods research seeks to bring greater understanding of a research problem than would be possible were the research conducted using a singularly quantitative or qualitative approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). McCrudden et al. (2019), drawing upon the work of Teddlie & Tashakkori (2012), cited two important features of mixed methods research as paradigm pluralism (the belief that many paradigms can be compatible with mixed methods research), and methodological eclecticism (drawing upon methods which are most appropriate for the research question). Mixed methods uses quantitative and qualitative methods and integrates findings from both “in a way that potentially maximizes the strengths and minimizes weaknesses of each respective method” (McCrudden et al., 2019, p. 2). Proudfoot (2023) argues for the compatibility of mixed methods research with the

critical realist paradigm due to its “ontic depth” and “epistemic relativism” – that as critical realism posits that realities are layered, complex, and subject to constant change, it follows that attempts to examine or understand phenomena will require the use of varied methodologies depending upon how the subject in question is viewed.

The present study draws upon the theory of self-efficacy. Booker (2021) observed that “psychological research has developed bodies of theory involving constructs…all considered to be entities which have a causal role in influencing or determining the behaviour of an individual in a particular context at a particular moment” (p. 244) and argued that self-efficacy meets Bhaskar’s criteria to be considered ontologically real. Booker (2021) described self-efficacy beliefs as existing within the real, actual, and empirical domains as an individual’s ‘internal world’ (within the domain of the real) has an influence upon their actions (within the domain of the actual) which we can seek to observe or measure this (within the domain of the empirical). As mixed methods approaches allow for the identification of trends within large-scale data that difficult to achieve through a purely qualitative method, whilst also facilitating the exploration of participants’ views lacking quantitative approaches (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), it allows for phenomenon to be explored across the three domains within critical realism.

In the current study, the researcher understands that participants’ perceptions of their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy will be influenced by events at each of the levels of reality, where political context and social structures interact with individual beliefs and experiences to influence participant actions. Both quantitative measures and qualitative accounts of self-efficacy returned data pertaining to these participants’ subjective experiences, as influenced by activity within each of these domains. As such, participants’ accounts are understood not as an attempt to measure an objective truth but that the experiences shared by participants are necessarily subjective and socially, politically and temporally situated (Bhaskar, 2008; Booker, 2021).

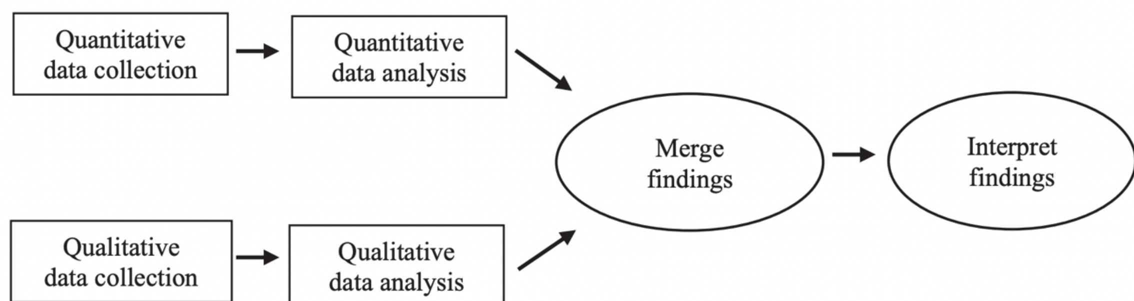
2.4 Research design

2.4.1 Convergent mixed methods design

The research question was addressed using a convergent mixed methods design, used “when the researcher wants to compare quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings for a complete understanding of the research problem” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 69). Within convergent mixed methods, data collection can occur at the same timepoint but data is analysed separately and integrated to explore possible convergences or divergences between qualitative and quantitative findings at the point of interpretation to broaden the insights offered by each strand (McCrudden et al., 2019). Integration is a key feature of mixed methods research, a process which creates insights that could only be achieved through the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches and would not be accessible were a single method used (McCrudden et al., 2019; O’Cathain et al., 2007).

Figure 2:

Convergent mixed methods design (from McCrudden et al., 2019)



2.5 Participants

2.5.1 Participant group one: School staff

The initial inclusion criteria for this participant group were that they should be currently working within a compulsory education setting (Key stage 1 – Key stage 5) in a teaching role within the United Kingdom. This participant group will be referred to as *school staff.*

Following ethical approval, data were collected from a convenience sample of school staff within the United Kingdom. Sixty-five school staff participants completed the survey. Of these, one participant was excluded from analysis for not meeting the inclusion criteria of working within the United Kingdom. Two participants were excluded for providing incomplete responses. The final participant total for this group was (N=62).

The majority of participants from this group indicated their role was best described as teacher (*n* = 39); followed by mid-level leadership role (*n* =11); senior leadership team (*n* = 7); pastoral role (*n* = 2); headteacher (*n* = 2) and teaching assistant (*n* = 1). Two participants submitted a response under the 'other' option: one to indicate they occupied an assistant headteacher role (*n* = 1) and one assistant headteacher and SENCO (*n* = 1).

The length of time participants had spent teaching in compulsory education ranged from 1 years' teaching experience to 33 years (M = 11.19, SD = 7.47). To support further analysis, school staff participants were divided into two groups based upon their length of teaching experience: early career (n=10) and non-early career (*n* = 52). Early career participants were those who were within the first two years of teaching, and are therefore an Early Career Teacher (Department for Education, 2022).

Most participants currently worked at key stage 3-4 (*n* = 35) followed by key stage 1-2 (*n* = 20), and key stage 5 (*n* = 2). The remaining participants did not share the key stage of their school, and these have been grouped by type of provision: independent school (*n* = 2); SEND / specialist school (*n* = 2) and multiple schools (*n* = 1). The majority of participants indicated they worked in a school based in England (*n* = 51) with a smaller number working in Scotland (*n* = 10). The survey received no responses from school staff participants working in Wales or Northern Ireland, meaning that results do not reflect all nations of the United Kingdom. One participant indicated via the 'other' option that they worked outside of

the United Kingdom, and their response was subsequently excluded from analysis for being outside of the scope of the present study.

Participants were asked to indicate whether they identified as LGBTQ+ using a multiple-choice question of three options: yes; no; not sure. Given the sensitivity of this personal information, a subheading was added to this question to advise participants that if they would prefer not to provide this information, they should leave the question blank. All participants submitted a response to this question. Most participants answered yes to indicate that they did identify as LGBTQ+ (*n* = 34) with a smaller number indicating they did not identify as LGBTQ+ (*n* = 28). In response to a question asking whether they had LGBTQ+ friends or family, a large majority of participants answered yes (*n* = 58) with only a small number indicating they did not (*n* = 4). Most school staff participants had completed CPD relating to LGBTQ+ matters (*n* = 42) with a smaller number responding no (*n* = 19). One participant indicated they were not sure if they had engaged in professional development in this area (*n* = 1).

2.5.2 Participant group two: Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)

The inclusion criteria for this participant group were to be working within the United Kingdom in an educational psychologist capacity, which included qualified educational psychologists and those currently in training. This participant group will be referred to as *Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)*. Following ethical approval, 67 Educational Psychologist (Trainee and Qualified) participants completed the survey – all participants returned completed responses and met the inclusion criteria, and therefore the final participant total for this group was N = 67.

Participants were asked to indicate using a multiple-choice question whether their role was best described as Educational Psychologist, Trainee Educational Psychologist or Other. Among the participants, *n* = 32 were Trainee Educational Psychologists, and an equal number indicated that they were Educational Psychologists (*n* = 32). Three participants submitted a response under the option 'other' and detailed their roles as "Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist"; "Specialist Senior [specialism]"; and "Tutor on EP training course and locum EP". Participants were presented with a multiple-choice question to identify their geographic region of within the four nations of the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland) and an 'other' option. Geographically, the

large majority (*n* = 66) worked in England, with one participant working in Northern Ireland, and no participants based in Scotland or Wales.

Participants time in role ranged from less than one year to 23 years (M = 5.56, SD = 6.02). Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) were divided into two groups: early career and fully qualified. Early career Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) included those presently undertaking a Doctoral training course (also known as trainee educational psychologists) and those within the first two years post-qualification. Fully qualified educational psychologists were participants who had more than two years' experience post-qualification. One participant did not answer this question and therefore is not included within a group. In total, *n* = 45 participants were early career educational psychologists, with *n* = 21 fully qualified.

Participants were asked to indicate, using a yes / no multiple-choice question, whether they would describe themselves as LGBTQ+. Guidance text above the question advised participants that this question was optional and that they could leave this blank if they wished to. In total, *n* = 13 participants reported that they identified as LGBTQ+, *n* = 54 indicated they did not. Participants were asked whether they had friends or family who identified as LGBTQ+, from a choice of yes, no and unsure. The majority of the sample (*n* = 60), reported having friends or family members who identify as LGBTQ+, while (*n* = 7) reported that they did not.

Finally, participants were asked to indicate whether they had completed continuing professional development (CPD) in LGBTQ+ matters from three options: yes, no and not sure. In total, *n* = 46 participants reported having undertaken CPD in this area, a smaller number (*n* = 18) indicated that they had not completed such CPD, and *n* = 3 reported that they were unsure.

Table 1

Demographic make-up of each Participant Group

Variable	School staff	Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)
Country		
England	51	66
Scotland	10	0
Northern Ireland	0	1
Career stage		
Early career	10	45
Not early career	52	21
LGBTQ+ identity		
Yes	34	13
No	28	54
LGBTQ+ Friends / Family		
Yes	58	60
No	4	7
LGBTQ+ CPD		
Yes	42	46
No	18	18
Not sure	1	3
Total	62	67

2.6 Procedure

Following ethical approval, (Appendix A), survey data was gathered using the online platform Microsoft Forms. Participants were required to indicate that they had read and understood the participant information and consented to participating ahead of proceeding to complete the survey.

Online surveys are low cost to develop, can be completed quickly and distributed with relative ease, however they can lead to sample bias and low response rates (Fan & Yan, 2010). To address these potential problems, the survey was distributed to a wide range of networks, including: social media; directly to schools and organisations working in and around education and educational psychology such as teaching unions and

educational psychology professional networks; to professionals supporting the training of educational psychologists; LGBTQ+ charities who complete work within schools; and snowball recruitment via word of mouth. In addition, after seeking the appropriate permissions, the survey link was circulated to those working within the educational psychology service in which the researcher completed their professional placement.

The survey for school staff participants was open to responses for 10 weeks. Towards the end of this period, the researcher ceased to receive new responses and was satisfied that data saturation had been reached. The survey for educational psychology participants opened subsequently to the school staff survey, for a period of six weeks, at which point the number of participants from this group was approximately equal to the school staff participant group. As this would allow for a more symmetrical analysis, and with the reduction in frequency of responses noted towards the end of educational psychology participant data collection, the researcher was satisfied that closing the survey at this point was appropriate to the research aims.

2.7 Materials

The survey questions asked for participants' demographic data, quantitative LGBTQ+ self-efficacy ratings, and qualitative reflections upon supports and inhibitors for participants confidence in this area (Appendix C).

2.7.1 Demographic information

Participants were prompted to provide demographic information to enable an assessment of characteristics represented in the final dataset, and to allow for exploration of differences between demographic groups. Demographic questions were designed to seek information regarding characteristics which could be potentially pertinent to self-efficacy evaluations, as identified through the literature review.

For school staff this included the nation in which the participant was based; the type of education setting the participant worked within (i.e. primary, secondary); for how many years the participant had been teaching; the role they occupied (i.e. leadership, classroom teacher); whether they had completed any continuous professional development (CPD) relevant to working with LGBTQ+ young people; whether they personally identified as LGBTQ+; and if they had LGBTQ+ family or friends.

Demographic data for Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) was similar to that gathered from school staff participants, with removals and additions made to reflect their working context. This included: the nation in which the participant was based; the length of time they had been working as an educational psychologist; whether they personally identified as LGBTQ+; whether they had family and/or friends with an LGBTQ+ identity; and whether they had engaged in any continuous professional development in the area.

2.7.2 Quantitative measures

2.8.1 The Multicultural Efficacy Scale adapted for working with LGBT students (M. Jones et al., 2021).

This study used an existing self-efficacy measurement instrument taken from M. Jones et al., (2021), first used in a study of pre-service teachers in the United States of America. To create the scale, M. Jones et al. (2021) adapted an existing multicultural self-efficacy scale (Guyton & Wesche, 2005), adapted to measure LGBT teacher efficacy. In developing the survey instrument, M. Jones et al. (2021) undertook a pilot phase, completing a confirmatory factor analysis which indicated that all scale items loaded onto the single construct of LGBT teacher efficacy, and establishing satisfactory internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha (α = .97).

In the present study, a small terminology change was made to four items to ensure relevance to the United Kingdom context, with the word 'instructional' changed to 'teaching' as 'instruction' implies a directive teaching pedagogy which is not reflective of the range of teaching styles used across schools across the UK. The instrument consists of 20 statements beginning with 'I can', for example, "I can identify school practices that may harm LGBT students" to which participants indicated the extent of their agreement or disagreement using a four-point scale (4= *strongly agree*, 1 = *strongly disagree*). This scale was provided to school staff participants and satisfactory internal consistency was established using Cronbach's alpha (α = .96).

Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants received the same 20-item scale as school staff participants, with minor wording adaptations to address the construct of Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) LGBTQ+ self-efficacy and their working context. Each statement was amended from "I can" to "I can support schools to", for example, "I can support schools to identify school practices that may harm LGBT

students”. Satisfactory internal reliability was established for the scale using Cronbach’s alpha (α = .95).

To further reflect the working context of Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) , where provision of training has been identified as a core function of the role (Scottish Executive, 2002) and in line with existing research findings recommending teachers receive LGBTQ+ professional development, an additional item was added to the scale for Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants: “I can provide training for schools on how to create a supportive environment for LGBT young people” to explore Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) self-efficacy within this specific domain.

2.7.2 Qualitative data

Proudfoot (2023) recommended that when gathering quantitative data via survey researchers should “consider the inclusion of qualitative survey open responses as a valuable facilitator which supports the interaction between the data strands” (p. 322).

School staff participants were invited to provide qualitative data via two free text boxes in response to the following prompts: 1) At school, what supports your confidence in working with or supporting LGBT young people and 2) Is there anything that makes you feel less confident in working with or supporting LGBT young people at school?

Educational psychologist (trainee and qualified) participants were invited to provide qualitative data via two free text boxes in response to the following prompts: 1) In your role as an EP or TEP, what supports your confidence in enabling schools to work with or support LGBT young people? 2) Is there anything that makes you feel less confident in supporting schools to work with or support LGBT young people at school?

2.8 Data analysis

Data from school staff and educational psychologist (trainee and qualified) participants were initially analysed separately, following the same process as outlined in this section. The synthesised data from each group was then compared to identify points of convergence and divergence (McCrudden et al., 2019). As the present study is exploratory in nature, exploratory approaches to data analysis were taken, with the intention of develop

new insights and establish initial foundations for further research (Swedberg, 2020, as cited in Haile, 2023).

2.8.1 Quantitative analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 29 (SPSS 29). A mean self-efficacy score was generated for each participant. Descriptive statistics were generated to measure frequencies within the sample, and subsequent to tests for normalcy, independent samples t-tests were used to examine differences in self-efficacy by demographic group (e.g. LGBTQ+ identity, country).

When selecting the independent t-test as a mode for analysing data, several assumptions must be met. The data should be derived from a sample with an approximately normal distribution, as for the Student's t-test, the null hypothesis is that both groups have the same mean and standard deviation (West, 2021). Participants assigned to each independent group must be distinct from one another (i.e. they should not be able to belong to both of the groups being compared) and the groups should have equal variances, which can be tested using Levene's test for equality of variances (Kim, 2013). Where the groups do not have equal variances, the Welch's t-test can be selected, which accounts for unequal variances with a level of power which is similar to the Student's t-test (West, 2021).

2.8.2 Qualitative analysis

Qualitative analysis followed an adapted version of structured tabular approach to thematic analysis with brief texts. The process as outlined by Robinson (2022) includes eight-stages, which was adapted to meet the requirements of the present study as, for example, Robinson's process includes collaborative code-checking with co-researchers which was not part of the present study. The process uses a spreadsheet to complete the analysis and does not require the use of specialist qualitative analysis programs, which Robinson argues makes it an accessible process to all researchers.

Three versions of the structured tabular approach to coding are described by Robinson (2022): inductive, deductive, and hybrid inductive / deductive. A hybrid approach to coding was chosen for the present study. Proudfoot (2023) argues that hybrid coding "helps to ensure that the voices of the participants are valued, while simultaneously allowing for more theory-led analysis" (p. 309), and as such, it was felt this suitably reflected the theoretical underpinnings and exploratory nature of the present study. Robinson (2022)

demonstrates that the structured tabular approach can accommodate latent or semantic coding, as described by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The length of qualitative comments submitted by participants was varied, with some participants providing only single words or phrases and others several sentences. Semantic coding was therefore used across all data, with further latent coding applied to those data extracts where longer reflections were provided by participants.

Table 2 outlines the stages followed for the qualitative analysis, adapted from Robinson (2022).

Table 2

Phases of the Structured Tabular Approach, as Applied to the Present Study.

Phase (as described in Robinson, 2022)	**Actions taken by researcher in present study**
Phase A: identification of a-priori themes	A-priori themes developed in alignment to Bandura's (1997) four sources of self-efficacy: Mastery experiences; Vicarious experiences; Verbal persuasion; Physiological and affective states.
Phase B: deep immersion in the data	All qualitative data imported into spreadsheet with one participant per row. Participant number and demographic data in columns alongside the qualitative data. All data was read through repeatedly to develop familiarity and initial notes were taken.
Phase C: generating initial codes and themes	Initial codes were identified to capture concepts and ideas communicated by the participant. Multiple codes were identified for each item of qualitative data, as participants' comments often reflected several concepts and ideas. Codes were derived from both the a-priori codes and text itself. Codes were then drawn together into clusters based upon common ideas and linked concepts, and these clusters began to amount to themes. This process was iterative and repeated several times, with changes made as greater familiarity and depth of analysis was achieved through repeated engagement with the data and coding. (Appendix D1).

Phase D: Tabulating themes against data segments	New spreadsheet created and initial themes written into top row. All data extracts copied into first column of spreadsheet and data assigned into a theme, to ensure the qualitative dataset was sufficiently captured by the themes. This process was iterative and moving between this phase and Phase C supported the development of robust themes. (Appendix D1).
Phase E: Checking interanalyst agreement	This stage is for co-researchers and coding teams and therefore was not completed by the researcher
Phase F: Exploring Theme Frequencies	The number of data extracts within each theme were counted and totaled overall and by demographic group to add a further dimension of analysis and identify how substantial each theme was in terms of the dataset overall. (Appendix D1).
Phase G: Developing Thematic Maps and Diagrams	Diagrams were made on paper initially and then electronically to establish relationships across themes and sub-themes, to provide further insight into how the themes connected or overlap.

Robinson (2022) describes that a useful aspect of this approach to analysing brief texts which may differ from other qualitative approaches, is the possibility of calculating quantitative information about the qualitative data, such as theme frequencies. Although the author cautions that a high count of a particular topic within the data does not necessarily in and of itself justify a theme, Robinson describes that by surfacing quantitative information as part of the qualitative analysis using structured tabular approach to thematic analysis with brief texts, a researcher can "convey some information on the salience and importance of a theme" (p. 197), in addition to the qualitative processes followed within the approach.

Following the identification of themes, a process of synthesis was employed to integrate the qualitative findings with quantitative data. This approach aimed to develop a more holistic understanding of the research problem through a greater depth of insight than would be possible using either method in a standalone manner.

2.9 Ethical considerations

The researcher consulted ethical guidelines relevant to the discipline, the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021) and BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational

Research (2018). Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of East Anglia Ethics Committee. To ensure informed consent was sought from participants, participants could not proceed to complete the survey without first indicating they had read and understood the information contained within the participant information sheet detailed within the survey (Appendix A1). The information sheet informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage until the point of submission, as the responses submitted were anonymous and therefore it would not be possible to identify their data once the survey had been completed. To further support the anonymity of participants, questions seeking qualitative responses included an instruction to not include any information which would make it possible to identify them, their colleagues or their places of work.

In Queer Data, Guyan (2022) argues that no research is value-neutral and can (re)produce harm towards LGBT people, particularly those who hold identities which are most marginalised. This study sought to collect sensitive personal information regarding LGBT identity, identities within education which have been subject to historical and contemporary prejudices shown to have a negative impact upon the individuals who hold them (C. Lee, 2023). As such, where participants were asked to share this information, an additional prompt was included to remind them they could leave the option blank if they wished to.

3.0 Findings

This section will explore quantitative and qualitative findings for each participant group separately, followed by an integration of the data across participant groups to explore key findings for the research as a whole.

3.1 School staff participants

3.1.1 Quantitative analysis

3.1.1.1 Distribution

For each participant, a score on the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scale was calculated. On average, school staff reported high levels of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy (M = 3.03; SD = .603). Due to sample size, determining the distribution of these scores was important to ascertain if the data met the normality assumption needed for the use of parametric tests like the t-test. Tests of skewness (to measure the symmetry of the distribution) and kurtosis (to measure the 'tailedness' of the distribution) were completed and histograms were examined to support the analysis of normality.

A skewness value of -.335 (*SE*=0.34) indicated that the distribution was skewed to the right and kurtosis value of .426 (*SE*=0.59) indicated that the distribution was heavy tailed. This means overall efficacy of the sample was skewed towards positive responses, and therefore differences between groups may be harder to identify. However, the skewness and kurtosis values are within the acceptable range of between -1 and +1 (Mishra et al., 2019). Nonetheless, for sample sizes of $n < 300$, these values may be less reliable due to the influence of standard error on smaller sizes. To address this, a z-score for skewness and kurtosis can be computed and interpreted to establish the normality of the data by dividing the skewness and kurtosis values by their standard error values (Mishra et al., 2019). Applying this equation to the data resulted in z-scores of 1.167 for skewness and 0.711 for kurtosis, results which meet the required value of ±1.96 necessary to conclude that the distribution of the sample is normal (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012). Following these results, it was decided that the quantitative data met the assumption of normality required to complete the independent samples t-tests.

3.1.1.2 independent t-tests

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to explore potential self-efficacy differences between participant groups, based upon reported demographic characteristics. Participants were divided into groups based upon: key stage; location of school; LGBTQ+ identity; LGBTQ+ friends and family; and prior experience of CPD.

3.1.1.2.1 Key stage

The majority of participants in the sample reported working at either primary or secondary level, and therefore two groups were created to enable a comparison across these key stages. All participants who described working in a primary school (n = 18) were put into the Key Stage 1-2 group, in addition to two participants who reported working within a junior school. All participants who described the school they worked in as a secondary school (n = 33) were placed in the Key Stage 3-4 group. Of the four participants who described working in an independent school, two described the level of their school as secondary and therefore these participants were integrated into the Key Stage 3-4 group.

In total, the two groups contained 89% of participants (Key Stage 1-2, n = 20; Key Stage 3-4, n = 35) with the remaining participants representing groups of numbers too small for meaningful comparison (specialist school, n = 2; independent school, n = 2; FE college, n = 2; multiple schools, n = 1).

Levene's test of equality of variances indicated that equal variances between the groups (p = .581) could be assumed. School staff participants who worked at Key Stage 3-4 level reported higher average levels of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy (M = 3.16, SD = 0.52) than those who worked at Key Stage 1-2 (M = 2.72, SD = 0.64). This difference, 0.432, CI [0.111, 0.754] was significant t(53) = 2,69, p = 0.005 and the effect size d = 0.756 was large.

3.1.1.2.3 Continuing professional development

A total of 61 participants were divided into two groups: participants who had completed LGBTQ+ CPD (n = 42) and participants who had not completed LGBTQ+ CPD

($n = 19$). One ($n = 1$) participant was excluded from this analysis as they submitted a "not sure" response to the CPD question. Levene's test of equality of variances indicated that equal variances between the groups ($p = .065$) could be assumed.

On average, school staff participants who had completed LGBTQ+ continuing professional development reported higher levels of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy (M = 3.17, *SD = 0.48*) than those who had not (M = 2.7, *SD* = .070). This difference, 0.476, CI [0.163, 0.789], was significant $t(59) = 3.04$, $p = .002$ and the effect size $d = 0.842$ was large.

3.1.1.2.4 LGBTQ+ identity and self-efficacy.

A total of 62 participants were divided into two groups: LGBTQ+ participants ($n = 34$) and non-LGBTQ+ participants ($n = 28$). Levene's test indicated unequal variances between the two groups ($F = 5.01$, $p = 0.029$) meaning the necessary assumption for the use of t-test was not met. As such an alternative approach, Welch's t-test was chosen, which has similar power as Student's t-test and can be used to compare differences between groups with unequal variances (West, 2021).

The mean LGBTQ+ self-efficacy score for the LGBTQ+ participants (M= 3.16, SD= 0.67) was slightly higher than non-LGBTQ+ participants ($M = 2.88$, SD= 0.47). Results of this t-test indicated that this difference was non-significant $t(59) = 1.85$, $p = 0.34$, $d = 58$). Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the groups was retained.

3.1.1.2.5 LGBTQ+ friends or family and self-efficacy

A total of 62 participants were divided into two groups, based on whether they indicated they had LGBTQ+ friends or family ($n = 58$) or did not have LGBTQ+ friends or family ($n = 4$). Although the group sizes were different, Levene's test of equality of variances indicated that equal variances between the groups could be assumed ($p = .411$).

The mean LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scores of school staff participants who had LGBTQ+ friends and family was larger than (M = 3.06, $SD = 0.58$) the mean self-efficacy scores of those did not have LGBTQ+ friends or family (M = 2.67, $SD = 0.41$) but the difference between these values, 0.38, CI [-0.233, 1.009] was not significant $t(60) = 1.249$, $p = 0.108$.

3.1.1.2.6 Location of school

A total of 62 participants were divided into two groups, based on the location of the school in which they worked, England (n = 52) and Scotland (n = 10). Levene's test of equality of variances indicated that equal variances between the groups could be assumed (p = .899).

The mean LGBTQ+ self-efficacy score of participants who worked in Scotland was slightly higher (M = 3.08, *SD* = 0.57) than the mean LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of those who worked in England (M = 3.02, *SD* = 0.61) but this difference, 0.050, CI [-0.369, 0.470] was not significant $t(60) = 0.239$, $p = 0.406$.

3.1.1.2.7 Early career

A total of 62 participants were divided into two groups: early career school staff (those within the first 2 years of their teaching career) (n = 10) and non-early career (those with more than two years' teaching experience) (n = 52). Although the group sizes were different, Levene's test of equality of variances indicated that equal variances between the groups could be assumed (p = .759).

The mean LGBTQ+ self-efficacy score of early career school staff participants was larger than (M = 3.31, *SD* = 0.50) than the mean LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scores of non-early career school staff (M = 2.98, *SD* = 0.61) but the difference between these values, 0.33, CI [-0.08, 0.74] was not significant $t(60) = 1.606$, $p = 0.057$.

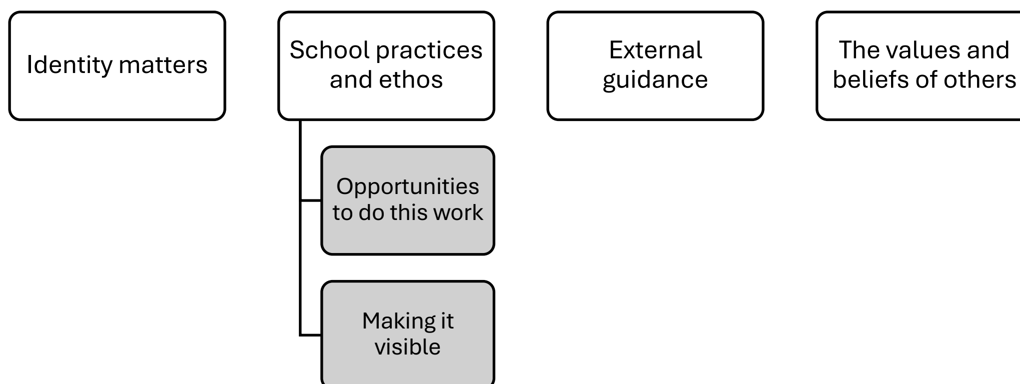
3.1.2 Qualitative findings

Of the 62 school staff participants, 59 provided comments via the two open-text boxes, which allowed an unlimited character count. A total of 114 comments were submitted and analysed. Qualitative data sought to gain a greater breadth and more in depth understanding of supports for LGBTQ+ self-efficacy in this area and its inhibitors, though exploring school staff' views and perspectives on this topic.

Qualitative data were analysed using the structured tabular approach to thematic analysis (Robinson, 2022). Codes were grouped to identify themes in an iterative process of several rounds, four main themes and three sub-themes were identified.

Figure 3

School staff themes and sub-themes



3.1.2.1 Theme one: Identity Matters

This theme explores how drawing upon LGBTQ+ direct or vicarious lived experience influences school staff LGBTQ+ self-efficacy evaluations. It explores participants' perceptions of lived experience as enabling greater levels of understanding when working with LGBTQ+ young people. Participants described drawing upon their own lived experience as LGBTQ+ people as having a role in supporting their confidence in working with LGBTQ+ young people.

Of the 34 LGBTQ+ participants who submitted qualitative comments, 18 mentioned this within their comments:

> *"Being LGBTQ+ myself, I have a good understanding of how children may be feeling." (Participant 31)*

> *"Using my own personal experience to create a safe space for pupils." (Participant 3)*

> *"My own beliefs and experience as a non-binary person." (Participant 37)*

One LGBTQ+ participant who described drawing upon their own personal experience also identified that there are limitations associated with this:

> *"Some young LGBT people are embarking on a journey of discovery. If they do not yet know who they are, finding the most appropriate strategy to support them can be challenging. Consistency on the part of the teacher helps but sometimes the unknown can be a hindrance." (Participant 17).*

Here participant 17 reflects upon the subjectivity of individual circumstances and experiences, and that the support that one LGBTQ+ person needs can be distinct from the needs of other young LGBTQ+ individuals, and again from staff's own experience as an LGBTQ+ person. Relating to one's own experience as an LGBTQ+ person also features as a motivation for some participants to complete work in this area:

“I have championed this for my entire career. I myself am part of the LGBT community and I feel very strongly that I want their education to be much improved from what mine was.” (Participant 23)

“From being gay myself knowing what I wished I had at school”. (Participant 38)

“I myself am gay and section 28 doesn’t exist anymore”. (Participant 39)

“Knowing that I was once an LGBT young person and wanting to support young people today.” (Participant 43)

One participant specifically mentions Section 28 here, and it is possible that other participants who are drawing upon their experiences at school as a motivator for their present-day actions were educated under Section 28. For participants who do not personally define as LGBTQ+, the role of identity was less commonly reflected upon. Of the 28 non-LGBTQ+ participants who provided qualitative comments, seven mentioned lived experience or identity within their account. For some, this related to drawing upon the lived experience of LGBTQ+ friends and family, or knowing LGBTQ+ staff in school:

“Close personal relationships with LGBTQ+ people throughout my life.” (participant 26)

“My own personal friendships with people who are part of the lgbt community.” (participant 35)

“Conversations with colleagues who are parents to LGBT young people” (participant 50)

“Having lots of LGBT friends” (Participant 56)

“We have a very open school and gave [sic] members of the LGBT community on our staff team.” (Participant 40)

"Experience in working with students from all backgrounds and identities over the course of 22 years." (Participant 64)

For Participant 64, the length of their teaching career has brought with it opportunities to work with young people from varied backgrounds and they considered this to support their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. Three participants identified a lack of lived experience as a barrier:

"Blind spots as a heterosexual person that I wouldn't realise unless reflecting eg classroom chat in primary (a predominantly female sector) in staff rooms about husbands and housework." (Participant 7)

"As a straight woman, I may not always see the obstacles some face straight away and therefore just require information to help me with this, particularly in terms of historical issues and challenges faced by some members of the community as I do not have first-hand experience." (Participant 40)

"We only have a limited number of staff who have experience of being a part of the LGBT community. I feel that this can sometimes makes giving information difficult. I do at times feel insecure about doing so because my life experiences have been heteronormative and I worry about unconscious biases and misconceptions; even at the level of where I would be getting this information from." (Participant 49)

Each comment identifies a sense of 'non-awareness' of the lived experience of being LGBTQ+ and that LGBTQ+ people may understand or identify barriers and biases more easily or quickly than heterosexual people. Participant 40 considers this could be remedied through information, Participant 49 describes that their heterosexual identity brings with it a concern that their identity means they cannot interpret or understand such information sufficiently or without unconscious bias.

The potential consequences of LGBTQ+ school staff having access to 'specialist experience' due to their identity was mentioned by one LGBTQ+ participant, who reflected that their lived experience means they feel they carry responsibility for supporting LGBTQ+ young people at school:

“Much of this then falls to myself as head of pshe and also a member of the [LGBT] community in order to support students effectively” (Participant 15).

3.1.2.2 Theme two: school practices and ethos

This theme relates to the practices and organizational ethos of the school within which an individual works, and its role in supporting or reducing LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. This includes two sub-themes exploring how schools enable staff to engage in work in this area, and how the wider environment visibly reflects the schools’ support for LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Participants spoke in general terms about the approach their school takes to LGBTQ+ inclusion, reflecting that this overall ethos supports their feelings of confidence to engage in this work:

“As a school, we work hard to champion diversity and inclusivity.” (Participant 65)

“Commonality of language, a school-wide culture that champions a range of voices, inclusive ethos” (Participant 13)

For some, this related to there being a dedicated role within their school, and that their confidence was supported by the sense that someone had responsibility for work in this area, and that there is someone they can approach or refer to as moving LGBTQ+ work forwards:

“We also have a representative in the school that we can go to to ask questions and gain advice… I would seek help from someone who is an expert if I felt I couldn’t support a student."” (Participant 61)

“Specific named members of staff who work in DEI.” (Participant 64)

“We have a strong and vocal school lead on LGBT issues that arise.” (Participant 49)

“…specified staff in our equalising learning group” (Participant 44)

Observing the work of others in the school and deriving confidence to approach similar tasks in the future is understood within self-efficacy theory to be a 'vicarious experience', which Bandura identified as one of four factors which support self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Participants described school policies and procedures as supporting their confidence, where there were policies to follow or approaches they could point to as enabling LGBTQ+ inclusion:

> *"We also have systems to deal with homophobia too. Examples we respect students who identify at non- binary and will edit records, anything using their name to reflect their chosen name and pronouns." (Participant 42)*

> *"We have access to online and in person training throughout the year and we have an association with the local council which gives staff and students clear reporting mechanisms and guides for further information." (Participant 49)*

Although participant 49 is not explicit on the nature of the reporting mechanisms they mention, the context of the survey the completed means it is possible to assume they are referring to reporting mechanisms for bullying or harassment. Here, both comments describe having a records-based process as supporting their confidence, and an ability to make a document or record of LGBTQ+ young people's experience in school through such systems.

Comments relating to the school environment were not all positive, however. Participants described a dissatisfaction with how the school operationalises policies designed to address discrimination and cited this as reducing their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy:

> *"School fails to act promptly and appropriately when queerphobic incidents reported... School says the right things but doesn't act on them; generally weak behaviour policy." (Participant 6)*

> *"When homophobia of students is identified by teachers but there is a perceived lack of consequence for airing offensive views." (Participant 10)*

"I feel that there are structural issues within the school around other forms of discrimination (ableism, racism, sexism) which contribute towards sometimes quite complex situations arising…" (Participant 49).

For these participants, although policies may exist within their school, inconsistency in the approach with which they were implemented hampered their confidence. Interestingly, in these comments participants use language which alludes to someone other than themselves being responsible behaviour policies in this area, or for ensuring consequences are implemented. Each of these participants worked within in a secondary school, which could reflect the more complex behaviour management systems at this level of education (when compared to primary school) and as such, implementing consequences for negative behaviours may not involve the participants directly. However, it could also relate to personal efficacy, in that it could suggest these participants have lacked direct mastery experiences in addressing LGBTQ+ bullying, and this could be having a downwards effect upon their self-efficacy.

Participant 49 identified structural factors beyond policies-as-written meaning that intersecting discriminations can lead to further complexity. In the same comment, this participant went on to describe those similar discrepancies existed within the classroom context when dealing with slurs in source materials, as they perceive a policy designed to prevent repetition of offensive terms is inconsistently implemented by school staff. For this participant, there appears to be a gap between espoused school values and how these are born our in practice. To protect participant anonymity the specifics of the situation they described will not be shared.

3.1.2.2.1 Sub theme 1: Opportunities to do this work

This theme relates to access to opportunities to experience mastery, a core component of self-efficacy theory. It explores how past experience has influenced participants' LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, and how they consider their school supports or inhibits their access to opportunities to do work in this area.

Bandura (1997) suggests that mastery experiences (previous experiences of successfully completing a task within a specific domain) is the most significant influence upon a person's self-efficacy. Eleven participants cited previous positive experiences in LGBTQ+ inclusion work as supporting their feelings of confidence, for example:

"We have rewritten the PSHE curriculum to be more inclusive and educational of the LGBT community." (Participant 1)

"Having resources available when planning lessons to help to avoid stereotypical representations and/or misrepresentations of LGBT people" (Participant 49)

"I have also established a network in our area for teachers to share best practice of LGBTQ+ inclusion in education. Gaining an insight into the status of LGBTQ+ inclusion in other schools has made me more confident in our approach. Seeing the difference the LGBTQ+ inclusion work has made for our children has also been a driving force in helping me to feel that what we are doing is morally and ethically essential." (Participant 55)

"It's no surprise for us that, because of the inclusive environment we have promoted we have seen a reduction in LGBT/prejudice-based behaviours and an increase in the number of young pupils wanting to speak with trusted adults in school about how they feel they may identify." (Participant 65)

Each of these participants describe successful experiences, although these are varied and context dependent. Participants 55 and 65 described witnessing the success of work to create a positive environment for LGBTQ+ young people as supporting their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, which would theoretically further secure such experiences as mastery (Bandura, 2006).

Having access to a role that led them to undertake LGBTQ+ inclusion work facilitated the mastery experiences of some participants:

"I work as our head of pshe in order to and do everything in my power to ensure cohesive and supportive LGBT+ education for students" (Participant 15)

"My current role is Diversity Co Ordinator so I have a certain level of autonomy and influence in identifying issues, working with pupils outside the classroom, accessing training and discussing ways forward with SLT. I'm not sure all staff at our school would feel the same way." (Participant 45)

"I have previously led our LGBTQ+ group and worked with external agencies to improve our support within school. I have also been Head of PSHE and created a curriculum that was inclusive." (Participant 53)

"I have support from some SLT members to run a lunchtime LGBT+ group." (Participant 60)

Participants 53 and 60 were two of six to mention having a role running an LGBTQ+ group in school. Participant 45 reflected that their role as Diversity Coordinator enabled them to have 'autonomy and influence', implying that this relates to the role specifically and that such an experience may not be common amongst other staff. It is possible then, that for participants who mention occupying a role, that this has facilitated them in undertaking more clearly defined work in relation to LGBTQ+ support than those who do not have such roles, and that with this comes increased opportunities to experience mastery.

Where some participants had past experiences they could draw upon, others directly referenced a lack of previous experience in the area, or feeling uncertain, as negatively impacting upon their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy:

"This has not really come up in my years teaching." (Participant 2)

"My own uncertainties or lack of confidence." (Participant 36)

These participants did not elaborate further, which could be reflective of lack of experiences to describe, but others participants provided more information as to the context which made them feel less confident:

"I do not feel very confident about working with LGBT students as we have very few students who are ready to explore that. I feel we are making adjustments in our curriculum to reflect a more inclusive ethos at a primary level." (Participant 54)

"Lack of experience managing difficulties linked to LGBTQ issues. Limited materials and resources that are primary age appropriate." (Participant 25)

Although Participant 54 goes on to describe that adjustments are being made at the curriculum level, they begin by reflecting that the age of the children they work means they are not “ready to explore that”. This could link to a perception that LGBTQ+ topics should not be discussed within such settings (Atkinson, 2021). Participant 25 also worked at Key Stage 1-2 and their comment mentions both a lack of experience and a lack of resources. this contrasts to other primary school participants who shared examples of how they are using resources to support children’s education in this area (explored in Sub-theme 2: Making it Visible).

For Participant 57, their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy was reduced when considering how they might approach a complex situation:

> *“Attitudes of other students can vary considerably and I’m not always confident in how to listen to views of all students whilst protecting those that are vulnerable and making sure that conversations don’t cause harm in the process of trying dispel myths and prejudices” (Participant 57)*

Handling understandings of difference and identity feels complex for this participant, or that this is challenging within the school context in which they work, and where the perceived complexity of a task increases, self-efficacy can decrease (Hoffman & Schraw, 2009).

3.1.2.2.1 Sub theme 2: Making it visible

This theme explores how visible signs of support for LGBTQ+ identities within the school environment supports school staff’ LGBTQ+ self-efficacy.

Several participants described the visibility of LGBTQ+ support in the school as important to their confidence, signalled by physical resources, flags, posters and displays, with some describing this as a means for the school to communicate its values in this area to a variety of stakeholders:

> *“School support for and participation in LGBT events.” (Participant 6)*

"We have a number of visuals that are used by teachers and students which show that as a school we are trying to have an open and inclusive culture; for example flags, pronouns badges, ally badges and other things like this." (Participant 49)

"[we] have posters up from [LGBT organisation] in all of our entrances, being clear to all of our families and visitors what we stand for in our school." (Participant 65)

"We have worked on and attained the [LGBT organisation] school award. This has helped give a clear message that we are supportive of everyone and to tackle any issues that would affect LGBTQ+ students/ staff / parents." (Participant 42)

Participant 42 described that the school had taken part in an award scheme run by an LGBTQ+ organisation and that this had the effect of helping to communicate inclusive values; similar schemes were named by other participants as positively supporting their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy (explored further in Theme Three: External Guidance).

Access to resources for the classroom and within the curriculum was mentioned positively by several participants, with links to visibility of support and the values of the school:

"We have lots of children [sic] literature to address themes and we teach children about their rights and responsibilities." (Participant 40)

"I have excellent LGBTQ+ reading material in the classroom and positive signage" (Participant 22)

"Both our school libraries are stocked with books which celebrate LGBT+ families, we discuss prejudice, the importance of protected characteristics, LGBT history month and pride through our weekly assemblies…" (Participant 65)

Although the purpose of the resources participants mention are similar, the words chosen to describe their use do not overlap: where one participant speaks of rights, responsibilities, another of challenging stereotypes, and another of celebrating LGBTQ+ families. This could suggest that resources are used for a range of purposes and each participant has a different perspective as to their purpose. Participant 40 and 65 both worked at Key Stage 1-2 and their accounts contrast to the Key Stage 1-2 participants

within *Sub Theme 1: Opportunities to do this Work* who mentioned that they felt less confident due having a lack of resources that are appropriate for primary age children, or that LGBTQ+-inclusion would be age appropriate, revealing an inconsistency of practice across settings.

Participant 65 was one of six to reference relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum or personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum as supporting their confidence. In England, this could relate to the statutory guidance on relationships and sex education (Department for Education, 2019a) which requires schools to ensure their curricula in this area is inclusive of LGBTQ+ relationships and families. This links to the sub-theme of local and national government in theme two.

For some participants, the school providing 'safe spaces' for LGBTQ+ young people was supportive of their confidence:

> *"My school is also very supportive of LGBT students and is keen to provide safe spaces" (Participant 62)*

This participant does not elaborate on the nature of such space, and whether the space is the entire school, if it is a physical space provided for LGBTQ+ students, or something more abstract. The idea of space features in other participants' accounts; Another participant (Participant 33) described their school as having a "specialist room" for LGBTQ+ students and participants who mentioned LGBTQ+ groups are offering physical 'safe spaces' for LGBTQ+ young people. The idea of providing a safe space was also described by Participant 3 in relation to their personal identity, which could be taken to indicate an abstract relational space rather than a physical one:

> *"Using my own personal experience to create a safe space for pupils." (Participant 3)*

Although the provision of safe spaces is seen as an inclusive action, the term 'safe space' for LGBTQ+ students – of whichever form – necessarily implies that LGBTQ+ young people may be feeling unsafe elsewhere in the school, although negative reflections upon school values were not shared by those participants who used the term safe space.

3.1.2.1 Theme Three: External guidance

This theme explores how LGBTQ+ self-efficacy is supported or not by having an understanding of what to do through government guidance, other external guidance or continuing professional development.

For some participants, their confidence was supported by local or national government:

> *"…we have an association with the local council which gives staff and students clear reporting mechanisms and guides for further information." (Participant 49)*

> *"We were an early adopter of the new RSHE syllabus produced in collaboration with [name of local authority]. Staff are confident delivering the content, have had training on it and our support staff have all had external training on equality, diversity and inclusivity." (Participant 65)*

This is one of two mentions of local government within the qualitative data. This low incidence could indicate that for most participants, local authorities are not foremost in their mind when it comes LGBTQ+ work. This could be due to an absence of local authority work in this area, or that such work is not visible to the majority of teaching staff. Participant 65 is an headteacher, and therefore they may work more closely with the local authority than most other school staff and have a different vantage point on how the authority supports the school. In terms of the role of legislatures, national government was also mentioned by participants, in both England and Scotland.

Two participants in England mentioned the government as a factor which undermined their confidence:

> *"Interference from the government." (Participant 29)*

> *"The government's attitude and language around LGBTQ+ people has posed numerous barriers…. The government's delay on non-statutory guidance has also created some worry with leadership as to whether we will need to change our approach." (Participant 55)*

Participant 55's comment reflects the period within which data collection with school staff was completed, in the months prior to the release of the UK government's draft guidance for schools regarding gender questioning children (Department for Education, 2023). Although Participant 29 did not elaborate on their comment, this was submitted as a factor making them feel less confident in supporting LGBTQ+ young people, and the word 'interfere' suggests it is not altogether welcome. However, where the Scottish government was mentioned by participants working in Scotland, it was exclusively as a support for self-efficacy, including specific mention of the National LGBT Inclusive Curriculum and feeling supported by the government directly:

> *"Knowing that we have guidance and support from Scottish government on trans pupils and LGBTQI Education." (Participant 8)*

Although only a small number of participants were based in Scotland (*n* = 10) the majority of participants from Scotland mentioned working with named external LGBTQ+ organisations as supporting their confidence, perhaps an indication of the requirements under Scotland's National LGBTQ+ Inclusive Curriculum (Scottish Government, 2021).

As well as citing formal guidance, participants also described the influence of continuing professional development upon their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. Forms of CPD mentioned by participants as supporting their confidence included research, wider reading and training. Although most participants did not elaborate on the nature or content of training they had received, some mentioned it had been external or provided by a specific organisation. In total, 15 comments included within this theme mentioned working with external organisations or networks as supporting their confidence. A total of seven different LGBTQ+ organisations were named, reflecting the variety of LGBTQ+ organisations involved with work in schools; to respect participant anonymity, the names of these organisations will not be shared here. It is not only LGBTQ+ organisations who provide training and support however, with two participants receiving their training as part of their role within a trade union.

3.1.2.3 Theme four: the values and beliefs of others

The final theme is the values and beliefs of others. This theme explores how LGBTQ+ self-efficacy is supported or reduced by interactions with other people within the school environment, or outside it. It also explores the role of religious beliefs and working within a faith context.

Being part of a community of colleagues appears important to these participants, particularly the ability to have discussions with other staff, to share information and knowledge. The support of senior leadership was mentioned as an important aspect, most participants who mentioned this did not state that they discussed matters directly with senior leadership, but shared a more general perception that senior leaders were supportive:

> *"Having a LGBTQ+ supportive SLT and teachers" (Participant 52)*

The positive contribution of relationships and discussions with colleagues was mentioned by participants, noting that the word 'open' features to characterise many of these relationships, perhaps suggesting that this facilitates discussion:

> *"We have respectful but open relationships where we feel we can discuss matters" (Participant 40)*

> *"Open dialogue between staff when issues arise" (Participant 1)*

> *"Having a group of colleagues to discuss appropriate support with" (Participant 35)*

> *"Knowing people who are affected Ted [sic] amongst staff I can talk to" (Participant 48)*

> *"Shared colleagues experience of how pupils preferred to be addressed so I know in advance if in the class." (Participant 7)*

“Working in a supportive school where everyone is constantly looking at ways to improve for all children.” (Participant 38)

For several participants, however, feeling that other school staff were not supportive of LGBTQ+ inclusion was described as reducing their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy:

“Other staff resistance to increased acceptance or change.” (Participant 5)

“My colleagues lack of understanding, prioritisation, training” (Participant 9)

“Navigating existing biases of other teachers/parents. To feel confident we are all on the same page in the first place” (Participant 12)

“Feeling like I am more socially progressive than my colleagues.” (Participant 26)

“I feel that while most staff are inclusive, there is a minority who do hold misconceptions or are intolerant, which is difficult to work with” (Participant 45)

“Some staff don't feel the issues are important on a daily level. They might engage with INSET but not follow up in daily practice.” (Participant 45)

One school staff participant shared negative views about working with LGBTQ+ young people within the survey, which is perhaps an example of the views other participants reference being concerned about:

“I don’t think schools should teach about LGBT issues specifically. They should spend more time addressing the underlying mental health issues associated with this trend.” (Participant 30)

Where participants identified problems within their school environment, many comments located the negativity ‘within’ individual or small groups of staff (i.e. attributed this to individual prejudice rather than a more abstract notion of school values). This contrasted somewhat to positive comments about the school ‘championing diversity’ or being inclusive that featured in Theme Two: School Practices and Ethos, which are more abstract and universal notions than individual beliefs.

For two LGBTQ+ participants, although they mentioned drawing upon their own personal experience as supporting their confidence, they also reflected that this was hampered by concerns about how their LGBTQ+ identity may be negatively received within the school environment:

> *"Concern about the narrative shifting towards my own sexual orientation; blurring of the lines between professional and personal life." (Participant 62)*

> *"In staff discussions I wouldn't feel comfortable coming out to everyone and this makes me unlikely to raise any issues I need help within meetings etc." (Participant 43)*

For Participant 43, concern about how their colleagues will respond appears to be preventing them from seeking help. This participant is a supply teacher, which could mean their connections to staff in the schools within which they work are more transient than they might otherwise be within a consistent place of work. As such, their relationships may be less secure, or may possibly indicate past negative experiences, but this participant is not able to take for granted that information about their LGBTQ+ identity will be positively received. The 'blurring of professional and personal life' mentioned by Participant 62 has also been reflected in other research with LGBTQ+ teachers as a potentially difficult tension to navigate (Brett, 2024).

Four participants considered their senior leadership teams to be unsupportive, fewer than mentioned senior leadership as a source of support in the previous sub-theme. For Participant 23, there is a sense that their senior leadership team stand in opposition to the work they would personally like to undertake:

> *"Senior Leadership not supporting my initiatives or the importance of the changes I want to make/things I want to run." (Participant 23)*

Participant 35 described tensions within their school in relation to trans young people, perhaps reflecting an increasingly polarised public discussion of the rights of trans students within school:

"…older members of staff who feel their 'gender critical' views are more important that the well-being and security of openly trans students. This undermines work the school does to promote a tolerant and accepting community and means that there are mixed messages from SLT in some regards." (Participant 35)

A link to the safety of young people as consequence of conflicting values between staff was made by another participant:

"I feel like school doesn't have enough processes around safeguarding LGBT students. It still feels like an awkward topic in which to discuss with most people." (Participant 39)

Although it is unclear whether the awkwardness this participant describes is directly related to the perceived lack of safeguarding processes or presented as a separate idea, feeling that the topic is difficult to discuss may hamper staff dialogue around relevant safeguarding concerns for an LGBTQ+ young person.

The attitudes and beliefs of students were mentioned by two participants, with one reflecting their perception that whilst overall progress has been made, this has not reached the full extent of the student body, and this reduces their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy:

"A lot of progress has been made in tackling homophobia in the school. Students have become more accepting, more inclusive in the main: however a core remain closed to progressive ideas for society" (Participant 10)

Where Participant 10 describes some young people in their school as being 'closed to progressive ideas', others described concerns about experiencing direct abuse or backlash if they were to pursue LGBTQ+ work, and that this reduced their confidence to do so:

"Fear of misrepresentation leading to social media harassment of staff / pupils" (Participant 59)

"Potential for abuse from online communities, parents and other students." (Participant 51)

"Local area has a high proportion of homophobia/transphobia due to its social placement" (Participant 28)

Here, two participants mention social media, and were the only participants to do so, whereas for the majority of participants who were concerned about experiencing resistance or pushback, the source of this was parents. Some participants described a clash between the practices of the school and the personal views of parents as leading to conflict. There is a sense amongst some participants that parents have a powerful influence over what happens:

"Parents and carers can use their views and negative perceptions and experiences at school to fight against the school on matters they disagree with (from curriculum to behaviour to anything)." (Participant 3)

"Parental expectations related to the role of schools in educating young people about issues related to LGBT young people - ie some parents not liking/approving of it. Potential of clashes between the school and parents of LGBT young people, who may not support the schools approach in working with that young person." (Participant 64)

Parental views as described by participants appear fixed and difficult to influence. Some participants mentioned actions that parents had taken to remove their children from school:

"Some parents within our school community who have very strong negative views around the LGBT community and wishing to withdraw their children from anything in school to do with LGBT." (Participant 38)

"Parental pressure and school acquiescing to parents (eg parent whose complaint was largely motivated by homophobia- pupil moved at parent request)" (Participant 6)

The idea of parental power is present here for Participant 6 who describes their feeling that the school 'acquiesced' to parents, perhaps reflecting a view that others in the

school should have taken a different stance towards the parental complaint due to it having possible anti-LGBTQ+ motivations. This idea, of school not ‘standing up’ to parents who hold such views was echoed by another participant:

> *“Their adults at home if they don’t support their child’s choices. I also feel there is quite an issue with male students and misogyny towards trans and natal women/ girls. I come up against a lot of anger when I try tackle this with these students. Parents don’t tend to be supportive of me and downplay seriousness or play off as a joke. I feel SLT then don’t hold these adult’s [sic] accountable for not supporting school expectations” (Participant 42)*

For this participant, feeling unsupported by senior leadership in navigating these challenges with parents has a negative impact upon their confidence. Participant 65, a primary school headteacher, reflected upon their experiences discussing LGBTQ+ inclusion with parents:

> *“Parental prejudice still prevails. As headteacher, I still have to politely challenge the misgivings parents may have about the content being taught in school. But I find this is often due to them being wrongly informed or having an incorrect perception of what is being taught.” (Participant 65)*

This participant has the positional influence of being a headteacher, which Participant 42 does not, and therefore has both the experience of having such conversations from within this role, and the vantage point to know these conversations have happened. Where other participants feel that the school does not challenge parents, Participant 65’s account reminds us of the possibility that these conversations may be taking place but are not shared with other staff.

For other participants, the resistance they anticipated (or had experienced) related to faith and religious belief. For some, it is the religious beliefs of parents that cause a reduction in self-efficacy:

> *“It is a catholic school so that can curtail some conversations especially as pupils may come from backgrounds which are not open to lgbt” (Participant 2)*

> *“I work in a Catholic school, which becomes difficult when you have strict, Catholic parents. I have to put the safety of the child first.” (Participant 31)*

> *"Strongly religious school community with parents who at times openly oppose any mention of LGBTQ+ issues in school. School leadership who prioritise not rocking the boat with religious families." (Participant 37)*

> *"Saying the wrong thing that would result in backlash from parents due to religious reasons." (Participant 46)*

> *"Some staff and parents of faith have also challenged our work around LGBTQ+ inclusion" (Participant 55)*

Participant 55 was one of two participants to mention the actions of staff with religious belief as reducing their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. There is a sense from these participants that the beliefs and actions associated with faith and religious belief can curtail conversations about LGBTQ+ matters and that this can lead to a silencing effect, either through concern about receiving backlash directly, or on how the leadership of the school will approach LGBTQ+ inclusion. For two other participants it is the faith context as a whole, rather than the beliefs of individuals, which reduced their confidence:

> *"I work in a faith school and I have concerns that issues surrounding our LGBTQIA and non binary students are ignored by those in SLT in line with the faith of the school. Much of this then falls to myself as head of pshe and also a member of the community in order to support students effectively" (Participant 15)*

> *"The trust (a catholic MAT) was not initially supportive and tried to shut the [LGBTQ+ lunchtime] group down. We are still waiting for guidance so that the group can be extended." (Participant 60)*

Overall, the findings of this theme echo Bandura (2001) observation that within social learning theory "should the threatened social consequences be severe, people hold in check self-praiseworthy acts in risky situations" (p.274) as participants reflect that the attitudes of those within or external to their school reduce their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy.

3.2 Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)

3.2.1 Quantitative analysis

3.2.1.1 Distribution

For each participant, a mean LGBTQ+ self-efficacy score was calculated. An additional item was added to the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scale (item 21: "I can provide training to schools on how to create a supportive environment for LGBT young people") which was not included in the original M. Jones et al. (2021) scale and therefore did not feature in the factor analysis completed by those researchers, where all items were shown to load to the single construct of LGBT self-efficacy. As such, this item has been excluded from the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy score calculations and were analysed separately as a single item.

Mean LGBTQ+ self-efficacy score for Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants was M = 2.99 (SD = 0.439) which suggests that on average, participants agreed with the statements on the self-efficacy scale.

Due to sample size, the distribution of mean values was examined to identify if assumptions were met for the use of parametric tests. Tests of skewness (to measure the symmetry of the distribution) and kurtosis (to measure the 'tailedness' of the distribution) were completed and histograms were studied to support the analysis of normality. A skewness value of .365 (*SE*=0.293) indicated that the mean values for the sample had slight positive skew and kurtosis value of -.323 (*SE*=0.578) indicated that the data had a lighter tail than would be expected of a normal distribution. These values suggest a slight deviation from normality but as the skewness value is relatively small, the data can be considered approximately normal (Lei & Lomax, 2005). To investigate further, given the smaller sample size, z-scores for skewness and kurtosis were computed (Mishra et al., 2019). This resulted in z-scores of 1.245 for skewness and 0.558 for kurtosis within the required range of ±1.96 necessary to conclude that the distribution of the sample is approximately normal (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012).

3.2.1.2 Independent t-tests

3.2.1.2.1 LGBTQ+ identity

A total of 67 participants were divided into two groups: those who identified themselves as being LGBTQ+ (n = 13) and those who indicated they were not LGBTQ+ (n =54). Levene's test of equality of variances indicated that equal variances between the groups (p = .157) could be assumed.

Participants who defined as LGBTQ+ reported higher average levels of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy (M = 3.30, *SD* = 0.492) than participants who did not (M = 2.92, *SD* = 0.397. This difference was small, 0.377, CI [0.120, 0.634] but significant $t(65) = 2.93$, $p = 0.002$ with a large effect size $d = 0.907$.

3.2.1.2.2 Continuing professional development

A total of 64 participants were divided into two groups: those who had completed LGBTQ+ related continuous professional development (n = 46) and those who indicated they had not (n =18). A small number of participants (n = 3) selected the ‘not sure’ option in response to this question, and they were excluded from the analysis. Levene's test of equality of variances indicated that equal variances between the groups (p = .090) could be assumed.

On average, participants who had completed LGBTQ+ Continuing Professional Development returned higher LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scores (M = 3.13, *SD* = 0.42) than those who had not (M = 2.66, *SD* = 0.31). This difference, 0.478 CI [0.259, 0.696], was significant $t(62) = 4.37$, $p = <0.001$ and the effect size $d = 1.216$ was large.

3.2.1.2.3 LGBTQ+ friends or family

A total of 67 participants were divided into two groups: those who identified themselves as having LGBTQ+ friends of family (n=60) and those who indicated they did not (n = 7). Levene's test of equality of variances indicated that equal variances between the groups (p = .919) could be assumed.

The difference between the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy levels of those who had LGBTQ+ friends or family (M = 3.01, *SD* = 0.436) and those participants who did not (M = 2.82, *SD*= 0.468) was small, 0.186, CI [-0.164, 0.536], and not significant $t(65) = 1.062$, $p = 0.146$.

3.2.1.2.4 Early career status

One participant did not answer this question and therefore was excluded from this analysis. A total of 66 participants were divided into two groups: Early Career Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) ($n = 45$) and non-early career educational psychologists (n=21). Levene's test of equality of variances indicated that equal variances between the groups ($p = .823$) could be assumed.

The difference between the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scores of early career educational psychologists (M = 2.99, *SD* = 0.427) and those participants who did not (M = 2.98, *SD*= 0.469) was very small, 0.009, CI [-0.223, 0.241], and not significant $t(64) = 0.78$, $p = 0.469$.

3.2.1.2.5 Self-efficacy to deliver training to schools on how to create a supportive environment for LGBT young people.

As this scale item was additional to the Multicultural Efficacy Scale adapted for working with LGBT (Jones et al. 2021), responses to this question were explored by demographic group separately. Levene's tests for equality of variances were conducted for each t-test and the results indicated that equal variances could be assumed for all sub-group pairings.

Participants who reported having engaged in CPD relating to LGBTQ+ matters (n=46) had higher self-efficacy to deliver training (M= 3.13, SD = 0.718) than those who had not engaged in CPD ($n = 18$) (M=2.44, SD = 0.616). The difference between these values, 0.686, CI [0.302, 1.070], was significant $t(62) = 0.825$ ($p = <0.001$).

Mean self-efficacy scores for delivering LGBTQ+ training were larger for participants who identified as LGBTQ+ ($n = 13$) (M= 3.23, SD = 0.927) than those who did not identify as LGBTQ+ ($n = 54$) (M = 2.87, SD = 0.674). The difference between these values, 0.360, CI [-0.088, 0.809], was not significant $t(65) = 1.604$ ($p = 0.057$).

Participants who reported having LGBTQ+ friends and family ($n = 60$) had mean self-efficacy scores for delivering LGBTQ+ training (M= 2.97, SD = 0.736) which were slightly

higher than those who did not have LGBTQ+ friends and family (n = 7) (M=2.71, SD = 0.756). The difference between these values, 0.252, CI [-0.336, 0.841], was not significant $t(65) = 0.857$ ($p = 0.197$).

Early career participants (n = 45) reported mean self-efficacy scores for delivering LGBTQ+ training (M= 2.98, SD = 0.783) which were slightly higher than those who were not early career (n = 21) (M=2.86, SD = 0.655). The difference between these values, 0.121, CI [-0.273, 0.514], was not significant $t(64) = 0.612$ ($p = 0.271$).

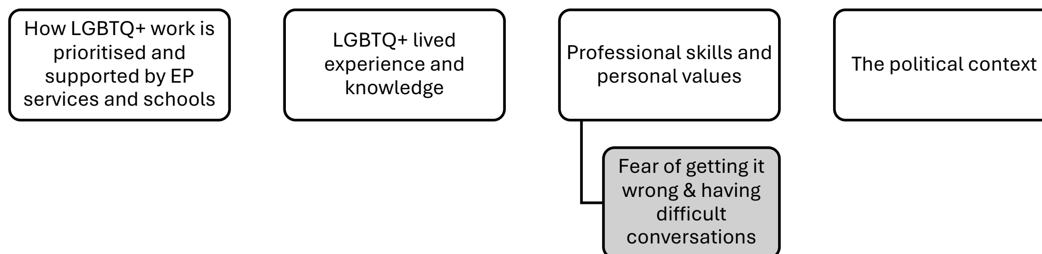
3.1.3 Qualitative findings

Of the 67 Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants, 63 provided comments via the two open-text boxes, which allowed an unlimited character count. A total of 123 comments were submitted and analysed. Four main themes were identified, two of the themes had sub-themes as indicated in Figure 4:

1. How LGBTQ+ work is prioritised and supported by EP services and schools
2. LGBTQ+ specific knowledge and (lived) experience
3. Professional skills and personal values
4. The political context

Figure 4

Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) themes and sub-themes



3.1.3.1 Theme 1: How LGBTQ+ work is prioritised and supported by educational psychology services and schools

This theme explores how the priority to which educational psychology services and schools give to LGBTQ+ inclusion work may relate to Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) LGBTQ+ self-efficacy.

For some participants, the characteristics of their service and the people who work within it supported their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy:

> *"Positive LGBT attitudes within my LA and amongst colleagues." (Participant 27)*
>
> *"The support/knowledge of colleagues within the service where I am on placement" (Participant 36)*
>
> *"An EP Service which continues to actively develop LGBTQI+ inclusive practice but understands it as part of the socio-political context of society, not just on the basis of individual prejudice" (Participant 65)*

For Participant 65, the approach of the service within which they work supports their confidence, both to develop work itself, and taking a particular vantage point which considers LGBTQ+ experiences from a structural perspective. Other participants described that their confidence was supported through service-level approaches and practices, adopting approaches to LGBTQ+ practice which are practical but moreover served to indicate a commitment to this work from their service:

> *"I'm also part of a gender diversity working group within my EPS, and I feel more confident with this collaboration and peer support." (Participant 38)*
>
> *"Comittment [sic] of the Service to Anti-oppressive practice with a named senior in this area." (Participant 54)*
>
> *"Critical evaluation of supporting needs in this area both as an ep service and between the service and schools (and the wider community too)." (Participant 44)*

Participant 54 was the only participant to mention having a named senior post in their educational psychology service for anti-oppressive practice, which could suggest such a post is less common in other services.

Accessing supervision within their service was mentioned by seven participants as supporting their confidence, for example:

> *"Good supervision, continued training/CPD around LGBT+ topics, open and enthusiastic staff who want to acknowledge their own knowledge/curriculum gaps" (Participant 32)*

For two participants, access to appropriate supervision was mentioned as part of feeling confident in working with or supporting LGBTQ+ young people. Three participants named peer supervision as important to their confidence. Another participant offered a suggestion of how they would feel supported by their educational psychology service, perhaps suggesting that the practices mentioned are not currently implemented:

> *"I think my confidence would be supported by having it as an item on team agenda discussions, explicit training, sharing of resources between colleagues (within and across services)" (Participant 39)*

A small number of participants (*n* = 3) described specific LGBTQ+-related practices they had engaged in as part of their current role which they felt supported their confidence, which could be described as a mastery experience (Bandura, 1997). For example, training:

> *"I was supported by the principal EP as a trainee to develop an inset session for the EPS on supporting LGBTQ+ children and have delivered this in two LAs." (Participant 51)*

> *"Working collaboratively in the EPS to produce appropriate and sensitive training materials that are used by all TEPs/EPs for consistency and continuity." (Participant 61)*

Both experiences described here relate to developing and delivering training on the topic, a core function of the educational psychologist role as identified by the Currie Report

(Scottish Executive, 2002). Only one participant described engaging in LGBTQ+-focused practice that had greater breadth:

> *"It has been one of the main focuses of my career, including throughout my training and subsequent EP practice. I regularly deliver training to schools and the wider LA, have frequent anonymous discussions with staff members, offer LGBTQ+-inclusive supervision and support, and - where necessary and appropriate - have worked 1:1 with students." (Participant 30)*

This participant describes this work as a focus of their career, which may account for the variety of practice they have undertaken, as they may have a higher level of motivation for pursuing this work than other participants who may not see this work as a primary area for their practise.

Relating to mastery experiences, several participants described that their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy was supported by experiences working with LGBTQ+ young people in roles other than that of the educational psychologist, which could further indicate a low presence of opportunities within educational psychology services:

> *"I have experience as a teacher in working with an [sic] supporting lots of CYP who identify as LGBTQ but not as TEP." (Participant 35)*

> *"My past and personal experience allow me to feel very confident in this area. I previously held a job role that was specific to Equality and Diversity within schools." (Participant 41)*

> *"Drawing on my previous experience as a secondary school teacher and working with young people who identify as LGBT." (Participant 52)*

> *"Drawing on previous work role as a LGBT youth worker." (Participant 14)*

> *"Working with LGBT groups in the local area help as well as other professionals and groups." (Participant 7)*

"As an AEP I created and delivered training about LGBTQ+ diversity and mental health frequently." (Participant 55)

"Lived experience and previous training/job roles." (Participant 3)

Drawing upon experience in past roles could relate to the length of service of some participants: of the seven participants who cited experience in past roles as being important to their confidence, five were early career educational psychologists.

Some participants described negative experiences within their services, highlighting concerns about a lack of guidance in this area, and a feeling that LGBTQ+ work was not prioritised as reducing their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy:

"Having little / no guidance within the EP team." (Participant 22)

"I also feel that there is not much within my LA to support with this - diversity and representation is scarce and there aren't many conversations being had about this." (Participant 26)

"Lack of interest from the LA EP Senior Leadership Team may highlight wider concerns that TEPs/EPs may not feel that LGBTQ+ inclusion is part of their job role (which I feel does not align with HCPC competencies), and that if TEPs/EPs who often work on a systems level to support schools do not feel that this work is within their remit, who then professionally holds LGBTQ+ young people's wider developmental needs at school in mind? My fear as a TEP is that despite my interest in supporting LGBTQ+ young people, unless there is a wide cultural shift in the EP world that means TEPs/EPs take more responsibility for work within this area, as a professional I will become less confident in supporting LGBTQ+ young people." (Participant 31)

Another participant commented on the demographic make-up and diversity of their educational psychology service as negatively impacting upon the extent to which this work is seen as important:

"Broadly what makes me less confident is the general lack of awareness or knowledge for EP services that are overwhelmingly cis-het, and often completely unaware of their own lens, biases, experiences and how these shape their view of

the world e.g. colleagues and managers not even understanding what heteronormativity is and how this leads to heterosexism." (Participant 14)

One participant described that their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy was reduced by interlinking problems relating to availability of CPD, role models and the commissioning of this work. This comment shares a link to theme two: LGBTQ+ specific knowledge and (lived) experience, but is included here as the participant's account also describes the role of their EP service in facilitating opportunities to practice in this area:

"Limited amount of CPD I have had, no CPD or training input on this in previous authorities I have worked in or on initial training, limited experience in being asked for this kind of work, limited access to colleagues who are carrying out this kind of work, lack of knowledge about where to target own learning in terms of resources and references." (Participant 45)

Participant 45's account draws attention to the links between how this work is prioritised and supported by educational psychology services and practices within schools: here, the participant describes a lack of opportunities provided by both. This aligns to accounts from other participants who reflected that schools may not see educational psychologists as a potential source for advice on LGBTQ+ work, and therefore may not commission it:

"Other professionals may be better placed to work with schools on this. I'm not sure schools would approach me over dedicated charities and task forces to ask for help on this issue, unless the child/young person also had additional needs." (Participant 63)

Participant 63 points to a question of remit, and the idea that educational psychologists' involvement with children and young people is primarily considered as relating to special educational needs. Remit was also reflected in other participants accounts:

"I think in response to the previous questions, I feel that I could do all of those things relatively confidently, however I am unsure sometimes whether schools see this as part of our remit as EPs and so I don't how frequently we would actually get the opportunity to do these things. I think this may therefore be a barrier to other EPs

engaging in this work confidently because they don't feel they have the opportunities to do so or don't want to over-extend their role." (Participant 3)

"I think that the reason I disagreed with some of the previous statements was when they were more specific and I didn't feel I would have the resources to support with these things" (Participant 28)

"Lacking of priority for inclusion of all pupils in many settings. For example, using systemic approaches such as appreciative inquiries have previously been useful to support whole school planning yet many senior leaders would not choose LGBT to be a focus in this area, or a topic for discussion." (Participant 46)

"I do not feel that schools typically reflect as much as they should on supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Therefore, I believe that TEPs and EPs would have to approach this issue proactively by gently encouraging school to review their existing practices under the guidance of TEP/EP. This requires confidence and a flexibility in time allocation that TEPs may not often have." (Participant 31)

Here, participants describe barriers potentially relating to the traded context of educational psychology services, where non-statutory work is commissioned and paid for by schools, and schools can contract this work according to their priorities. Two participants also reflected on the interplay between the present funding model for traded educational psychology services and a feeling of time-pressure in the educational psychologist role, describing a concern that the process of contracting traded work requires increased effort when the area of practice has not been identified by schools:

"I also fear that schools may not priotise [sic] financial investment in this area of work, and therefore negotiating TEP/EP time to conduct such work may be tricky, with TEPs/EPs potentially feeling uncomfortable seeking increased financial investment as this may be seen to cause relational tensions with school colleagues, ultimatley [sic] lead to TEP/EP avoidance, which may mean that important LGBTQ+ work is not carried out." (Participant 31)

"Having has [sic] experience of the resistance that can be encountered in schools to these issues in a very practical way in the past, I am aware of the difficulty in changing the attitudes of students and staff. It is not impossible but it is difficult and

takes a significant investment of time that the current funding of EP work does not necessarily allow." (Participant 41)

These comments suggest that opportunities to work in this area are seen as inaccessible to educational psychologists, and that many are experiencing a lack of discussion and prioritisation of LGBTQ+ work within their services. This was, however, not the case for all participants, with three describing the positive impact of having positive relationships with the schools they work with and a level of buy-in:

"Generally positive attitudes amongst most people I come into contact with, Schools that openly display positive LGBT values" (Participant 27)

"Relationships and trust with school and service colleagues where transparent and non-judgemental practice is encouraged." (Participant 44)

"'Having by [sic] in from staff, support from a SENCO or someone in school who wants this support" (Participant 47)

3.1.3.2 Theme 2: LGBTQ+ lived experience and knowledge

This theme explores how LGBTQ+ self-efficacy may be related to personal lived experience as an LGBTQ+ person, vicarious experience through family or friends, and learning about LGBTQ+ lives through continuous professional development.

Seven LGBTQ+ participants mentioned that their confidence was supported by their own lived experience as an LGBTQ+ person, for example:

"I also belong to the LGBTQ+ community and have strong personal interest in supporting LGBTQ+ people. As such, I feel I may have some confidence in understanding the ways in which LGBTQ+ experience oppressive and discriminatory practices within school and wider society." (Participant 31)

"My own experiences as a bisexual woman" (Participant 17)

"Being a member of the LGBT community" (Participant 9)

The same number of non-LGBTQ+ participants (n = 7) described drawing upon the experiences of LGBTQ+ friends and family, for example:

> *"Being close to the journey of my very close friends raising a family as a same-sex couple has been a big part of my understanding." (Participant 6)*

> *"Talking to my friends who identify as part of this group." (Participant 15)*

> *"I have also taken an interest in the lives and experiences of those around me and close to me that identify as LGBT". (Participant 26)*

> *"I have a fellow TEP who is LGBTQ and could support me in my development." (Participant 35)*

Conversely, a total of eight non-LGBTQ+ participants mentioned a concern about how their identity impacts negatively on their confidence, for example:

> *"Not having personal experience/understanding and not being able to fully relate to their experiences." (Participant 36)*

> *"I don't identify as being in this group myself so am conscious not to speak for a minority of which I am not a part." (Participant 15)*

> *"Also, I'm very aware that I don't identify as LGBT+ which may impact my support with possible unrecognised bias" (Participant 18)*

> *"Perhaps also not having lived experienced in the area and recognising the limitations of my own knowledge." (Participant 28)*

For these participants, a barrier seems to relate to the extent to which they feel able to speak for / about LGBTQ+ young people when they themselves do not share this identity. This touches upon notions of legitimacy and authenticity of voice and whether shared lived experience is a prerequisite for working with people from marginalised backgrounds. One participant who shared similar concerns went onto reflect upon their desire to change their practice and seek more knowledge:

"It is something I feel less confident about, due to not being LGBT and not many experiences of delivering training or supporting schools, but open to learning and open to making changes to become a better LGBT advocate and ally. It is something we need to do." (Participant 7)

For one participant, an additional consideration is how work to advocate for LGBTQ+ people would be received due to their own identity as a marginalised person, and speaks to the complexity of identity-based work and power within systems:

"Another factor is that I am an EP from a marginalised background myself, which means that I would have to be fully supported by both the school and the EPS to undertake this work to not end up a scapegoat." (Participant 51)

A range of CPD activities were described by participants as supporting their confidence: a total of 19 mentioned having undertaken training on this topic, with two external LGBTQ+ organisations mentioned by seven participants. Other forms of CPD were mentioned by 18 participants, including and books, wider reading of news and social media and accessing LGBTQ+ resources. Five participants described having completed research with LGBTQ+ populations, for example:

"My previous research experiences with LGBt young people" (Participant 14)

"My thesis research" (Participant 18)

"I have published research (as an EP) in this area and have tried to keep abreast of CPD. I consider myself an ally." (Participant 19)

Another source of knowledge described by participants was LGBTQ+ input during their doctoral training. Eight participants mentioned this as a positive influence upon their confidence, for example:

"One of our group tasks was on LGBTQ and this helped me understand a lot more" (Participant 35)

"This is something that has been and continues to be covered within my current doctoral training in both a theoretical and practice-based way." (Participant 41)

"I have recently completed an assignment about mental distress within the LGBTQ+ population and what can be done to compensate for risks within schools and by EPs." (Participant 55)

Thirteen participants considered that a lack of training undermined their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, for example:

"This research has made me realise that I have never engaged in any specific personal or professional development in ways to better understand the experiences of LGBT young people or how best to support hem [sic] and I will make sure I do now... I feel like we don't know what we don't know. Having taken part in this survey i've realised how much more cpd I need to do in this area to know how best to support and what the challenges to this may be. Thanks so much for raising this very important discussion." (Participant 6)

"My lack of understanding, training and experience in supporting schools with LGBTQ CYP - it is something I am aware I need to address and improve through professional development." (Participant 35)

"Lack of training/input on LGBT and supporting pupils. Limited awareness of the wide range of terms used and their meanings." (Participant 40)

"Lack of training - would need to do a lot of research and preparation for this type of work as it is something that I have not done before." (Participant 57)

"i dont think i would feel hugely confident until i had spent time researching and reading so wouldnt necessarily provide many in the moment strategies" (Participant 67)

"It is a very changing landscape and I/my service will need to keep abreast of developments in knowledge and research to promote the best evidence-informed practice." (Participant 33)

Here participants describe a lack of knowledge as undermining their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy and feeling that they would need to upskill in this area before commencing LGBTQ+-related work. Participant 33 reflected a sense that there is change associated with LGBTQ+ work and that there is a need to continually maintain updated knowledge. This could link to Participant 6 describing the possibility of 'unknown unknowns' and a sense of being unsure how much knowledge is necessary to feel one is competent to practice within and around LGBTQ+ young people. Similarly, four participants reflected negatively on the extent to which their doctoral training had covered LGBTQ+ matters, describing that a lack of input has led them to feel less confident. This could point to a variety of practices across the training courses nationally:

"I have not had any training on this (uni or service based)" (Participant 39)

"…as a TEP I feel that despite my interest in supporting the LGBTQ+ community, I have received limited doctoral training and information on how best to support the LGBTQ+ young people I work with within education" (Participant 31)

"The TEP training has not provided much insight into how to approach this in practice and it has failed to further expand my knowledge. I would have liked to receive more input about EP practice and good practice when working with LGBT young people, their families and school." (Participant 26)

"I wish the doctorate course could have explored in more in depth." (Participant 25)

3.1.3.3. Theme 3: Professional skills and personal values

This theme explores how Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) may (or may not) draw upon their core skills as practioners when evaluating their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, and also explores the contribution of personal values.

Participants reflected upon the broader professional skill sets and personal values they possessed as Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) and how these might be usefully deployed to support their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. Participants described skills of "empathy", "transparent and non-judgemental [sic] practice" and "taking a curious stance" a when considering supports their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. One participant described having mastery experiences in the general principles of supporting schools around equality,

diversity and inclusion, but that they felt they lacked the specific knowledge required to support LGBTQ+ young people:

> *"I would feel confident in supporting schools more generally in supporting setting up a school environment/policies etc ensuring all EDI principles are followed and therefore all CYP's needs met however I am not confident in that I have the specific knowledge in supporting LGBT young people." (Participant 64)*

This could support the notion LGBTQ+ self-efficacy as a domain distinct from inclusive practice more broadly and could suggest that having knowledge about LGBTQ+ people or their experience helps Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) to feel efficacious. Related to this, for other participants, there was a sense that the values associated with inclusive practice or working with diversity was useful in supporting their confidence:

> *"Being aware of cultural differences and personal/wider world belief systems and how to take these into consideration when offering support, being aware of my own biases, taking on the role of a reflective practitioner". (Participant 9)*

> *"In all honesty, I think I probably draw on more general principles of acceptance, respect, inclusivity and unconditional positive regard and trying to examine and reflect my own perspective in the same way I have tried to with anti-racist practice." (Participant 6)*

> *"I undertake antiracist work which is intersectional, recognising how marginalisation and oppression impacts everyone with protected characteristics. All of the knowledge I have developed has come through my personal connections and independent CPD" (Participant 51)*

Participant 6 and 51 draw connections to the way they approached undertaking anti-racist work, and having an alignment to anti-discrimination and social justice values came through in other participant accounts. This could suggest that the values of some participants and commitment to practicing in an anti-discriminatory way acts as a foundation to the actions they might feel efficacious to approach for other marginalised groups.

For some participants, supporting LGBTQ+ young people had a relationship to their professional skills in addressing with discrimination, and their accounts discussed the potential of drawing upon broad psychological approaches, frameworks and knowledge in

addressing this issue. Eliciting student voice was also mentioned as being relevant to this area of practice:

> *"I would draw on the skills I use to support the inclusion of all students who may be discriminated against. The skills we have as EPs in reframing and holding other perspectives particularly that of the child would help me support schools to support LGBT YP." (Participant 29)*

> *"Understanding of the psychology behind school belonging, discrimination etc." (Participant 48)*

> *"My training in relation to helping reduce prejudices and promote equality in general." (Participant 15)*

> *"My understanding of intersectionality resources (e.g., Social GRACES model). The knowledge of evidence-based research in this area." (Participant 53)*

Other transferrable skills mentioned by participants included person centrered planning techniques, and the potential role of consultation:

> *"Underpinning ethos of inclusion, exploration of power within consultation and work with school systems, and knowledge around the experience of cyp in education." (Participant 66)*

> *"I believe that the consultative and training skills developed as part of doctoral educational psychology training allow TEPs to flexibly support schools within many areas, which may include helping them to develop improved practices for supporting the inclusion and sense of belonging for LGBTQ+ students. I therefore feel confident in being able to adapt my practices to the needs of the educational provider." (Participant 31)*

> *"Using my consultation skills to support school to think about how they have tackled other issues relating to inclusion and diversity." (Participant 22)*

In each of these accounts, consultation is described as a possible mechanism for facilitating discussions of inclusion, although no participants reported having completed consultation work around LGBTQ+ inclusion, only describing that they would or could draw upon their consultation skills to support their confidence in working around this topic. For these participants, their efficacy is supported by drawing upon familiar skills which can be transferred to a variety of contexts, suggesting that for some participants it is the means of practice which supports their efficacy rather than specific topic knowledge. This may be due to participants having more mastery experiences of using core practise skills (e.g. consultation) across diverse contexts, than they have of the topic of LGBTQ+-inclusion.

3.1.3.3.1 Sub theme: fear of getting it wrong and having difficult conversations.

This sub-theme identifies an area where core professional skills and personal values may feel insufficient for supporting LGBTQ+ self-efficacy: if the situation is contentious, or the educational psychologist is concerned about making mistakes or causing offence.

Participants described that their confidence was undermined by concerns about 'getting it wrong' in this area and concerns about meeting prejudice, discrimination, or the viewpoints of others who are unsupportive of LGBTQ+ inclusion. The idea of making mistakes in this area was troubling for several participants who described how this concern undermined their confidence. For example:

> *"Worrying about saying/doing the wrong thing." (Participant 36)*

> *"As this is a sensitive topic, I would be concerned about saying something discriminatory (coming from a straight heterosexual person)" (Participant 43)*

> *"Fear of 'getting it wrong' or 'saying the wrong thing'" (Participant 37)*

> *"Fear over giving the wrong response / offending and being called out despite trying to be reflective/sensitive and when trying to get it right." (Participant 23)*

Participant 23 elaborates on their concerns about saying the wrong thing, describing apprehensions about being 'called out' if they were to do this. Similarly, another participant described that such beliefs may hamper the practice of colleagues:

> *"I think staff shy away from certain conversations because they worry about saying the 'wrong' thing but this can mean they may not ask questions for clarity or may not ask for support/new ideas on an issue they may be having." (Participant 11)*

Another participant elaborated on a similar point, explaining that they are unsure as to how their views are distinct from others, and a belief that their personal views should not impact their professional advice. This perhaps indicates a confusion as to what constitutes evidence-based practice in the area of LGBTQ+ support and what would be considered personal opinion:

> *"I am nervous about offending, I am unclear about how to separate my own views and understandings on the topic with other peoples and how to ensure that I advise in a professional capacity without letting my own views impact." (Participant 39)*

Many of these participants describe affective states such as fear, nervous, or worry as reducing their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy and this is supported by Bandura (1996) self-efficacy theory, as physiological and affective states is identified as one of the four sources of self-efficacy, describing that negative emotions and perspectives can reduce a person's sense of self-efficacy.

For all of these participants, the language of 'getting it right' vs. getting it 'wrong' is consistently present, which is noticeable in its duplication across each of the accounts. This could suggest that participants perceive LGBTQ+ topics and language to be 'black-and-white' and that the consequences of making a mistake or being ill-informed in this area are to be feared. Some participants described concerns about causing offense, which implies consideration of an audience to speech acts, and other participants directly referenced their confidence is reduced by the idea of 'saying the wrong thing', again implying that there is someone to whom offense could be caused. It appears for these participants, the topic feels fraught with possibilities of causing offense towards another, that there would be subsequent embarrassment or repercussions for this, and that handling such complexity or feelings of upset in the other causes concern. In this way, such fears may also relate to having difficult conversations. This aspect of LGBTQ+ practise was mentioned by

participants as causing a reduction in their confidence, in relation to experiencing prejudice or negative attitudes:

> *"When those on the receiving end of the support don't appear willing or 'ready' for the support yet. When there may be conflicting views across all parties, such as CYP, families and school and navigating this" (Participant 37)*

> *"Strangely, the lack of understanding of key adults working with young people and challenging these views. I think this is more reflective of my lack of confidence with challenging rather than specifically with supporting LGBT young people." (Participant 52)*

> *"Potential for challenging conversations if working with staff with opposing views about LGBT issues." (Participant 56)*

These accounts mention key staff, school staff and families, and another participant described that they did not feel confident when working with parents in this area. These accounts suggest a lack of assurance in how to handle prejudices or conflicting views, that the idea of encountering these situations caused participants to feel less LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. This may relate to Theme one: LGBTQ+ knowledge and experience, where perhaps some participants feel that they lack the requisite knowledge to support a particular position or point of view regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion, but may also indicate that in situations of stress, conflict or challenge, identifying transferable practice-based skills is less clear. One participant did reflect on mechanisms which could help in situations of difficulty:

> *"When strong relationships and trust between and within service/school systems are not present. Lack of transparency which could cause conflict with our support involvement (e.g., not notifying pupils, parents and others involved that this work will be happening and what is included. Opportunities for people to ask questions can alleviate the tensions uncertainty may provoke)." (Participant 44)*

This participant related this to the links between educational psychology services and the schools with whom they work, reflecting that facilitating dialogue could be useful in

reducing the potential for conflict, although they are not clear on whether it is the educational psychologist or the school who would do such work.

Three participants mentioned concerns about experiencing challenges relating to faith and religious belief, and that their confidence to practice would be reduced in this area as they are unsure as to how to navigate differences:

> *"Maybe when working with certain faith schools and groups where there may be beliefs that discriminate against the LGBT community" (Participant 29)*
>
> *"When working with 'faith' schools" (Participant 61)*
>
> *"Religious-belief-based attitudes that create an often unspoken reluctance to address LGBT related issues or concerns amongst school staff and education professionals; the resurgence of 'gay' as a disparaging term amongst pupils in London secondary schools (including friends of our 14 year old twins)" (Participant 58)*

Participant 58 also mentions a rise in homophobic language as reducing their confidence, although they do not expand as to why this has the effect of reducing their confidence in the area, perhaps it relates to the idea of meeting challenge and conflict when working around LGBTQ+ support. Of the 13 comments made relating to this sub-theme, 11 came from non-LGBTQ+ participants. Two LGBTQ+ participants shared distinct reflections on how the potential for difficult conversations affects their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy:

> *"Where the language used to talk about LGBT young people is negative/damaging…this is a sign that this work needs to take place here but it can also feel like the shutters are down, and also quite vulnerable." (Participant 47)*

3.1.3.4 Theme four: The political context

This theme relates to the influence upon Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)' LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of the political context surrounding LGBTQ+ support in education, both historically and at the present time.

One participant described that they believe the historical and political context is important when completing work in the LGBTQ+ domain, and that if it is not, their confidence feels undermined:

“When this work is approached as a bolt on part of the curriculum, in a tick-box manner, or simply from the point of view of individual bias and not in its political and historical context or the political context of education.” (Participant 65)

Another participant references concern about encountering or operating within an established prejudicial narrative regarding LGBTQ+ people in education, reminiscent of attitudes documented during the time of Section 28 (Lee, 2019):

“push back in the community, broad labels re LGBT people being "dangerous to children and forcing an agenda"” (Participant 9)

This suggests that for this participant, there is a feeling that such narratives are still promoted today, and this links to a comment shared by another participant who felt that the current political and social landscape negatively impacts upon their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy:

“I think given the political landscape and social/cultural viewpoints at present make it challenging to make sure I am getting it right.” (Participant 13)

Another participant reflected similar concerns, linking this directly to the present government, although they also sought to highlight that this could act as a motivator for their practise:

“To some extent the current awful context promoted by this government makes me somewhat less confident, but also acts as a strong stimulus to support schools to support LGBTQ+ young people, centering their voice and wellbeing.” (Participant 14)

At the time of data collection, the UK Conservative Government had recently published draft guidance relating to transgender identities in schools (Department for Education, 2023) and this draft guidance was referenced by 13 participants as undermining their confidence, causing concerns for their practice and the school experience of LGBTQ+ young people, for example:

“Government policy making schools an unsafe place for LGBTQ students” (Participant 17)

“Ensuring advocacy is compliant with current government policy” (Participant 54)

“The new non-statutory guidance around gender identity has the power to undo years of positive practice. It is awful.” (Participant 30)

“Recent suggested changes in government guidance may further exacerbate [difficulties] with schools perhaps not wanting to draw attention to LGBTQ+ related practices that are currently facing higher levels of scrutiny nationally, due to an increasingly conservative narrative that, in my view, seeks to vilify and isolate the transgender community.” (Participant 31)

Participant 31 linked the draft government guidance to a concern that it would have a ‘chilling effect’ on the work schools seek to do for LGBTQ+ young people, and other participants described specific concerns about the draft guidance and its implications for educational psychology practice, feeling that the advice they would or have provided in their professional role would now be unacceptable according to the draft guidance:

“Current government discourse and legislation, i.e “the gender questioning children non statutory guidance”. I am worried about the current direction of travel, and how this affects my ability to support schools when the advice I think would be most helpful goes against the guidance schools are given from the government.” (Participant 27)

“The government's recent guidance on gender diverse young people in schools, particularly the guidance for schools to inform parents. This has caused a lot of confusion and worry in schools about doing the "right thing", and I feel a need to tread much more carefully when discussing gender diversity in schools (e.g., I want to advise schools to protect the privacy and choice of gender diverse pupils and to provide a safe space in line with lived experience research, but this directly contradicts governmental guidance).” (Participant 38)

“The recently released guidance on social transitioning within schools is of major concern. I do not know where this situates us as EPs. I have written recommendations based on clear and triangulated evidence within statutory assessments that would now be seen as being in breach of this guidance.” (Participant 41)

"The draft guidance that has recently been released by the government would totally undermine the work that I have undertaken in the past." (Participant 51)

These accounts raise a question of the legislative frameworks within which educational psychologists operate and, when there are perceived contradictions between evidence-based practice and government guidance, how this should be approached by Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified). Another participant commented on this conflict as undermining their confidence:

"How it fits with Ofsted requirements, ensuring my guidance information is up to date and aligned with other policies (or else clearly distinct) e.g., new guidance for supporting trans students (which doesn't align necessarily with EP values)." (Participant 53)

Another participant described the draft guidance as unhelpful and reducing their confidence due to its lack of specificity and that the tone of the document as focusing on prohibitive practices and suggests a desire for government guidance which might offer practical support.:

"Lack of clear guidance from local and national government, particularly re. supporting trans and non-binary students. I am aware of the recent government draft guidance, however, my first skim reading of the draft suggests that this is more about what schools don't need to do, rather than what schools can and should do to support students." (Participant 59)

In total, two participants mentioned that they considered they may find the government guidance helpful:

"I have recently completed the doctorate which covered these areas so feel I have quite up to date knowledge on the perspectives around this area of casework. There has been recent government published guidance for schools which will also be useful in supporting the EP role." (Participant 33)

"Reviewing new policy and government guidance and other relevant news relating to LGBT+ young people" (Participant 18)

Other legislation and policy frameworks mentioned by participants as supporting their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy included two mentions of the Equality Act 2010, and one participant mentioned specific guidance from a local authority which they had found helpful for their practice. One participant described feeling undermined by “safeguarding policy/legislation”, and another described being unsure as to how to support schools in this area whilst at the same time meeting Ofsted requirements. This aligned to Participant 34 who raised concerns about “supporting without an overhaul of the National Curriculum and school policies etc”

3.3 Findings summary

This section brings together the quantitative and qualitative findings from both participant groups in summary form, ahead of integration and analysis within the Discussion section.

3.3.1 Quantitative findings

Mean self-efficacy scores for school staff participants (M = 3.03; SD = .603) and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) (M = 2.99; SD = .452) were similar, with both groups on average agreeing with the statements in the self-efficacy scale.

Across both school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified), approximately 67% of participants had completed LGBTQ+ CPD, and those who had undertaken this CPD returned significantly higher self-efficacy scores than those who had not completed LGBTQ+ CPD.

A greater proportion of school staff participants (55%) defined as LGBTQ+ than amongst Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants (19%). LGBTQ+ Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) returned significantly higher LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scores than non-LGBTQ+ Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified), but no significant difference was found in LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scores between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ school staff. The large majority of both participant groups had LGBTQ+ friends and family (93% of school staff; 90% of Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)) and in both participant groups, no significant difference was found between those who had LGBTQ+ friends and family, and those who did not.

The majority of school staff participants were based in England (84%) with the remainder of the sample based in Scotland (16%). Almost all participants in the educational psychology sample were based in England (98%) with one participant working in Northern Ireland. No significant differences were found in LGBTQ+ self-efficacy based on geographic location for either school staff or Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified).

The majority of school staff participants (87%) were not early career, but the majority of educational psychology participants (68%) were within their early career stage. Differences in mean self-efficacy scores between early career and non-early career were non-significant across both participant groups. School staff working at Key Stage 3-4 were

found to have significantly higher LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scores than those who worked at Key Stage 1-2. As Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) work across all key stages and the 0-25 age range, this question was not asked of their participant group.

3.3.2 Qualitative findings

Four themes and two sub-themes were identified from school staff participants' comments; four themes and one sub-theme was identified from Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants' comments. Figures 5 and 6 demonstrate the links between themes within each participant group, and Figure 7 shows connections between school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) themes. Connections will be explored further within the Discussion and integrated with the quantitative data.

Figure 5

Thematic map: School staff

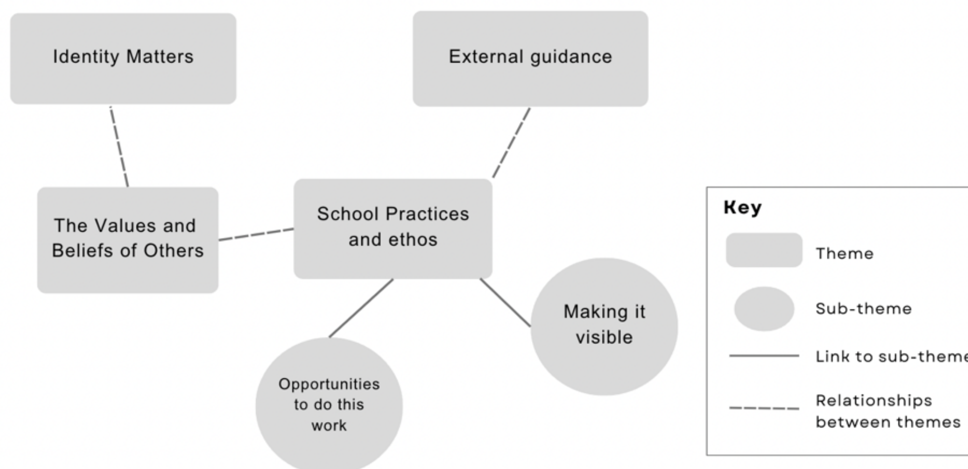


Figure 6

Thematic map: Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)

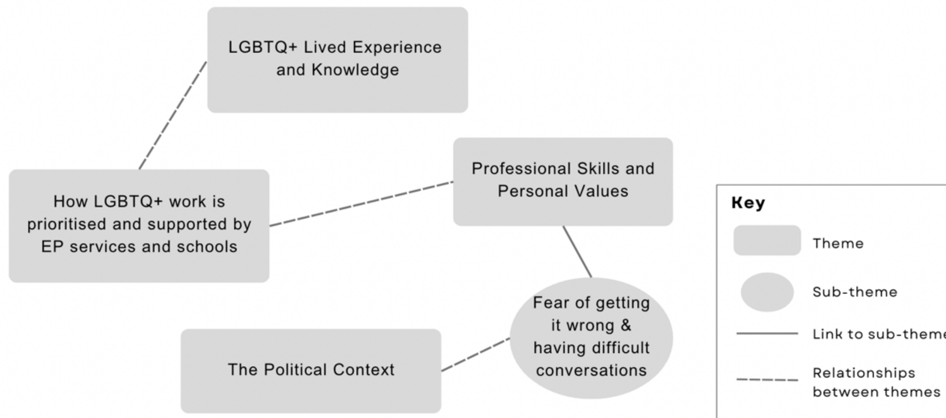
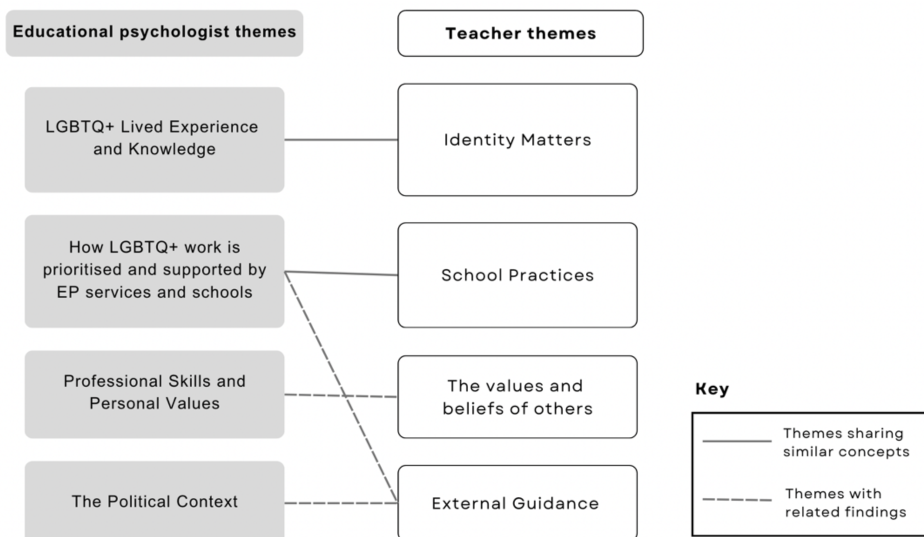


Figure 7

Relationships between themes across participant groups.



4.0 Discussion

Self-efficacy has been used as a theoretical framework to examine school staff' confidence to support LGBTQ+ young people at school in studies outside of the UK, but to the best of the author's knowledge this is the first study to explore this in the UK and extensive searches of relevant literature suggest that it is the first study to explore educational psychologist self-efficacy for supporting schools with this work.

The present study sought to answer the exploratory research question: What promotes or inhibits the self-efficacy of school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) to support LGBTQ+ young people at school in the UK? This discussion seeks to integrate quantitative and qualitative data to provide a greater level of insight into LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) by combining these data sources to address the research question. It will discuss key findings and situate this research alongside existing literature, consider the findings in relation to self-efficacy theory, identify areas for future research and implications for educational psychology practice.

A key finding of this research is that for both school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants, participants who had undertaken continuing professional development (CPD) had significantly higher LGBTQ+ self-efficacy and described the positive impact of these experiences within the qualitative comments (within the school staff theme of External Guidance and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) theme LGBTQ+ Lived Experience and Knowledge). A similar proportion of Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) and school staff participants indicated that they had completed CPD in this area (~67% for both groups) and the difference in mean self-efficacy scores between those who had CPD compared with those who had not was the same (~0.5 higher for the CPD participants) for both school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified), although the size of the effect was greater within the school staff participants.

Qualitative data revealed that CPD was described as positively supporting LGBTQ+ self-efficacy by both Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) and school staff participants. School staff participants described receiving support and input from external agencies (such as LGBTQ+ organisations) as important to their confidence, but Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) were not mentioned as a possible source of such

support. Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) who had completed CPD in this area in turn reported higher self-efficacy scores for delivering LGBTQ+ training to schools. Qualitative data from Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) revealed that where participants had previously engaged in LGBTQ+-focused work, delivering training was the most frequently reported experience, and those who had delivered LGBTQ+ training to schools in the past considered that this experience supported their confidence to practice in this area in the future. However, only a small number of participants described having completed such work.

A difference between school staff participants and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants was that Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) felt a lack of CPD contributed to a lower sense of confidence (explored within the qualitative theme *LGBTQ+ lived experience and knowledge*) but this idea was less present in the school staff data, despite a similar proportion of both groups reporting they had completed LGBTQ+ CPD. Within the relevant qualitative themes, both Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants and school staff named a variety of CPD activities currently undertaken, with 'training' featuring most frequently, but the content or form of the training participants had received was not conveyed, and therefore it was not possible to build a more detailed picture of the kinds of activities and content these participants found to be useful or otherwise.

School staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) who had engaged in LGBTQ+ CPD reported higher levels of self-efficacy than those who had not. Previous studies have called for school staff to receive training so that they can deliver effective practice in the area of gender diversity and sexuality (McDermott et al., 2023; Leonard, 2022; Yavuz, 2016), and LGBTQ+ has also been identified as priority area for CPD for educational psychologists (Sargent et al, 2022). The present findings support these calls and align to findings from international research which suggest CPD can support LGBT+ self-efficacy (Poteat & Scheer, 2016). For Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified), engaging in CPD related to higher levels of self-efficacy to deliver LGBTQ+ training to schools. As training is a core function for educational psychologists (Scottish Executive, 2002) and school staff who have had CPD report higher LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, this can be considered a useful activity that Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) can undertake to develop schools' capacity to become positive environments for LGBTQ young people.

In a related finding, qualitative data revealed that Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) in this study consider a *lack* of CPD regarding LGBTQ+ matters to lessen their confidence to practise in this area, but this notion was less present within school staff qualitative responses. This finding could relate to the distinct professional requirements of the two groups: school staff s are not required to evidence their CPD to an external body, whereas Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) must maintain a record of CPD as part of their ongoing registration with the Health Care and Professions Council (HCPC) and the BPS Practice Guidelines (British Psychological Society, 2017) describe CPD as "essential for maintaining and enhancing professionalism and competence" (p.12). Operating with respect to these requirements may mean that Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) place a greater emphasis on the need for CPD when making efficacy evaluations about their ability to practise with competence within a particular domain, a conclusion supported by the findings of a study exploring UK educational psychologists' self-efficacy regarding critical incidents, which identified that the majority of participants desired more training to support their confidence within that area of practice (Bennett et al., 2021).

Another difference identified is that for some educational psychology participants, their doctoral training offered a variety of opportunities to build LGBTQ+-related knowledge, either through research activities or assignments, direct input or discussion with peers. This is an encouraging finding, where previous research has identified a lack of input within doctoral courses (Court, 2019), although the findings of the current study also support these studies as it identified that these experiences may be inconsistently distributed across the training courses in the UK, with some participants describing receiving little-to-no LGBTQ+ input during their training. Interestingly, no school staff participants mentioned their teacher training as a source of LGBTQ+ knowledge or CPD, which likely reflects the distinct natures of the training pathways but may also point to a lack of LGBTQ+-focused input during teacher training programmes (Formby, 2015).

The emphasis placed upon CPD by Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) could also have links to the disparities identified in the current study between school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) access to practical experiences of LGBTQ+ work. Concrete examples of LGBTQ+ inclusion work were more present in the school staff qualitative data (within the theme *School Practices*) than in Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) accounts, which may mean school staff participants were less likely to consider a lack of CPD as impeding their confidence, as self-

efficacy theory suggests that where participants have mastery or vicarious experiences, they draw from these when evaluating their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Although educational psychologists LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scores suggested most felt efficacious in this area, qualitative data demonstrated a widespread lack of opportunities to practise, which participants reported as undermining their confidence. Participants identified barriers relating to perceptions of the Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) remit, or levels of service demand meaning other areas are prioritised. This idea is supported by New-Brown et al. (2024) review of UK and international literature on the role of educational psychologists in supporting gender diversity in schools, which identified that educational psychologists are well-positioned to work systemically on developing inclusive school environments but that educational psychology services are more often called upon by schools in reaction to individual needs.

As such, the findings of the current study appear to point to a potentially circular problem: if the commonly understood remit of educational psychologists means that they are not readily identified as a source of support for LGBTQ+ inclusion, then schools may not approach services for this work; however this lack of demand may mean educational psychologists and their services do not consider there to be a need for LGBTQ+ systemic work, and therefore do not prioritise or promote it, and in doing so, limit opportunities for educational psychologists to increase their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy by restricting their opportunities to experience mastery. Self-efficacy theory suggests that this cycle could have wider impacts, as lower self-efficacy leads to a reduction in task-initiation (Bandura, 1997) meaning that where opportunities arise for educational psychologists to work to support schools' LGBTQ+ inclusive environments, a lack of mastery experiences could mean they are less likely to pursue or propose such work.

This study has also identified that both school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)' confidence is reduced by concerns about meeting resistance or 'getting it wrong', in related but distinct ways. For school staff, confidence was reduced by the experience of, or potential for, 'backlash' from parents and others who oppose LGBTQ+ inclusion, and unsupportive attitudes from colleagues. Some school staff participants described that their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy was reduced due to past interactions with parents opposing LGBTQ+ inclusion, aligning to self-efficacy theory's suggestion that negative past experiences can lead to lower self-efficacy evaluations (Bandura, 1989). However, other participants who were concerned that LGBTQ+ work could lead to backlash, did not describe specific experiences. Although this may reflect omissions on the part of

participants, social learning theory suggests that anticipation of negative outcomes does not always derive from direct previous experiences of negativity, and can be generated from other sources, such as the media (Bandura, 2001; Pajares et al., 2009). Therefore, consideration should be given to how the high-profile protests schools experienced when LGBTQ+-inclusive RSE was introduced (C. Lee, 2021) or increasing transphobia within the UK media (Rozado & Goodwin, 2022) may be impacting upon school staff confidence in this area. Bandura's (2001) observation that "media portrayals can alter perceived social sanctions by the way in which the consequences of different styles of conduct are portrayed" (p. 277) may be relevant to participants' concerns about experiencing potential backlash. In addition, as school staff were the subjects of anti-LGBTQ+ protests, this could be a form of vicarious experience for school staff participants, as where a model is perceived as being similar to an individual, the self-efficacy evaluations derived from that model can be more powerful (Bandura, 2001).

Meeting resistance from those with opposing views also featured within accounts from Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants as contributing to a lower sense of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, alongside apprehensions about 'getting it wrong' or causing offence. This finding aligns to existing studies of Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) potential and actual contributions to working with gender diverse young people in schools, where participants shared similar concerns, and which concluded that these fears could reflect a lack of training and knowledge within the profession (Allen-Biddell & Bond, 2022; Court, 2019; Gavin, 2021). The present study builds upon these findings to explore how such concerns may relate to Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)' LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, and how this could impact the nature of the support Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) attempt to offer to school staff and schools.

Previous research has identified Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) as possessing transferrable skills that could be usefully deployed to support LGBTQ+ inclusion (Court, 2019; Leonard, 2022; Marks, 2012; New-Brown et al., 2024; Yavuz, 2016) and the current study provides further evidence that educational psychologists *do* consider these core skills (such as person-centred approaches, consultation, and taking a curious stance) as important in supporting their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. It is notable, however, that participants did not mention core skills when they expressed concerns about meeting resistance or 'getting it wrong'. Conflict Resolution for the Helping Professions (Barsky, 2014) identifies a range of psychological approaches for working through conflict including

skills which are regularly drawn upon by Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified), such as reflective listening and modelling, and on the application of psychological theories such as systems theory and narrative theory. As such, Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) may need help to identify how these core skills may be used in difficult circumstances, when meeting resistance to LGBTQ+-focused work, or in navigating conflicting values. This conclusion shares links with the findings Bennett et al. (2021) who described the need to highlight the transferability of core skills as a means to support the self-efficacy of educational psychologists when working on critical incidents.

This study has identified that fear of backlash is a key concern for school staff when making LGBTQ+ self-efficacy evaluations, and that therefore support is needed in this area, but findings also suggest that although Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) possess core skills to provide such support, they too experience fears about how to navigate resistance. Allen-Biddell & Bond (2022) observed that “by reframing the thinking of those around the CYP and drawing upon the underlying concepts which lead gender-diverse and autistic youth to experience poorer outcomes, EPs can offer distinctive support in this area (McBride, 2021) ” (p. 85), however despite the potential for such work, this study reveals that educational psychologists may not necessarily derive self-efficacy from their core skills if the circumstances surrounding LGBTQ+ inclusion are negative or contentious.

The importance of direct and indirect LGBTQ+ lived experience upon LGBTQ+ self-efficacy was noted in the findings of the current study for both participant groups. The majority of school staff participants and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants indicated that they had LGBTQ+ friends and family, and participants described that their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy was supported through their personal relationships with LGBTQ+ friends and family, whose experiences and perspectives they felt able to learn from. Research conducted within the field of intergroup contact theory suggests that friendships between majority and minority group members can result in prejudice reduction and to positive attitudes towards outgroup members which can generalise to the outgroup as a whole (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Close personal friendships with LGBTQ+ people have been previously identified as associated with allyship behaviours amongst heterosexuals (Knepp, 2022), and the findings of the current study can build upon this suggesting that as well as leading to allyship behaviours, learning from the experiences of LGBTQ+ friends and family can underpin LGBTQ+ self-efficacy.

Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) who identified as LGBTQ+ returned higher LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scores than their heterosexual counterparts. This effect was not observed, however for LGBTQ+ school staff self-efficacy scores, despite participants' LGBTQ+ identities or experiences as an LGBTQ+ individual being prominent in school staff qualitative data. The size of the LGBTQ+ participant sub-group was larger amongst school staff participants than Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified), and this larger number of LGBTQ+ school staff participants is likely to mean increased diversity of experiences and self-efficacy levels are represented within the LGBTQ+ school staff sub-group than within the LGBTQ+ Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) sub-group. This suggestion is supported by looking to the qualitative data, where a heterogeneous range of experiences were described by LGBTQ+ school staff, both positive and negative, which could reduce the impact of LGBTQ+ identity alone on the quantitative results, and therefore lessen the power of this variable upon school staff LGBTQ+ self-efficacy levels in the quantitative analysis.

Some LGBTQ+ school staff participants described that they felt unable to be open about their identity at school, or had experienced negative attitudes from colleagues, other students or parents. This can be understood as minority stress experiences (I. H. Meyer, 2003), a framework which suggests that anti-LGBTQ+ experiences in the workplace are likely to have a greater negative impact upon LGBTQ+ individuals than non-LGBTQ+ individuals. Previous research has linked the minority stress framework to the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers in schools (Stones & Glazzard, 2019) and found that some LGBTQ+ teacher participants' confidence to do this work was reduced because of concerns about how their identity would be received by others. Research conducted within the theoretical framework of Self-Determination Theory (a theory of motivation distinct from self-efficacy but with which some constructs are shared (Sweet et al., 2012)), found wellbeing benefits derived from LGBTQ+ people coming out were *only* evidenced in environments in which participants felt 'autonomy support' (feeling connected to and supported by others for being one's authentic self) (Legate et al. 2012). It is possible to hypothesise that a similar effect might be seen upon self-efficacy, as negative affect and physiological states reduce self-efficacy (Bandura 1996). Slaton (2011) argued that studies of self-efficacy with individuals belonging to minority groups can potentially overlook the influence of broader sociocultural conditions (for example, heterosexism) and institutional practices upon this construct. Thus, taken together, the variety of negative and positive experiences within the sub-group of LGBTQ+ school staff (as described within the qualitative data) offers insight into the potential reasons for LGBTQ+ school staff self-efficacy scores not being significantly higher

than non-LGBTQ+ school staff, and demonstrates the myriad ways that LGBTQ+ identity can impact LGBTQ+ school staff LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, based on their personal experiences of holding a minority identity within that same environment.

School staff participants working at the primary school level of Key Stage 1-2 had lower self-efficacy than those working at secondary level. A consistent reason for this difference was not explicitly identified within a single qualitative theme, as the themes had applicability to participants from both primary and secondary level, although qualitative data can add insight into this finding. Within the theme *School Practices* some Key Stage 1-2 participants described the relationships and sex education curriculum as enabling their confidence and others mentioned examples such as having a range of LGBTQ+ resources and participating in LGBTQ+ events and awards, but others mentioned concerns relating to how LGBTQ+ topics could be addressed with respect to the age of the children they were teaching. This finding could link to the conclusions of existing research about the contested nature of LGBTQ+ identities within primary schools, due to a predominance of heteronormativity within these environments (Atkinson, 2021) . DePalma & Jennett (2010) described that there exists in society an erroneous "implicit conceptual link between sexual *orientation* and sexual *activity*" (pg. 19) in relation to LGBTQ+ identities, which they argued leads school staff in primary schools to shy away from acknowledging same-sex relationships in broad discussions of family or friendship. Similarly, Glazzard & Stones, (2021) described concerns that the statutory guidance on Relationship and Sex Education (Department for Education, 2019) provides English primary schools with an 'opt-out' from LGBTQ+ inclusion and that framing of teaching LGBTQ+ identities within the guidance is stigmatizing as it is "acknowledged within the policy framework as a "sensitive" aspect of the curriculum" (pg. 3). Alongside the potential contribution of negative media and parental responses discussed previously, these cultural assumptions about LGBTQ+ identities and the 'sensitive' nature of the topic, could lead to a reduction in confidence for primary school school staff as to how to undertake this work within the primary school context. If school staff consider that a topic is potentially fraught or hard to teach, this could reduce their efficacy, which has been shown to diminish when perceived task difficulty increases (Power et al., 2020).

This study revealed potential contributions to participants' LGBTQ+ self-efficacy relating to the UK political environment. Participants in Scotland described feeling supported by Scottish government guidance and the introduction of the national LGBTQ+ curriculum, although a small number of participants from Scotland were represented in the

sample which limits the ability to draw firmer conclusions or observe a larger effect. Where government influence was mentioned by participants in England, the majority described this as reducing their confidence. Only two school staff participants in England mentioned political or governmental factors, but this was more prominent in Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)' accounts. The discrepancy is likely to reflect the timing of data collection for the two groups: the majority of Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) responses were submitted in the weeks immediately after the UK government had published draft guidance on responding to gender diversity within English schools (Department for Education, 2023), whereas school staff participant responses were received in the months prior to its publication.

Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants reflected that the draft guidance reduced their confidence as they were unclear on how they could practise with respect to its content while also retaining their values as an Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) and their understanding of evidence-based practice. A small number described that the guidance would mean previous advice they had given relating to trans and gender diverse young people would be seen as being in breach of the guidance. One participant described feeling they would have to 'tread carefully' as a result of the guidance and that it may restrict their ability to complete this work in schools. C. Lee (2023b) argued that "unlike Section 28, this guidance does not silence teachers completely, but it is likely to affect what teachers feel they can say – and, crucially, the extent to which they can support young people" and the present research provides evidence that Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) share similar concerns about the effect of the draft guidance on practise. This is unfortunate, as the need for professional frameworks to support psychologists' to work in this area has been identified by previous studies (Allen-Biddell & Bond, 2022; Connor & Atkinson, 2022; New-Brown et al., 2024) however that which has been made available by the UK government appears to have had the opposite effect.

4.1 Implications for educational psychology practice

This study has highlighted several implications for educational psychology practice. Overall, Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) wish to complete work in this area, and have good efficacy to do so, but lower feelings of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy relate to lack of opportunity. Educational psychology services should proactively seek work relating to LGBTQ+ inclusion and highlight to schools the diverse range of skills that Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) can bring to supporting positive school environments

for LGBTQ+ young people, as this study also provides evidence that school staff are willing to pursue work in this area and that they place value on external input to support them.

The findings of this study have identified a range of practices highlighted by school staff and educational psychologists (trainee and qualified) to support LGBTQ+ young people within education, which are summarised in the table below and could be drawn upon by educational psychologists (trainee and qualified) when working with schools in this area.

Table 3

Examples of practices highlighted by participants as being supportive for LGBTQ+ young people in schools

School staff participants
School ethos and culture, led by senior leaders, which champions diversity and inclusivity, with supportive relationships and dialogue between staff on these matters
Training and/or continuing professional development for staff
Named role within school with responsibility for leading LGBTQ+ work at a strategic or senior level
Systems to report homophobic incidents
Student records which can be updated to reflect how a student would like to be referred to
Training and guidance from external agencies (such as LGBTQ+ charities) or the local authority
Ensuring the PSHE curricula are inclusive of LGBTQ+ relationships and lives
Access to resources to support lesson planning to avoid stereotypical representations or misrepresentations of LGBTQ+ people
Access to a network of school staff engaging in LGBTQ+ work across a local area
School support for staff to facilitate an LGBTQ+ group for students
School participation in LGBTQ+ events such as LGBTQ+ History Month or Pride

Visible support for LGBTQ+ inclusion such as flags, banners, badges, posters
Participation in externally accredited LGBTQ+ school inclusion awards
Access to literature, books and resources which celebrate LGBTQ+ families or individuals
Educational psychologists (Trainee and Qualified)
Continued training and/or professional development in LGBTQ+ topics, including engagement with research literature
An educational psychology service which works to actively develop LGBTQ+ inclusive practice and understands it within the wider socio-political context, not only a matter of addressing individual prejudice
Positive attitudes towards LGBTQ+ inclusion from colleagues, the educational psychology service and the local authority more widely
Working groups within educational psychology services to support work in this area (e.g. gender diversity working group)
Named Senior Educational Psychologist with responsibility for Anti-Oppressive Practice
LGBTQ+ inclusive supervision
Support from Principal Educational Psychologist to develop training regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion for delivery to schools and the wider local authority
Good relationships between educational psychology services and school staff
Training or assignment tasks received as part of Doctoral studies
Broad understanding and training of the principles of anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practices, including modes such as Social GRACES.

The study highlighted the existence in one service of a senior educational psychologist post for anti-oppressive practice and although it is unclear how commonplace such a position is, where these posts do not exist in other services, this research could

provide impetus to create them. The present study shows that Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) value CPD, guidance and support regarding LGBTQ+ matters, and senior specialist educational psychologist roles could hold strategic responsibility for LGBTQ+ work within their services, support the professional development needs of colleagues (which are partially evidenced within this research) and seek and develop systemic collaborations with schools.

At a different level of the system, this study also provides evidence that delivering training is a worthwhile activity for Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) to take in contributing to a LGBTQ+ positive school environment, as school staff who undertake such CPD are likely to have higher LGBTQ+ self-efficacy levels to complete work in this area. Whilst schools engage with external LGBTQ+ organisations to support their CPD needs and derive benefit from their expertise, Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) have a potentially unique contribution to offer to enable LGBTQ+ positive school environments through deploying their core skills to help school staff who experience backlash from others who oppose LGBTQ+ inclusion; this study shows such resistance is a key barrier to LGBTQ+ work and reduces school staff confidence. Previous research identified that educational psychologists hold skills which could valuably contribute to supporting adults in school to work in support of LGBTQ+ young people (Allen-Biddell & Bond, 2022), and this research supports this call, evidencing school staff need, and showing that in order for Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) to help schools who experience opposition, they themselves need the confidence to navigate conflict and difficult conversations. Additionally, a ‘fear of getting it wrong’ in this area may undermine LGBTQ+ work unless Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) are supported to overcome these concerns, to develop and deploy relevant skills, and educational psychology services should take this into account as they consider the professional development priorities for their workforces.

This research clearly highlights many areas for collaboration between school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) and offers unique insights into the supports and barriers to self-efficacy for each group, how these may intersect and how they differ, and offers considerable implications for educational psychology practice in supporting schools to develop LGBTQ+ inclusive environments.

4.2 Limitations

Limitations of this study include that most participants worked within England and therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions which can be generalised to the whole of the United Kingdom. Higher participant numbers from across the four nations of the UK could have supported the development of further insights into how the devolved context and distinct policy priorities of the devolved national governments may influence the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy of practitioners who work within those regions. Increased participants from those nations, however, could have affected the stability of the overall insights of the study if the participants were not drawn equally from the four nations, and may have been skewed to one nation in particular, and indeed, the devolved nature of education policy and LGBTQ+ national action plans may limit the extent to which any claims can be made about the United Kingdom context as a whole. As this study did not ask participants directly about the influence of devolved governmental policy upon LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, its influence is inferred and a closer examination of this factor offers a potential avenue for future research.

Overall, the sample for this study was appropriate to a small-scale study but is a small proportion of the target population in the UK and participants were self-selecting and therefore may reflect a high proportion of participants with a special interest in the topic. This could mean that those with strong opinions or interest in the topic may be overrepresented in the sample, and those with more moderate or indifferent perspectives may be underrepresented. Participant groups are not homogenous, and the study did not seek to control for the diversity of prior knowledge or experience in the topic; as self-efficacy theory suggests that participants with more mastery experiences are likely to feel more efficacious within a domain, the effect of prior knowledge, experience or training upon the overall self-efficacy rating for the sample may therefore be latently present within the data. The school staff sample had a higher representation of LGBTQ+ participants than non-LGBTQ+ participants and therefore may not be representative of non-LGBTQ+ school staff. Similarly, educational psychologist (trainee and qualified) participants included a lower number of LGBTQ+ individuals and therefore their experience may not have been fully captured within the sample.

Due to timing constraints, the survey instrument was not piloted with participants, and therefore its applicability to a UK context has been assumed. Piloting the instrument may have allowed further understanding into how questions are interpreted by participants, and to identify any ambiguous or confusing wording, to help ensure each survey question was clear to participants and relevant to the self-efficacy construct being measured, to further

assure its validity. Future research could explore how the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy instrument speaks to different key stages and school contexts, to understand the nuances which may support the LGBTQ+ efficacy of school staff or educational psychologists working across the age ranges.

4.3 Future research

The present study identifies several avenues for future research. Firstly, this study could be further refined by future research comparing the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy levels of school staff and Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) across the four nations of the UK, with respect to the different legislative frameworks within which they operate and the devolved nature of these education systems, as the findings of this study generate further questions as to how differences in policy approaches across the four nations toward LGBTQ+ inclusion may impact upon the self-efficacy of professionals operating within those education systems. For example, within the present study, staff participants working in Scotland identified that the Scottish Government approach to LGBTQ+ inclusion in schools supported their confidence, and further research could be conducted to garner a deeper understanding of the impact of this policy approach, how this supports school staff LGBTQ+ efficacy and lessons which could be drawn upon by other UK nations. Similarly, Educational Psychologist (Training and Qualified) participants identified that the UK government's draft guidance for working with gender questioning children in schools undermined their confidence, with some participants expressing concern that this contradicted previous work they had completed in this area, and future research could explore the potential and actual impact of the draft guidance on the LGBTQ+ efficacy of school staff and educational psychologists (trainee and qualified).

The study could be further refined by exploring in more detail the impact of training and continued professional development upon LGBTQ+ efficacy. The present study identifies that this has an important role in supporting the LGBTQ+ efficacy of school staff and educational psychologists (trainee and qualified) and future research could seek to gather more information as to the kinds of continuing professional development that school staff and educational psychologists (trainee and qualified) are engaged in across the UK and examine how these different activities or modes of delivery impact upon the LGBTQ+ self-efficacy levels of those who undertake them.

Future research could also gather further insight into the wider impact of practices identified by participants as supporting their LGBTQ+ efficacy, such as challenging stereotypes, taking a service / school-wide approach to LGBTQ+ inclusion, engagement in external awards or LGBTQ+ inclusion schemes. Whilst many such examples were shared of proactive approaches schools and educational psychology services are engaged in, the findings equally highlighted factors which negatively impacted participants' confidence, and the study generates further questions as to which approaches might be most effective at reducing these barriers to confidence, for example, experiencing or anticipating negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ inclusion or concerns about 'getting it wrong'.

Where future studies seek to identify such findings, these could be usefully generated in collaboration with participants using an action research approach, to ensure that any guidance that is developed is useful to those working within schools and/or educational psychology services. As this study has further highlighted the complexity of the role of LGBTQ+ individuals who work within these systems, and the potential for minority stress experiences, future studies could seek the input of LGBTQ+ professionals to ensure any recommendations for practice generated incorporate insights relating to their lived experiences in their roles.

Chapter Three: Reflective Chapter

This chapter provides a critical, reflective commentary on the research process, based upon the reflections I documented throughout the process within my research diary, through research supervision, and those derived from an overall, holistic view on the research process taken as I approached submission. It has been a challenging process, from which I have learned a significant amount.

1.0 Seeking research questions

From the beginning, I knew I wanted to undertake a research project which was grounded in social justice and which sought to make a small contribution to improving the lives of marginalised young people within education. I was attracted to the Doctorate for this purpose, having spent a decade working in higher education, and understanding education to have the potential to change lives, whilst at the same time being aware that it is an imperfect system, one within which access and inclusion is not equally distributed.

I came to the research process with an interest and understanding of the lives of LGBTQ+ young people in education, and therefore considered that finding out more about the literature in this area would offer a useful place to begin. Early in my reading, during the first year of Doctoral study, I found the work of Professor Catherine Lee, whose research provides incisive accounts of the historical and contemporary impact of Section 28 on LGBTQ+ teachers. C. Lee (2023) discusses a sense of retrospective guilt, that as a lesbian teacher during the 1980s and 1990s she did not do more to support LGBTQ+ young people with whom she worked, although the sense of fear engendered by Section 28 arguably applied to LGBTQ+ teachers moreso than young people, as they lived in fear of losing their jobs or being subject to homophobic accusations about their motivations within their role. As a young person whose time in compulsory education was entirely governed by Section 28, I began to consider how this legislation, and the societal narratives that facilitated its introduction, shaped my experiences at school. I felt a strong sense of injustice about the way in which LGBTQ+ teachers were affected by this legislation and struck by the idea that I had not considered this aspect of Section 28's reach previously, as any prior engagement I had had with the topic was in relation to its impact upon LGBTQ+ young people.

The idea of teachers stuck with me: a group of people who are often considered to have power within the school setting, and yet whose professional lives are subject to scrutiny and pressure (Nwoko et al., 2023). As I read more of the literature on LGBTQ+

identities within education, I noticed that teachers and school staff were often identified as a group of people who could make a difference, and where recommendations were made to improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people in school, teachers and school staff were often called upon to do it. From this I began to wonder to what extent school staff feel they *can* do this work, and whether they considered themselves as the potential change-makers they had been identified as within the research literature. The theoretical framework of self-efficacy arose from this thinking, as it relates to the extent to which individuals feel they have the necessary skills to act in pursuance of goals or tasks.

I found that only a small number of studies had explored school staff LGBTQ+ self-efficacy, and that these had been conducted outside of the UK. These studies offered interesting insights, and where some had adopted a mixed-methods approach (e.g. Brant, 2017), I felt drawn to the way this methodology had allowed the researchers to explore the topic in more depth than would have been possible using a quantitative approach alone, and to establish a wider picture than could have been achieved using a solely qualitative study.

My previous engagement with the social and political influences of Section 28 and understanding of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (1979) meant that I was reluctant to choose a topic which was focused only on the behaviour of the individual without paying attention to the context, and factors such as school culture (Harris et al., 2021). I understood this to be theoretically compatible with self-efficacy theory, as social cognitive theory considers how external influences interact with individual characteristics and behaviours (Bandura, 1986). In my reflections on the research area, I began to make links: researchers had shown that the UK social and political context of LGBTQ+ identities within education is unique, and self-efficacy beliefs are shaped by social factors and context. Therefore, I considered that the research gap in understanding LGBTQ+ self-efficacy amongst UK school staff represented an important area for further developing understanding and potentially making a difference to the lives of LGBTQ+ young people within UK education.

2.0 Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

I had initially identified Critical Theory as aligning to my values and world view. I had engaged with the work of Judith Butler and established that the concept of Heteronormativity was derived from Queer Theory (B. A. Robinson, 2016) which sits within the Critical Theory tradition, as many existing LGBTQ+ education research projects had used this lens. However, I encountered a difficulty in how to confidently approach a mixed

methods project from this stance, which usually draws upon qualitative methods. Although there is an emerging field of critical quantitative approaches (Tabron & Thomas, 2023), I was concerned as to whether I could competently complete my project using this, given its relatively new status as a theoretical framework, and my present skills as a developing researcher. As I engaged in more literature around ontology and epistemology, I found Critical Realism to be a research position which allows for the exploration and of social, political and historical influences upon individual experiences, such as self-efficacy, which was the place at which my thinking had arrived. In formulating an argument for self-efficacy to be considered as 'real' within Critical Realism, Booker (2021) observes that "although regarded as an individual attribute the development of self-efficacy is clearly a product of the individual's engagement with the physical and social world." (p.248) and therefore I considered this research framework suitable for my project, in that it facilitates examination of social and individual factors.

3.0 Working the framework of heteronormativity

I constructed the questionnaire to have three parts: demographic data; quantitative measures of self-efficacy and school culture; and qualitative open-text boxes. I chose demographic questions based upon characteristics which were identified within the literature review which could be potentially important, such as the key stage the participants taught within (DePalma & Jennett, 2010) and their LGBTQ+ identity (C. Lee, 2019) and to provide information about the individuals who were represented within the sample (such as their teaching role). Upon reflection, the options I presented to Educational Psychologists (Trainee and Qualified) participants to describe their role may have been too limiting, and this question may have been better presented as a free text box to capture the full range of possible roles and add further richness to the demographic information gathered.

In deciding upon the focus of this study, I chose to explore LGBTQ+ self-efficacy as one concept, rather than breaking this down further into distinct groups. Part of this decision was methodological – the existing, validated LGBTQ+ self-efficacy scale used this approach and I did not want to alter the core concepts and risk the validity of the measure. Another aspect of the position was theoretical – Butler's (2006) description of the 'heterosexual matrix' asserts that Western expectations of gender stem from the belief that a person's biological sex predicts their gender identity, which in turn predicts their sexual orientation. In other words, it is expected that to be biological male means to identify as a man, and that an integral part of being a man is a 'natural' sexual and/or emotional attraction to women (Butler, 2006; Ellis, 2007). In this way, sexuality and gender identity are

intrinsically linked in terms of how society responds to individuals who do not conform to this expectation, whether that relates to sexuality, gender identity or gender presentation. As I read further, I encountered the term Homotransphobia, which speaks directly to the interconnected marginalisations LGBTQ+ people experience (Saketopoulou & Pellegrini, 2023). Through these concepts, and continued reading and reflection, I decided upon a research position which understands there to be complex interplays between how sexuality and gender identities are understood and responded to within a heteronormative society and that this impacts upon all of those within the LGBTQ+ umbrella, in different ways.

I developed questions to collect LGBTQ+ identity data from participants and had initially included two questions, one pertaining to sexuality identity and one to gender identity. Upon reflection and following input from the ethics committee to consider this further, this question was changed to a broader phrasing as to whether the participant identified as LGBTQ+. I felt something of a tension with this decision however, as trans peoples' lived experiences are distinct from those who hold diverse sexuality identities and therefore should be explored as such (DePalma, 2013). However, considering the contemporary political climate regarding trans and non-binary identities within education (McLean, 2021), an ethical decision was taken to support the anonymity of transgender educators within the dataset, as quantifying people from minority groups can lead to heightened visibility, which can in turn lead to increased vulnerability (Guyan, 2022).

3.0 An evolution of the project

Initially, I had decided to explore school staff perceptions of school culture and how this related to their LGBTQ+ self-efficacy using mixed-methods questionnaire consisting of two scales to measure each construct, and open-text boxes seeking participants' qualitative reflections upon barriers and enablers to complete this work at school. In constructing this questionnaire, the first task was to find reliable and valid measures for each aspect. During the literature review, I identified many papers which used school culture measures and found there were a range of different measures available, with fewer validated quantitative measures of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. As I did not have sufficient time within my research project to recruit participants to a pilot phase to validate an original measure, it was important that the measure I chose had already been established as valid and reliable. I reviewed existing measures, checking their prior validation and their alignment to the aims of my project, and established that M. Jones et al. (2021) offered the best fit, as it had been established as loading onto the single construct of LGBTQ+ self-efficacy. In addition, when reviewing the items, I noticed they addressed contextual aspects of working with LGBTQ+

young people at school, rather than taking a potentially pathologising focus of addressing LGBTQ+ ‘issues’ or ‘difficulties’. This felt appropriate to considering systemic approaches to addressing LGBTQ+ inclusion.

I chose a school culture questionnaire with sub-scales which explored aspects of school culture which the literature had identified were potentially important for positive school environments for LGBTQ+ young people. Unfortunately, after the first round of data collection with school staff, I identified that some items of the scale had been erroneously missed from the questionnaire which was sent to participants and, subsequent to exploratory factor analyses and discussion with research supervisors, it was established that the data gathered from the school culture measure was of limited use to the research project. As participants were anonymous, there was no mechanism to contact them to ask them to complete the missing items. However, sufficient data from participants was gathered via the self-efficacy measure and as qualitative comments. I felt it was ethically important to retain as much data gathered from school staff as possible, as they had given their time and personal information to participate research process. As such, I decided to maintain focus on the self-efficacy aspect of the research and recruit a new participant group to add to the existing data: UK Educational Psychologists.

Educational Psychologists were chosen as, during my engagement with the literature, I had established that this group had been identified as being ideally placed to make a positive, systemic impact upon the lives of LGBTQ+ young people at school. For example, Yavuz (2016) concluded that: “Gender variance sits within a wider agenda around gender stereotypes, equalities, gender-based violence and health and wellbeing. Educational Psychologists are uniquely positioned within the local authority to be able to deliver effectively within their current practice across the three levels of child and family, school and local authority.” (p. 13). As my initial intention with this project was to explore systemic as well as individual influences upon school staff’ self-efficacy, I considered that educational psychologists’ views could offer a unique insight into LGBTQ+ inclusion as they are practitioners who work systemically with schools. I could find no research exploring Educational Psychologists’ LGBTQ+ self-efficacy for supporting schools in this work, despite their identification as a profession who could do so, and therefore I considered this presented a new opportunity to gather useful insight and implications for practice. I considered that, particularly when analysed alongside the data gathered from school staff, this refocused project had the potential explore whether the barriers and enablers for LGBTQ+ self-efficacy were similar or different for school staff and Educational

Psychologists, and therefore the research project could offer guidance to Educational Psychologists on their work with schools in this area (ensuring they are focusing on aspects that school staff would find most useful to support their self-efficacy) and for the workforce development needs of Educational Psychologists themselves by identifying what supports or reduces their self-efficacy for practice in this area. I returned to ethics with a significant amendment to the project, to add educational psychologists to my participant group, together with changes to the questionnaire, and this received approval to proceed.

4.0 Data collection and analysis

Participants were recruited online with the intention of gathering as many responses as possible. I used a mix of convenience and snowballing approaches to identifying the sample, including professional networks, mailing lists, social media and personal contacts within both professions. This may account for the limited spread of participants from across the four nations of the UK. I had hoped to receive more responses from participants outside of England, so that a more in-depth exploration of the differences between nations could be attempted with respect to the different political contexts. As in my study, sample size for exploratory studies usually relates to practical concerns such as resource availability (Haile, 2023) however a purposive approach to sampling from these nations may have yielded further participants and in future research projects I would consider the possibility of taking such an approach. In addition, funding and support to access professional translation of the survey into Welsh may have supported further recruitment of participants based in Wales.

Quantitative data analysis revealed that on average, participractipants agreed with the items on the self-efficacy scale. The scale had four answer options (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree) and did not have a mid-point for a ‘neutral’ response. Although there is some debate in the literature about the effect of ‘neutral’ options within questionnaires one consideration is how the lack of a mid-point might interact with a positivity or participant bias, and whether this could influence participants to select an ‘agree’ response more frequently (Chyung et al., 2017). If I were to develop a novel scale in future research projects, I would include a mid-point to capture ambivalence or uncertainty towards survey items.

A reflection upon using a mixed methods approach is that it has been necessary to learn multiple methods and modes of data analysis, including inferential statistics and thematic analysis, as well as the unique approaches to mixed methods of combining and integrating findings. Whilst I consider that a mixed methods approach has led to a finding of

an increased depth of insight than may have been possible if using one method in isolation, the professional development required has been significant and I reflect that perhaps choosing one method may have reduced some of the pressures inherent in conducting a complex research project and developing new research skills.

Using an existing framework to analyse the qualitative data was very helpful in supporting my approach, and I found the staged process supported the iterations of my thinking and added a useful structure to the dataset, whilst also being flexible enough to accommodate semantic and latent, inductive and deductive approaches to coding. During this process at times I felt frustrated by the brevity of some participant responses, which I reflected was most likely due to the research design and the likelihood that many participants would have responded using their smartphone. Some information that participants provided was very interesting and I would have liked the opportunity to explore them in more depth. If using this approach in the future and if timescales for the research project allowed, I would consider adding an interview stage to facilitate further exploration.

5.0 Professional development

Prior to commencing this project, I had not undertaken formal academic research since completing my undergraduate degree over a decade ago. As such, it has been a significant learning curve, from which I have gathered new skills and extended existing ones. I have learned the connections between ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies, and how to interrogate research positions through these different lenses. Although I had some familiarity with SPSS, my quantitative data analysis skills have increased significantly, and I had not previously completed a thematic analysis and therefore I have also learned this skill. I have reflected that pursuing a mixed methods research project required learning a range of methods and skills across both quantitative and qualitative, which at times felt like a more significant professional development task than if I had chosen either quantitative or qualitative, and learning how to integrate mixed methods data to create a ‘yield’ was a further aspect of the process. However, I consider that I now have skills in both quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approach, which will be a useful foundation for undertaking future research projects and provide me with competencies to build upon across each of those domains.

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Appendices

A.1 Ethical Approval

University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich. NR4 7TJ

Email: ethicsmonitor@uea.ac.uk
Web: www.uea.ac.uk

Study title: Exploring the relationship between school climate and teachers self-efficacy for creating positive school environments for LGBTQ+ young people

Application ID: ETH2324-1132 (significant amendments)

Dear Joanne,

Your application was considered on 20th December 2023 by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee).

The decision is: **approved**.

You are therefore able to start your project subject to any other necessary approvals being given.

This approval will expire on **26th July 2024**.

Please note that your project is granted ethics approval only for the length of time identified above. Any extension to a project must obtain ethics approval by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) before continuing.

It is a requirement of this ethics approval that you should report any adverse events which occur during your project to the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) as soon as possible. An adverse event is one which was not anticipated in the research design, and which could potentially cause risk or harm to the participants or the researcher, or which reveals potential risks in the treatment under evaluation. For research involving animals, it may be the unintended death of an animal after trapping or carrying out a procedure.

Any amendments to your submitted project in terms of design, sample, data collection, focus etc. should be notified to the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) in advance to ensure ethical compliance. If the amendments are substantial a new application may be required.

Approval by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee) should not be taken as evidence that your study is compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. If you need guidance on how to make your study UK GDPR compliant, please contact the UEA Data Protection Officer (dataprotection@uea.ac.uk).

I would like to wish you every success with your project.

On behalf of the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee)

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Warburton

B.1 School staff participant information

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(1) What is this study about?
You are invited to take part in a research study as you are a teacher currently working in a UK-based school. You have been invited to participate in this study because teachers' perspectives on school cultures and creating LGBTQ+ inclusive environments are imporant. This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling me that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
- ✓ You have received a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?
The study is being carried out by the following researcher(s): Ms Joanne Caulfield., a Trainee Educational Psychologist and Postgraduate Research Student at the University of East Anglia.

This will take place under the supervision of Mrs Imogen Gorman (i.gorman@uea.ac.uk,).), an Educational Psychologist and Associate Professor at the University of East Anglia.

(3) What will the study involve for me?
Your participation will involve completing an anonymous online questionnaire.The questions will explore your perception of the culture in your school, such as how much autonomy you consider yourself to have as a teacher, and also how able you feel to create LGBTQ+ supportive environments witin your school. As the survey is anonymous, it will not be possible for the researcher to contact you to ask you to review research papers prior to publication.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?
The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I have started?
Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

If you decide to take part in the study, you can withdraw your consent at any point. You can do this by exiting the questionnaire at any time before you submit your responses at the end of the questionnaire. Once your response has been submitted, it will not be possible to withdraw as all responses are anonymous and the researcher will not be able to identify your response.

(6) What are the consequences if I withdraw from the study?
If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time before you have submitted the questionnaire. Once you have submitted it, your

responses cannot be withdrawn because they are anonymous and therefore we will not be able to tell which one is yours.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?
Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?
A benefit to participating in this study is that you will contribute to a research evidence base which helps to further understand practice in this area. The study intends to help with the continued development of LGBTQ+ inclusive environments at school, and therefore your participation can also help current and future LGBTQ+ young people.

(9) What will happen to information provided by me and data collected during the study?
The information you provide during the study will be anonymised and compared with the data of others who participate to identify common themes. The study results will be published within a Doctoral Thesis, and may also be published within academic journals and within conference presentations.

Your personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy.

The information you provide will be stored securely and your identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications if you decide to participate in this study.
Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. The data will be kept for at least 10 years beyond the last date the data were accessed. The deposited data will not include your name or any identifiable information about you.

(10) What if I would like further information about the study?
When you have read this information, Ms Joanne Caulfield (joanne.caulfield@uea.ac.uk, n/a) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

(11) Will I be told the results of the study?
A one-page summary of the research findings will be available to participants subsequent to the publication of the Doctoral Thesis. A link to a separate Microsoft Form to collect this information will be provided at the end of the survey questionnaire.

(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?
If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University of East Anglia at the following address:

Ms Joanne Caulfield
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
joanne.caulfield@uea.ac.uk

You may also contact my supervisor, Imogen Gorman, Associate Professor at the University of East Anglia: i.gorman@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning: Professor Yann Lebeau (Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk, 01603 452754).

(13) How do I know that this study has been approved to take place?
To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body. This research was approved by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee).

(14) What is the general data protection information I need to be informed about?
According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a University.

In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

- The data controller is the University of East Anglia.
- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.ukin the first instance.

(15) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?
If you are happy and consent to take part in the study simply access the questionnaire at this website https://forms.office.com/e/gJ5qe8i1ei and answer the questions. By submitting your responses you are agreeing to the researcher using the data collected for the purposes described above. Please keep the information sheet for your information.

(16) Further information
This information was last updated on 20 July 2023.
If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by updates to this information sheet

This information sheet is for you to keep

B.2 Educational psychologist (Trainee & Qualified) participant information

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(1) What is this study about?
You are invited to take part in a research study as you are an educational psychologist or a trainee educational psychologist currently working in the UK. You have been invited to participate in this study because educational psychologists' and trainee educational psychologists' perspectives on supporting the development of positive school environments for LGBTQ+ young people are important. This Participant Information Sheet tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling me that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
- ✓ You have received a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?
The study is being carried out by the following researcher(s): Ms Joanne Caulfield., a Trainee Educational Psychologist and Postgraduate Research Student at the University of East Anglia.

This will take place under the supervision of Mrs Imogen Gorman (i.gorman@uea.ac.uk,).), an Educational Psychologist and Associate Professor at the University of East Anglia.

(3) What will the study involve for me?
Your participation will involve completing an anonymous online questionnaire.The questions will explore your perception of how able you feel to support schools to create positive environments for LGBTQ+ young people. As the survey is anonymous, it will not be possible for the researcher to contact you to ask you to review research papers prior to publication

(5) How much of my time will the study take?
The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I have started?
Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision on whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.

If you decide to take part in the study, you can withdraw your consent at any point. You can do this by exiting the questionnaire at any time before you submit your responses at the end of the questionnaire. Once your response has been submitted, it will not be possible to withdraw as all responses are anonymous and the researcher will not be able to identify your response.

(6) What are the consequences if I withdraw from the study?
If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time before you have submitted the questionnaire. Once you have submitted it, your

responses cannot be withdrawn because they are anonymous and therefore we will not be able to tell which one is yours.

(7) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?
Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(8) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?
A benefit to participating in this study is that you will contribute to a research evidence base which helps to further understand practice in this area. The study intends to help with the continued development of positive school environments for LGBTQ+ young people and therefore your participation can also help current and future LGBTQ+ young people.

(9) What will happen to information provided by me and data collected during the study?
The information you provide during the study will be anonymised and compared with the data of others who participate to identify common themes. The study results will be published within a Doctoral Thesis, and may also be published within academic journals and within conference presentations.

Your personal data and information will only be used as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), and the University of East Anglia's Research Data Management Policy.

The information you provide will be stored securely and your identity will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications if you decide to participate in this study.
Study data may also be deposited with a repository to allow it to be made available for scholarly and educational purposes. The data will be kept for at least 10 years beyond the last date the data were accessed. The deposited data will not include your name or any identifiable information about you.

(10) What if I would like further information about the study?
When you have read this information, Ms Joanne Caulfield (joanne.caulfield@uea.ac.uk, n/a) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

(11) Will I be told the results of the study?
A one-page summary of the research findings will be available to participants subsequent to the publication of the Doctoral Thesis. A link to a separate Microsoft Form to collect this information will be provided at the end of the survey questionnaire.

(12) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?
If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University of East Anglia at the following address:

Ms Joanne Caulfield
School of Education and Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
NORWICH NR4 7TJ
joanne.caulfield@uea.ac.uk

You may also contact my supervisor, Imogen Gorman, Associate Professor at the University of East Anglia: i.gorman@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of School of Education and Lifelong Learning: Professor Yann Lebeau (Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk, 01603 452754).

(13) How do I know that this study has been approved to take place?
To protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity, all research in the University of East Anglia is reviewed by a Research Ethics Body. This research was approved by the EDU S-REC (School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Subcommittee).

(14) What is the general data protection information I need to be informed about?
According to data protection legislation, we are required to inform you that the legal basis for processing your data as listed in Article 6(1) of the UK GDPR is because this allows us to process personal data when it is necessary to perform our public tasks as a University.

In addition to the specific information provided above about why your personal data is required and how it will be used, there is also some general information which needs to be provided for you:

- The data controller is the University of East Anglia.
- For further information, you can contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.uk
- You can also find out more about your data protection rights at the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- If you are unhappy with how your personal data has been used, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@uea.ac.ukin the first instance.

(15) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?
If you are happy and consent to take part in the study simply access the questionnaire at this website https://forms.office.com/e/gJ5qe8i1ei and answer the questions. By submitting your responses you are agreeing to the researcher using the data collected for the purposes described above. Please keep the information sheet for your information.

(16) Further information
This information was last updated on 14 December 2023
If there are changes to the information provided, you will be notified by updates to this information sheet

This information sheet is for you to keep

C.1 School staff survey questions

1. Please tick the box below to confirm you have read and understood the participant information sheet* (*required)

   ▢ I have read and understood the participant information sheet

Section 1

In total, this questionnaire should take no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete.

2. Which category best describes your role?
   (if multiple categories could apply to you, please choose the role that you spend most of your time working in)

   ▢ Teacher
   ▢ Teaching assistant
   ▢ Pastoral / wellbeing role
   ▢ SENCO
   ▢ Mid-level leadership (e.g. Head of year)
   ▢ Senior leadership team
   ▢ Headteacher
   ▢ Other [_______________________]

3. Please describe the type of school you currently work in
   (e.g. Infant school, Primary school, Secondary school, Specialist)

   [____]

4. Where is your school based?

   ▢ England
   ▢ Scotland
   ▢ Wales
   ▢ Northern Ireland
   ▢ Other [_______________________]

5. For approximately how many years have you been working as a teacher?

   [___________________________]

6. Would you describe yourself as LGBTQ+?
   If you would prefer not to say, please leave this blank

   ▢ Yes
   ▢ No
   ▢ Not sure

7. Do you have any friends or family members who identify as LGBTQ+?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not sure

8. Have you engaged in any professional development relating to LGBTQ+ matters?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not sure

Section 2

For each statement, please indicate your response using the scale below

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can provide teaching activities to help students develop strategies for dealing with confrontations amongst LGBT and non-LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can adapt teaching methods to meet the needs of LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can develop materials appropriate for a classroom with LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can develop teaching methods that dispel myths about LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can analyse teaching materials for potential stereotypical and/or prejudicial content about LGBT people	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can help students to examine their own prejudices regarding people who are LGBT	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can teach about being LGBT in a manner that builds mutual respect with people who are not LGBT	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can develop activities that increase the self-confidence of LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can provide instruction showing how prejudice affects LGBT individuals	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can plan teaching activities to reduce prejudice toward LGBT people	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can identify biases toward LGBT people in materials used in teaching	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can help students work through problem situations caused by stereotypical and/or prejudicial attitudes toward LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can get LGBT and non-LGBT students to work together	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can identify school practices that may harm LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can identify solutions to problems that may arise as the result of someone being LGBT	▢	▢	▢	▢

I can identify the societal forces that influence opportunities for LGBT people	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can identify the ways in which LGBT people contribute to our pluralistic society	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can help students take on the perspective of people with sexual and/or gender identities different from their own	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can help students view history and current events from LGBT perspectives	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can involve students in making decisions and clarifying their values regarding LGBT issues	▢	▢	▢	▢

Section 3

Thinking about the answers you have chosen in the previous questions, please provide your reflections on the below:

At school, what supports your confidence in working with or support LGBT young people?

Please ensure your answer maintains anonymity. Do not include any information which would make it possible to identify (for example) you, your colleagues, pupils at your school, or the name of the school in which you work.

Is there anything that makes you feel less confident in working with or supporting LGBT young people at school?

Please ensure your answer maintains anonymity. Do not include any information which would make it possible to identify (for example) you, your colleagues, pupils at your school, or the name of the school in which you work.

Section 4

Thank you for taking part in my research study.

If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this project following the completion of the Doctoral Thesis please enter your email address into this separate form: [link]

Please see below for information on sources of support, should you wish to access them:

https://switchboard.lgbt/

https://www.samaritans.org/

https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/lgbtqia-mental-health/about-lgbtqia-mental-health/

https://lgbt.foundation/

C.2 Educational psychologist (trainee and qualified) survey questions

1. Please tick the box below to confirm you have read and understood the participant information sheet* (*required)

   ▢ I have read and understood the participant information sheet

Section 1

In total, this questionnaire should take no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete.

2. Which category best describes your role?

   ▢ Educational Psychologist
   ▢ Trainee Educational Psychologist
   ▢ Other [______________________]

3. Where is your EP practice based?

   ▢ England
   ▢ Scotland
   ▢ Wales
   ▢ Northern Ireland
   ▢ Other [______________________]

4. For approximately how many years have you been working as an educational psychologist or trainee educational psychologist?

   [__________________________]

5. Would you describe yourself as LGBTQ+?
   If you would prefer not to say, please leave this blank

   ▢ Yes
   ▢ No
   ▢ Not sure

6. Do you have any friends or family members who identify as LGBTQ+?

   ▢ Yes
   ▢ No
   ▢ Not sure

7. Have you engaged in any professional development relating to LGBTQ+ matters?

   ▢ Yes
   ▢ No
   ▢ Not sure

Section 2

For each statement, please indicate your response using the scale below

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can support schools to help students develop strategies for dealing with confrontations amongst LGBT and non-LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to adapt teaching methods to meet the needs of LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to develop materials appropriate for a classroom with LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to develop teaching methods that dispel myths about LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to analyse teaching materials for potential stereotypical and/or prejudicial content about LGBT people	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to help students to examine their own prejudices regarding people who are LGBT	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to teach about being LGBT in a manner that builds mutual respect with people who are not LGBT	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to develop activities that increase the self-confidence of LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to provide instruction showing how prejudice affects LGBT individuals	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to plan teaching activities to reduce prejudice toward LGBT people	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to identify biases toward LGBT people in materials used in teaching	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to help students work through problem situations caused by stereotypical and/or prejudicial attitudes toward LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to get LGBT and non-LGBT students to work together	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to identify school practices that may harm LGBT students	▢	▢	▢	▢

I can support schools to identify solutions to problems that may arise as the result of someone being LGBT	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to identify the societal forces that influence opportunities for LGBT people	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to identify the ways in which LGBT people contribute to our pluralistic society	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to help students take on the perspective of people with sexual and/or gender identities different from their own	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to help students view history and current events from LGBT perspectives	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can support schools to involve students in making decisions and clarifying their values regarding LGBT issues	▢	▢	▢	▢
I can provide training to schools on how to create a supportive environment for LGBT young people	▢	▢	▢	▢

Section 3

Thinking about the answers you have chosen in the previous questions, please provide your reflections on the below:

In your role as an EP or TEP, what supports your confidence in enabling schools to work with or support LGBT young people?

> Please ensure your answer maintains anonymity. Do not include any information which would make it possible to identify (for example) you, your colleagues, the local authority you work within, or the name of any schools with which you work.

Is there anything that makes you feel less confident in supporting schools to work with or support LGBT young people at school?

> Please ensure your answer maintains anonymity. Do not include any information which would make it possible to identify (for example) you, your colleagues, the local authority you work within, or the name of any schools with which you work.

Section 4

Thank you for taking part in my research study.

If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this project following the completion of the Doctoral Thesis please enter your email address into this separate form: [link]

Please see below for information on sources of support, should you wish to access them:

https://switchboard.lgbt/

https://www.samaritans.org/

https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/lgbtqia-mental-health/about-lgbtqia-mental-health/

https://lgbt.foundation/

D1 Structured Tabular Thematic Analysis for Brief Texts Process Examples

Phase C: Generating initial codes and themes

In your role as an EP or TEP, what supports your confidence in enabling schools to work with or support LGBT young people?	Is there anything that makes you feel less confident in supporting schools to work with or support LGBT young people at school?	Initial notes	Initial codes
Experience-life and work Empathy Training Reading Support from LGBT friends to reflect	The political and school environments and pressures		Experience-life and work Empathy Training Reading Support from LGBT friends to reflect; The political and school environments and pressures
Lived experience and previous training/job roles.	I think in response to the previous questions, I feel that I could do all of those things relatively confidently, however I am unsure sometimes whether schools see this as part of our remit as EPs and so I don't how frequently we would actually get the opportunity to do these things. I think this may therefore be a barrier to other EPs engaging in this work confidently because they don't feel they have the opportunities to do so or don't want to over-extend their role.	could also perhaps relate to opportunities provided in services - pressures from other areas of work?	Life experience Previous job roles (mastery experience?) Training Perceived / actual limits of EP role lack of mastery experience
Training Reading Reflection			Training Reading Reflection
Research from those with lived experience. We are scientist-practitioners and should look to the literature before anything else.	I do not have lived experience myself		Lack of lived experience Desire to learn from those with lived experience Engaging with research literature
In all honesty, I think I probably draw on more general principles of acceptance, respect, inclusivity and unconditional positive regard and trying to examine and reflect my own perspective in the same way I have tried to with anti-racist practice. Being close to the journey of my very close friends raising a family as a same-sex couple has been a big part of my understanding. However, this research has made me realise that I have never engaged in any specific personal or professional development in ways to better understand the experiences of LGBT young people or how best to support hem and I will make sure I do now.	I feel like we don't know what we don't know. Having taken part in this survey i've realised how much more cpd I need to do in this area to know how best to support and what the challenges to this may be. Thanks so much for raising this very important discussion.	impact of participating in research itself as prompting reflection from this participant	General principles of pracrtice (acceptance, respect, inclusivity and unconditional positive regard) Drawing on lived experience of close friends Lack of CPD or training Unknown gaps in knowledge
It is our duty to support schools to make their environments LGBT inclusive and friendly. Working with LGBT groups in the local area help as well as other professionals and groups.	Yes. It is something I feel less confident about, due to not being LGBT and not many experiences of delivering training or supporting schools, but open to learning and open to making changes to become a better LGBT advocate and ally. It is something we need to do.		Sense of duty to do this work Working with LGBTQ+ groups locally (Mastery experience?) Lack of lived experience lack of mastery experience delivering training or supporting schools

Phase C – Further iteration of generating initial codes and themes

F	G	J	K	L	M	N	O
In your role as an EP or TEP, what supports your confidence in enabling schools to work with or support LGBT young people?	**Is there anything that makes you feel less confident in supporting schools to work with or support LGBT young people at school?**	**Mastery experiences**	**Experiences in other jobs**	**Limits of EP role**	**working with diversity**	**parents**	**dealing with prejudice and conflict**
Experience-life and work Empathy Training Reading Support from LGBT friends to reflect	The political and school environments and pressures	Experience-life and work					
Lived experience and previous training/job roles.	all of those things relatively confidently, however I am unsure sometimes whether schools see this as part of our remit as EPs and so I don't how frequently we would actually get the opportunity to do these things. I think this may therefore be a barrier to other EPs engaging in this work confidently because they don't feel they have the opportunities to do so or don't want	Life experience	Previous job roles	Perceived / actual limits of EP role			
Training Reading Reflection							
Research from those with lived experience. We are scientist-practitioners and should look to the literature before anything else.	I do not have lived experience myself						
respect, inclusivity and unconditional positive regard and trying to examine and reflect my own perspective in the same way I have tried to with anti-racist practice. Being close to the journey of my very close friends raising a family as a same-sex couple has been a big part of my understanding. However, this research has made me realise that I have never engaged in any specific personal or professional development in ways to better understand the experiences of LGBT young people or how best to support hem and I will make	I feel like we don't know what we don't know. Having taken part in this survey i've realised how much more cpd I need to do in this area to know how best to support and what the challenges to this may be. Thanks so much for raising this very important discussion.						
It is our duty to support schools to make their environments LGBT inclusive and friendly. Working with LGBT groups in the local area help as well as other professionals and groups.	Yes. It is something I feel less confident about, due to not being LGBT and not many experiences of delivering training or supporting schools, but open to learning and open to making changes to become a better LGBT advocate and ally. It is something we need to do.	Working with LGBTQ+ groups locally lack of mastery experience delivering training or supporting schools					
Training and also experience of working with CYP from this community.	Lack of experience.	Previous experiences working with LGBT CYP Lack of experience					
knowing the systemic influences across the different schools and communities I work in, being aware of cultural differences and personal/wider world belief systems and how to take these into consideration when offering support, being aware of my own biases, taking on the role of a reflective practitioner, legislation around equality and inclusion, support from my employer and EP service as a	push back in the community, broad labels re LGBT people being "dangerous to children and forcing an agenda"				Understanding cultural difference and difference in perspectives		Queerphobic narratives concern about pushback
Understanding and modelling inclusive practice	Changing national framework						

Phase D: Tabulating themes against data segments

In your role as an EP or TEP, what supports your confidence in enabling schools to work with or support LGBT young people?	Is there anything that makes you feel less confident in supporting schools to work with or support LGBT young people at school?	Theme 1 How LGBTQ+ work is prioritised and supported by EP services and schools	Theme 2 LGBTQ+ lived experience and knowledge	Theme 3: Professional skills and personal values	sub-theme: fear of getting it wrong & having difficult conversations	theme four: The political context
Experience-life and work Empathy Training Reading Support from LGBT friends to reflect	The political and school environments and pressures		1	1		1
Lived experience and previous training/job roles.	I think in response to the previous questions, I feel that I could do all of those things relatively confidently, however I am unsure sometimes whether schools see this as part of our remit as EPs and so I don't how frequently we would actually get the opportunity to do these things. I think this may therefore be a barrier to other EPs engaging in this work confidently because they don't feel they have the opportunities to do so or don't want to over-extend their role.	1	1			
Training Reading Reflection			1	1		
Research from those with lived experience. We are scientist-practitioners and should look to the literature before anything else.	I do not have lived experience myself		1			
In all honesty, I think I probably draw on more general principles of acceptance, respect, inclusivity and unconditional positive regard and trying to examine and reflect my own perspective in the same way I have tried to with anti-racist practice. Being close to the journey of my very close friends raising a family as a same-sex couple has been a big part of my understanding. However, this research has made me realise that I have never engaged in any specific personal or professional development in ways to better understand the experiences of LGBT young people or how best to support hem and I will make sure I do now.	I feel like we don't know what we don't know. Having taken part in this survey i've realised how much more cpd I need to do in this area to know how best to support and what the challenges to this may be. Thanks so much for raising this very important discussion.		1	1		
It is our duty to support schools to make their environments LGBT inclusive and friendly. Working with LGBT groups in the local area help as well as other professionals and groups.	Yes. It is something I feel less confident about, due to not being LGBT and not many experiences of delivering training or supporting schools, but open to learning and open to making changes to become a better LGBT advocate and ally. It is something we need to do.	1	1			
Training and also experience of working with CYP from this community.	Lack of experience.		1			

Phase F - Exploring theme frequencies

	Theme 1: How LGBTQ+ work is prioritised by EP services and schools	**Theme 2: LGBTQ+ lived experience and knowledge**	**Theme 3: Professional skills and personal values**	Subtheme: Fear of getting it wrong & having difficult conversations	**Theme 4: Political context**
	n	**n**	**n**	**n**	**n**
Country					
England	33	24	8	8	12
NI	1	1	1	0	1
Career stage					
Early Career	25	39	12	12	10
Not early career	9	16	11	2	7
LGBTQ+ identity					
Yes	10	10	2	3	8
No	24	45	21	11	9
LGBTQ+ Friends / Family					
Yes	29	49	23	11	16
No	5	6	0	3	1
LGBTQ+ CPD					
Yes	26	41	14	10	15
No	5	13	7	3	0
Not sure	3	1	2	1	2
Total	**170**	**245**	**101**	**64**	**81**

Phase G - Developing thematic maps and diagrams