AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL EXPERIENCE AND SELF-IDENTITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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Abstract

To date, no research has explored the relationship between UK school experience and self-identity for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Within this study, it is argued that identity is an adaptive process that utilises experience of the sociocultural context to generate a 'self'. Reviewed literature additionally suggests that school may be an important domain of identity development. Using a Narrative Orientated Inquiry (NOI) methodology, this research examines identity constructs within school experience narratives produced by young people who have a diagnosis of ASD. Participants were five mainstream secondary school (MSS) students (four males and one female) with a diagnosis of ASD (including Asperger Syndrome), sound expressive language skills and no additional diagnoses. Narrative Interviews (Mishler 1986a, 1986b) were conducted. Three interpretive perspectives, in accordance with NOI, were used to analyse transcripts: Separation of 'fabula' from 'sjuzet' (Hiles and Čermák, 2008); The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998); and Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). Member checks were carried out. The stories imply that being a young person with ASD at an MSS can be restrictive and disempowering. Findings can be seen to support the proposed theory of identity, suggesting the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with a diagnosis of ASD may be an adaptive one, where school experience is the material subject to the process of identity. Findings appear to show that school experience may hinder, through restrictive systems and structures, or help the development of self-identity for young people with ASD. Where young people with ASD can experience free choice and receive support, not least through school staff empathy and understanding, findings suggest they may be aided in developing self-identity. Peer friendships may also potentially afford the opportunity for young people with ASD to learn about themselves, although further research is required in this area.

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Glossary of Acronyms

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

APA: American Psychiatric Association.

AS: Asperger Syndrome.

ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder.

CAMHS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

DSM: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

EHCP: Educational and Health Care Plan.

EP: Educational Psychologist.

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education.

MSS: Mainstream Secondary School.

NIG: Narrative Interview Guide.

NOI: Narrative Orientated Inquiry.

PDD: Pervasive Developmental Disorders.

1 Introduction

1.1 Section Overview

This section provides a summary of the origin of this study. The rationale and aims are also outlined, before an overview of the structure of the thesis is shared.

1.2 Origin, Rationale and Aims

Since working to complete an undergraduate honours degree in Philosophy and Psychology, exploration and consideration of the 'self' and of 'identity' has been an area of personal interest; the nature and development of self-identity, the range of influential factors and the inherent potential that it can afford. Interest in this area has been made more salient through the experience of teaching young people across different secondary schools and through recent engagement in casework as a Trainee Educational Psychologist, highlighting that many young people appear to face difficulties in developing a secure, positive sense of identity and belonging. Indeed, Seiffge-Krenke (1993) identifies the establishment and maintenance of self-identity, along with school life and relationships, as being key areas of change and insecurity for young people. This could potentially be a factor in relation to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) being at high risk of permanent exclusion (Department for Education, 2016b). For young people with ASD, the nature of the difficulties associated with this diagnosis would suggest that the development of self-identity poses an even greater challenge. Browning, Osbourne and Reed (2009) report that students with ASD are likely to have difficulty constructing their identity, integrating their diagnosis with their sense of self. The experience of being a student in a mainstream school (a state-maintained school that caters for the general student population), with all the assumptions of neurotypical functioning, may make the task of reconciling identity even more difficult. This may cause individuals with a diagnosis of ASD to struggle to psychologically, socially and pragmatically integrate into mainstream school life. Indeed, DePape and Lindsay (2016) report 'experiences at school' as being a key theme in a qualitative meta-synthesis of lived experiences from the perspective of individuals with ASD. Through meeting and working to support young people with ASD, it has become apparent to the researcher that a

positive self-identity could aid wellbeing and resilience in light of the challenges that they face at school. It is hoped that exploring the relationship between school experience and self-identity may provide education professionals with greater understanding and insight into the experience of school from the perspective of young people with ASD, enabling support to be more effectively tailored. To date, no research has explored the relationship between UK school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD (see Appendix B). A recent study involving College students with ASD in the USA, describes tensions between public and private identities within college experience (Cox et al., 2017). The findings of Cox et al. (2017) are foundational in acknowledging identities in relation to educational experience for individuals with ASD.

In formulating a research question and considering appropriate methodology to further explore this area, findings from research carried out for a Masters dissertation (Rowark, 2013) were considered. This study explored the therapeutic potential of blog writing to aid the development of a positive self-identity for individuals with a diagnosis of ASD. Findings demonstrated that blog writing had a core theme of inclusion and can offer a means of exploring and self-reflecting to empower the individual, suggesting a potential role in establishing a coherent, positive self-identity. More interestingly though, findings demonstrated the ability of blog authors with Asperger Syndrome to creatively use various forms of narrative expression to tailor their blog to meet their inclusive needs, highlighting a marked difference in the empowerment afforded by different self-referential and descriptive terms. This work highlights the important role of self-identity for individuals with ASD, demonstrating a potential to empower. It also suggests that practical forms of support exist to aid individuals with ASD to develop self-identity to meet their inclusive needs. In light of this it would appear that raising the voice of young people with ASD has an important role to play. In addition, wider research literature calls for young people with ASD to be more directly included in the research process (Potter, 2015). A recent Local Authority Educational Psychology Service project that compared data from high and low excluding schools across a Local Authority, also recommended that future research explore student voice data in relation to inclusive and exclusive school practice (Derbyshire County Council Educational Psychology Service, 2016). With this Local Authority Educational Psychology Service being a stakeholder in the current research study (consent to being identified as part of this

research obtained), the research proposal was also designed to respond to this recommendation, with the aim of contributing further insight to inform inclusive practice in Local Authority schools.

This original research therefore seeks to examine the identity constructs within school experience narratives produced by young people with a diagnosis of ASD. It is hoped that findings from exploring the relationship between secondary school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD will aid understanding, inform effective inclusive practice and support wellbeing.

1.3 Thesis Structure

Chapter 2, the 'Literature Review', reviews the literature relevant to the current study and is comprised of three sub-sections, introducing three areas of focus: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); Identity; and school experience. Within this chapter a new theory of identity analogous to the research question is proposed. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the need to explore the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD.

Chapter 3, the 'Methodology and Method', outlines and justifies the methodology selected for this study in light of broad methodological issues and considerations. It provides details of the method, designed to best address the research question, over three sub-sections: Participants; Procedure; and Plan of Analysis. Three further sub-sections respond to additional considerations relating to dependability and credibility, researcher reflexivity, and to ethics.

Chapter 4, the 'Results and Analysis' section, raises the voices of the young people interviewed. Contextual information in relation to each participant is shared along with findings from the analysis of each of the participant's narratives. For each narrative, findings in relation to The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998) and in relation to Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004) are presented, prior to the presentation of summative findings resulting from the completion of the analysis process.

Chapter 5, ‘Discussion Part 1. - Analysis and Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Research Question’**,** considers how the findings from each participant relate to the reviewed literature of Chapter 2, identifying the contribution of each story to informing a response to the research question. Findings are then synthesised and considered in light of the proposed theory of identity in order to provide a response to the research question (to be subsequently considered and reviewed in light of the study limitations identified in chapter 6).

Chapter 6, ‘Discussion Part 2. – Strengths, Limitations and Implications of the Study’, shares reflections upon the study and is divided into three sub-sections. It considers the original contribution of the study and strengths of the work, the limitations of the study, and implications of the study (in relation to the school experience of young people with ASD, as well as with regard to practice and future research).

Chapter 7, the ‘Conclusion’, provides an overview of the outcomes of the study, presenting study findings in relation to the research question.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Section Overview

This section reviews the literature relevant to the current study and is comprised of three sub-sections, introducing three areas of focus: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); Identity; and School experience. The first sub-section defines and explains what is meant by ASD and how it is conceptualised, what is known about the views of young people with ASD, and how the education of young people with ASD is at risk.

The second sub-section considers what is meant by 'identity' and reviews foundational theories and contemporary approaches, before proposing a new theory of identity analogous to the research question, relating narrative and sociocultural approaches. Clarification of how identity will be understood within the study is given accordingly. A review of the development of identity in early and mid-adolescence follows, along with an exploration of how identity is constructed for young people with ASD. Such a focus upon the identity formation of young people with ASD is made in light of the establishment and maintenance of self-identity being a key area of change and insecurity for young people (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). For young people with ASD, the nature of the difficulties associated with this diagnosis would suggest that the development of self-identity poses an even greater challenge. Browning, Osbourne and Reed (2009) report that students with ASD are likely to have difficulty constructing their identity, integrating their diagnosis with their sense of self. The experience of being a student in a mainstream school, with all the assumptions of neurotypical functioning, may make the task of reconciling identity even more difficult. This could potentially cause individuals with a diagnosis of ASD to struggle to psychologically, socially and pragmatically integrate into mainstream school life. It may therefore be that the formation of a coherent, positive self-identity could aid wellbeing and resilience in light of the challenges that young people with ASD face at school.

In the third sub-section, attention turns to how the experience of school for young people with ASD differs from that of their neurotypical peers. The need to hear the voices of young people with ASD is justified. This sub-section goes on to review the role of school in self-identity and concludes with a consideration of the

need to explore the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD.

2.2 ASD

2.2.1 What is ASD?

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) defines ASD as being characterised by deficits in social communication and social interaction, and involving the display of repetitive patterns in behaviour or interests (APA, 2013). More specifically, the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-5 (APA, 2013), states that there must be persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across a number of contexts, manifested by deficits in: social-emotional reciprocity; in non-verbal communicative behaviours used for social interaction; and in the development of understanding and maintenance of relationships. The accompanying restrictive and repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities, which are required to be present for a diagnosis of ASD according to DSM-5 (APA, 2013), are manifested by at least two of the following: stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects or speech; insistence on consistent, inflexible adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal / non-verbal behaviour; interests that are highly restricted, fixated and abnormal in intensity or focus; hyper-reactivity or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interests in sensory aspects of the environment (APA, 2013). For a diagnosis, symptoms must be present during early development, cause clinically significant impairment in current functioning and not be more effectively explained by the criteria for a diagnosis of Intellectual Developmental Disorder or Global Developmental Delay (APA, 2013). Ratings of severity for social communication and for restrictive, repetitive behaviour accompany a diagnosis of ASD, with severity ranging from level 1 (requiring support) to level 3 (requiring very substantial support) (APA, 2013). Features of ASD are identifiable by the age of three with features chiefly presented in boys; being four to five times higher in boys than girls (Hundert et al., 2005). This is not to say that ASD is necessarily more prevalent amongst boys, indeed, it may be that the ASD needs of girls are less evident, with girls being better able to mimic appropriate behaviours, as illustrated by Holliday-Willey (1999).

The changing nature of the diagnostic criteria of ASD is highlighted by the change from the fourth text revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) to that of the DSM-5. In the DSM-IV-TR, ASD existed as one of four diagnoses under the diagnostic category of Pervasive Developmental Disorders, or PDD (along with Asperger Syndrome, 'PDD – Not Otherwise Stated' and Rett's Syndrome), by comparison, in the DSM-5, all four diagnoses have been collapsed into the one diagnosis of ASD. According to the APA (2013) such changes sought to strengthen the medical accuracy of diagnosis, a process made all the more complex in respect of the continuum along which characteristics vary in their severity (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2016). However, as McGuire (2011) notes, what is meant by 'Autism' remains in flux in response to changing times, changing attitudes and changes in diagnostic criteria. Such sustained change, in its attempt to work towards a definitive understanding of ASD, runs the risk of supporting a potentially damaging homogenous conceptualisation of those diagnosed with ASD (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2016). Accordingly, Ajodhia-Andrews (2016) contends that it is important to look beyond conceptions of ASD to deeply appreciate and value how the expression of ASD has shaped the individual and their way of being in the world. This is particularly poignant with respect to the education of young people with ASD.

2.2.2 Conceptualisations of ASD

Conceptualisations of ASD other than that in accordance with the medical model have largely been absent within academic discourse, with ASD being defined under a medical classificatory paradigm by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and consequently being part of a deficit model (Molloy and Vasil, 2002). As such, Molloy and Vasil (2002) raise the important question of whether ASD is a disorder or a neurological difference that has been socially constructed as a disorder. Indeed, approaches to theorising about social and communication needs, and disability more generally, range from a realist, materialist position (illustrated by the medical model) to a post-structuralist position, where the phenomenon of ASD is entirely socially constructed. Thornton and Underwood (2013) note that with regard to disability, there appears to be a dichotomy of conceptualisations, with two models dominating the literature: the medical model and the social model. While supporters

of the medical model regard disability as being biologically constituted and an inherent feature of the individual, supporters of the social model take the view that social structures create disability through the insufficient accommodation of any impairments (Lindsay, 2003).

The implication of adopting the medical model with regard to young people with social and communication needs is that it suggests that such needs may be eradicated with appropriate treatment, positioning a young person's needs as being distinct from how those needs are viewed and classified by medical discourses (Molloy and Vasil, 2002). In this way young people may be defined by the diagnoses that they are given, along with the potential for expectations regarding their development and achievement to be limited. Firth (1991) raises the additional concern that diagnostic criteria are unclear, leading to consideration of where diagnostic boundaries lie and of what constitutes the 'normal' range. Although it must also be recognised that such a conceptualisation of social and communication needs may bring pragmatic benefits through potentially enhancing access to support and resources (Molloy and Vasil, 2002), arguably an outcome at the heart of the social model of disability.

The social model acknowledges the existence of impairments but takes the view that how they are classified, treated and interpreted is socially constructed (Molloy and Vasil, 2002). As such, Molloy and Vasil (2002) state that the social model makes an important distinction between an 'impairment' (a lack, or partial lack, of a limb, defective limb organisation or mechanism of the body) and a 'disability' (a disadvantage or restriction which excludes an individual as a result of a social organisation (a structure of social relations) that does not take account of any impairment). Such a distinction, however, can consign 'impairment' to medical discourse and may ignore the lived experience of the body (Hughes and Paterson, 1997). In response, developments of the social model, such as the social relational model (Reindal, 2008), regard disability as a form of oppression produced through the interaction of the individual and their social environment (Reindal, 2008, 2009). This model acknowledges both the reality of impairment (Williams, 1999) and that medical knowledge is socially moderated (Zaretsky, 2005).

As identified by Molloy and Vasil (2002), there is an unwillingness within the professional literature to explore conceptualisations of autism in relation to medical and social models. Indeed, they contend that the previous diagnostic

category of AS was socially constructed, being readily adopted because of its value to school as a category of special educational need (Molloy and Vasil, 2002). Danforth (1995) further argues that research and practice have the power to define individual lives through the attribution of pathology through labelling without considering the impact for the individual. Moreover, Reid and Weatherly Valle (2004) suggest that our conceptions impact upon our actions such that the way difference is framed has personal and material consequences for young people. In addition, Molloy and Vasil (2002) argue that it is important to examine the social effects of representing young people as having ASD, challenging the medical model by considering alternatives. They consider that people playing a more active role in shaping the cultural definition of autism may result in a move from the sole use of a rehabilitative therapeutic approach to one that promotes the strengths associated with ASD and acknowledges the role of society in framing individuals with ASD as having weaknesses (Molloy and Vasil, 2002). It is hoped that raising the voices of young people with ASD may contribute to this aim. However, it is also recognised that diagnostic categories are useful in providing structure to research (Bishop, 1989) and that current conceptions of ASD within the literature relate to the medical model. This study therefore recognises the current need to work with the DSM criteria and to use the diagnostic term, 'Autism Spectrum Disorder' (ASD), along with associated terms in correspondence with the medical model, with the hope that findings may contribute to a broader conceptualisation of the term in the future.

2.2.3 Knowledge of the views of young people with ASD

As research relating to young people with ASD has been primarily based upon the Medical Model (Mogensen, 2011), the literature offers little knowledge of the views and personal understandings of young people with ASD (Molloy and Vasil, 2002). Adult personal accounts do exist (for example, Willey (1999)), however such accounts are predominantly outside of academic theory and research, and tend to be written by individuals who have voluntarily adopted the ASD label based on their recollections of the nature of perceived difficulties during their childhood (Molloy and Vasil, 2002). Indeed, in a systematic literature review of qualitative research methods for eliciting the views of young people with ASD about their educational experiences, Fayette and Bond (2017) report that the participation of young people

with ASD within research is limited, with effective processes enabling their participation under-researched. Indeed, they report that semi-structured interviews have predominantly been used to elicit the views of young people with ASD about their educational experiences, however they caution that this method may result in a perceived imbalance between researcher and participant, which influences participant engagement (Winstone, Huntington, Goldsack, Kyrou and Millward, 2014) and the nature of knowledge produced (Milton, 2014). The limited participation of young people with ASD within research is despite an increasing recognition of the importance of considering and incorporating the views of young people on matters that affect their lives (Fayette and Bond, 2017). Accordingly, where studies have worked to elicit the views of young people with ASD, they have explored the young people's views on their experiences of their daily lives (for example, Preece and Jordan (2010)), and upon views of their school experience (Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016); Hebron and Humphrey (2014); Marks, Scharader, Longaker and Levine (2000)). In recognition of such a focus, the views of young people with ASD in relation to their experience of school will be explored in a subsequent section of this literature review ('How is the experience of school different for young people with ASD compared to their neurotypical peers?', section 2.4.1). Further exploration of the need to raise the voices of young people with ASD will be raised in a later section, forming an important strand of argument for the focus of the present study (see 'The need to hear the voices of young people with ASD', section 2.4.2).

2.2.4 How is the education of young people with ASD at risk?

Government statistics report that there are 76, 020 children and young people in England who are identified as having ASD as their primary special educational need, over a quarter (25.9 %) of the student Special Educational Needs population (Department for Education, 2016a). Woolfson and Brady (2009) note that changes in legislation have led to 60% of students with a diagnosis of ASD being educated in 'mainstream schools' (state-maintained schools that cater for the general student population). Despite affording these students with an array of benefits including regular exposure to peer role models to aid the development of social, behavioural and academic skills as well as enabling access to a general curriculum (Jones, 2002),

those areas by which ASD is defined are associated with considerable challenges to inclusion (Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

Diamond et al. (2007) recognise such challenges as resulting from the expression of what can be "maladaptive" behaviours and from difficulty in regulating negative emotions. Lecavalier (2006) suggests that a lack of knowledge about the source of feelings of anger and of how to manage these feelings can lead to behaviours which present students with ASD as being frustrated, stubborn or hyperactive. This can impact upon staff and peer perceptions of the individual with ASD (Boutot and Bryant, 2013). As noted by DePape and Lindsay (2016), difficulties for students with ASD in processing sensory information may result in teacher perceptions of students as misbehaving. Negative teaching staff attitudes about students with ASD have been found to be associated with more problematic student behaviours and academic underperformance relative to ability (Ashburner, Ziviani and Rodger, 2009). Additionally, peer perceptions may play a role in difficulties experienced by the student with ASD in engaging with peers during break times (Wing, 1996). It is therefore unsurprising that Humphrey and Lewis (2008) report that students with ASD struggle to assimilate themselves to their school environment.

It would also appear that mainstream schools may struggle to fully meet the needs of students with ASD (Symes and Humphrey, 2010), with schools reporting that such students have high levels of behavioural and emotional difficulties (Osborne and Reed (2011). Such difficulties challenge the school community as they are often presented in domains that are essential for school activities (Teixeira De Matos and Morgado, 2016). Indeed, Dean, Adams and Kasari (2013) claim that in the case study under their consideration, autism-related behaviours manifested in inflexible interactions that systematically led to the exclusion of the individual with ASD. Government statistics reveal that students with special educational needs account for just over half of all permanent exclusions, reporting that eleven percent of students in England who have ASD as a primary educational need have been permanently excluded from school (Department for Education, 2016b). The most frequent reasons given for these permanent exclusions include 'Physical assault' (36.1 % of permanently excluded students with ASD) and 'Persistent disruptive behaviour' (23.3 % of permanently excluded students with ASD) (Department for Education, 2016b). This data is particularly concerning in light of the potential of

schools to make a sustained positive difference to the lives of vulnerable children (Samel, Sondergeld, Fischer and Patterson, 2011). As Hillier, Fish, Cloppert and Beversdorf (2007) state, having access to social support and social groups greatly enhances quality of life for individuals with ASD and school attendance is significant in providing such opportunities. It would therefore appear that schooling has the ability to have a significant impact upon the experiences and the wellbeing of young people with ASD.

2.3 Identity

2.3.1 What is identity?

McKinlay and McVittie (2011) note that social scientific accounts of 'identity' demonstrate that social scientists have not prioritised the agreement of a definition. When the term is used as a social science construct, it is often because researchers aim to provide empirical evidence on aspects of human experience that can be explained by regarding individuals as having a reflective awareness of what they are like (McKinlay and McVittie, 2011). While it may be argued that this avoids problems of terminology and definition at the outset, and enables a definition to be cumulatively built up through the detailed definitions produced in relation to each specific domain of relevant research (McKinlay and McVittie, 2011), it can hinder progress. This is not least due to a lack of coherence and the fact that different areas of research have different core concerns and areas of focus that impact upon how identity is construed.

Lapsley and Power (1988) request that terms such as 'self' and 'identity' be integrated to avoid further differentiation of research traditions in identity-related areas. However, although 'self' and 'identity' are occasionally used synonymously, they refer to different concepts and different levels of analysis (Owens, 2006). For Owens (2006), 'identity' falls within the broader notion of the 'self', where identities are categories used to specify the relation of an individual to others. That 'self' and 'identity' appear to be separate and distinct was noted by William James, who stated that if the 'me' that oneself is aware of is an empirical aggregate of what is objectively known, the 'I' which has this knowledge cannot itself be part of the aggregate (James, 1890). As Erikson (1968) implies through his distinction of 'ego

identity' and 'group identity', ambiguity is created through reference to an individual's central, stable biographical history and the temporary and fragmented social positions and roles that are adopted through interaction with others (McKinlay and McVittie, 2011). In attempting to address this apparent dual nature of identity, Social Psychologists have developed explanatory frameworks such as Social Identity Theory (Turner and Onorato, 1999), separating 'personal identity' (referring to aspects of the individual that persist over time) from 'social identity' (the aspects of society that the individual compares his or herself to and draws upon in making sense of themselves as individuals).

As Bourdieu (2002) asserts, identity is about difference. It is constructed through a sense of how we are different to others and through taking account of notions of how others see us, as well as through our own conception of who we are (Reay, 2010). Appreciating the concepts of 'self' and 'identity' to be distinct, Baumeister (1986) contends that the 'self' is based on having a physical body, experiencing reflective consciousness, having interpersonal connections, belonging to groups and being able to self-regulate and make decisions. In contrast, 'identity' is meaningful definitions ascribed to the self, including social roles, reputation, a value structure and conception of potentiality (Baumeister, 1986). This distinction can also be seen to identify with the narrative definition of identity put forward by McAdams (1996). McAdams (1996) makes the distinction between 'I' (one's identity) and 'me' (one's self), viewing 'I' as the process of creating a 'self' through narration and 'me' as the product (the 'self') that the 'I' constructs. Such a definition of identity appears suitable in light of both the current understanding of identity in the social sciences and the current endeavour, where the research question calls for consideration of the 'self-identity' of individuals. With regard to the current research study, it is also of interest that McKinlay and McVittie (2011) recommend that a future approach to the study of identity attend closely to the ways that identity and identity issues appear in the everyday discourse of individuals, in order to move forward in resolving issues of definition and further informing understanding. Through adopting a narrative methodology, this is exactly the approach being undertaken.

2.3.2 The origin of identity in the Psychosocial theory of Erikson

Erikson (1956) is credited with first introducing the notion of identity to contemporary social science (McKinlay and McVittie, 2011). Erikson (1968) describes identity as a subjective feeling of continuity and sameness of self and spoke of it being both a conscious process of the individual and an unconscious process, as the individual works to achieve continuity of their character (Erikson, 1969). For Erikson (1969), the term has a variety of meanings which can only be made more explicit through consideration from a number of perspectives. He identifies 'ego identity' (the ability to experience a sense of who one is with continuity and to enable according actions (Erikson, 1968)) as having a tripartite nature, comprising of one's biological characteristics; psychological needs, interest and defences; and the cultural context around the individual which provides opportunities for expression and recognition of such characteristics and needs (Erikson, 1968). In this way, optimal identity development involves finding a social position and role within the wider community context that coheres with the individual's biological and psychological capacities and interests.

Initial resolutions are trialled during adolescence (Erikson, 1963). Indeed, Erikson (1963) takes a life-span perspective on development, creating an eight-stage life cycle scheme of development which identifies important psychosocial tasks that require attention and resolution at different points across the life span, highlighting the relationship of identity to these tasks (Erikson, 1963). The eight stages of psychosocial crisis include: trust versus mistrust; autonomy versus shame; initiative versus guilt; industry versus inferiority; ego identity versus role confusion; intimacy versus isolation; generativity versus stagnation; and ego integrity versus despair (Erikson, 1963). While each of the eight stages of psychosocial crisis are relevant to the identity of the individual (Erikson, 1963), the fifth stage ('ego identity versus role confusion'), which occurs during adolescence, can be seen to have a more immediate and direct relation to the development of identity. Indeed, Erikson (1968) describes the identity-formation process as being a central task of adolescence despite the process occurring throughout the life cycle. This fifth, adolescent stage of development involves the psychosocial crisis of 'ego identity versus role confusion' (Erikson, 1963), where an adolescent is required to re-examine their sense of self and explore different possibilities, roles and places in society in preparation for

adulthood. An optimal balance is desired, with success resulting in the virtue of fidelity and the outcome affecting the quality of resolution that is possible with respect to later developmental stages (Erikson, 1963).

In giving much attention to the identity-formation process, Erikson (1968) describes how identity formation involves the emergence of a new intrapsychic structure, enabling the individual to choose their own path as opposed to necessarily adhering to 'identifications' (where a child adopts the admired characteristics or features of significant others), as experienced during childhood. For Erikson (1968), the identity-formation process, marked by key turning points in identity ('identity crises') and periods of exploring meaningful identity commitments ('moratoriums'), is a life time endeavour, with adolescence featuring as a critical period. While Erikson (1963) does not offer a comprehensive explanation of how or why the individual develops as proposed, and faces evidence suggesting that development does not encompass such discrete stages (McCrae and Costa, 1997), he himself notes that his theory is rather a descriptive overview (Erikson, 1964). Although there is support for Erikson's (1963) proposed stages of psychosocial development (McAdams, 2001), the value of this work predominantly lies in the framework that it offers in understanding identity in relation to psychosocial tasks and developmental stages. In this way, it can be seen that the work of Erikson (1963, 1968) is valuable in raising identity as an important aspect of the individual for consideration.

2.3.3 Contemporary approaches to identity

Following Erikson's (1963, 1968) original work on identity, five different approaches to defining the meaning of identity have developed, resulting in different understandings of the term, each with its own associated research tradition.

The Psychosocial Approach to identity, illustrated by Erikson (1963), has the aim of integrating the roles of an individual's intrapsychic structural characteristics with the demands of society, in order to create and maintain personal identity. Successful in considering a range of influences upon an individual's identity, theories such as that of Erikson (1963) have demonstrated wide cultural applicability (Marcia et al.,1993) and provided integrative frameworks for applied work (Kroger, 2000). However, the precise nature of the intrapsychic developmental structures remains elusive, with Kroger (2000) noting that the many and varied meanings

attributed to the concept of identity by Erikson (1963,1968) make it difficult to operationalise definitions such that empirical study may be carried out.

The Structural Stage Approach also faces such difficulty in explaining the mechanisms in use, specifically those mechanisms underlying the impact of context upon development (Kroger, 2000). This approach, following the tradition of Piaget (1968), focuses upon the changing internal structures of ego development from which life experiences are interpreted and given meaning. Internal ego structures (intrapsychic organisations) develop sequentially over time, with successive internal structures allowing increasing complexity in the interpretation of life experiences. The development of internal structures enables an individual to account for significant differences in the ways that they change their understanding of experiences throughout their life. However, it does not take account of wider factors that may influence identity structures, such as the impact of certain personal beliefs included in the content of such structures.

A further approach, the Historical Approach, accounts for contextual factors, focusing on changing historical conditions and their impact upon identity (for example, the work of Baumeister, 1987). According to this approach, identity is a social construct and the problem of identity as a concern is argued to have arisen when social change has occurred and values, guidance and forms of self-definition have begun to be questioned (Neubauer, 1994). A criticism of this approach is that it is unable to account for individual variation in identity, a difficulty also faced by the Sociocultural Approach.

The Sociocultural Approach focuses on the role of society in enabling individual identity alternatives (for example, Shotter and Gergen, 1989), where identity is seen as being the result of cultural possibilities and limitations that affect the individual in a particular context. Contexts involve relationships wherein language and actions inform the generation of the self. As noted by Mead (1934), people define themselves according to how they perceive others responding to them, a response conveyed through verbal and behavioural communication. According to this approach, an individual's identity is the product of the surrounding social context, being formed, constrained and defined by the contexts of their lives (Gergen, 1991; Shotter and Gergen, 1989). Although, Markus and Nurius (1986) contend that contextual forces are too stable to account for the demands and constraints of the run of momentary situations experienced by an individual. The

Sociocultural Approach has made an important contribution to understanding identity by emphasising the social context and the impact of the demands and feedback of others upon an individual's identity over time (Kroger, 2000). However, individual variation attests to identity being more than the result of social influence alone.

Narrative approaches to identity, such as that of McAdams (1988) suggest that language underpins the construction and maintenance of identity. Narratives produced by individuals allow insight into how they make sense of their experience and give meaning and coherence to their lives. 'We create stories and we live according to narrative assumptions…As the story evolves and our identity takes form, we come to live the story as we write it' (McAdams, 1988, p.ix). Narrative approaches attempt to interrelate internal psychological processes with societal messages and demands (Kroger, 2000). A life story is therefore a psychosocial construction and the telling of the story of the self synthesises 'me' elements (elements of the product (the 'self') that the 'I' process (the process of creating the 'self' through narration) constructs) to provide coherence over time and experience (McAdams, 1996). Narrative approaches to identity are therefore able to avoid the criticisms faced by alternative approaches, being able to explain how identity elements are integrated and able to account for individual difference, indeed a strength of such approaches is the ability to focus upon the whole person as an individual.

While the Narrative Approach can be criticised for not being able to generalise identity principles beyond the individual level of description (Marcia and Strayer, 1996), it is important to question the value of doing so. Understanding of identity must surely be focused on the level of the individual if investigation is to remain true to the concept and able to account for the nature of the process undertaken by the individual, as needed to explain individual difference. Indeed, the data obtained by narrative analysis is limited by the meaning-making structure of the storyteller but in the same way, so too is the formation of the individual's identity. The Narrative Approach offers a unique opportunity to gain insight into the interrelation of sociocultural experiences and psychological processes in the coherent formulation of an individual's identity.

2.3.4 The proposed theory of identity: Sociocultural experience as the material subject to the adaptive process of identity

Baumeister and Muraven (1996) identify the importance of the role of context in the development of identity, reconceptualising the fluid nature of identity as 'adaptation'. They argue that adaptation may be the best way to conceptualise the complex relationship between individual identity and sociocultural context, as it appreciates the causal role of culture and recognises the role of individual choice and change. For Baumeister and Muraven (1996), identity is adaptation to social, cultural and historical context.

Societies clearly have an important role in shaping identity and people do exert considerable influence and choice in their identity development, actively modifying their identity to their advantage within the context (Baumeister and Muraven, 1996). Baumeister and Muraven (1996) use the concept of adaptation as it does not imply passive acquisition of identity, nor overstate the extent of self-determination. Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma (2006) support this theory of identity, presenting findings from a quasi-experimental study of 8th grade students across three different schools in the USA, each school having different demographic characteristics. Findings demonstrate that identity is an adaptation to the school context and that the school system adapts to the perception of its students (Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma, 2006). In this way, taking a sociocultural approach to identity, it can be argued that there exists a relationship between identity and context and that this relationship is adaptive. However, this argument is also relevant to the narrative approach. If 'identity' is a process with the 'self' as the product, as McAdams (1996) proposes, there must be a material for the process to act upon in bringing about the product. An individual's experiences, which are by their nature sociocultural, exist as this material. Indeed, to the individual there can be no other medium; everything is experienced. In this way, the concept of adaptation can be regarded as synonymous with the process of identity, as the raw material (the individual's experiences) is shaped by, and interpreted in relation to, the context, influencing the nature of the 'self' that is created. A 'self' which in turn can exert influence over the context and resultant experiences, in accordance with its nature. (See Figure 1. (p.31) for a summary and diagrammatic representation of this argument and proposed theory).

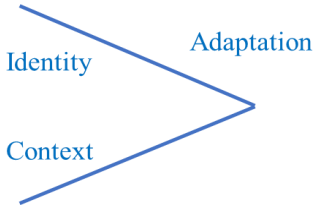
In considering the theory of identity as sociocultural adaptation, Baumeister and Muraven (1996) also take a historical approach to identity, referring to a modern adolescent 'identity crisis' as young people are faced with a broad range of choices and no clear basis for making those choices in light of a current sociocultural context where there is an absence of sources offering definitive values and morals. However, Connell (2001) notes that identity development (the development of a 'self' with its own identity) may be a great deal less fluid in the reality of the institutional contexts of everyday lives.

There is a need to be aware of mechanisms that limit the fluidity of identity development, as such mechanisms hinder individuals in overcoming disadvantage (Skeggs, 2005). This is particularly relevant in relation to issues of inclusion and exclusion in schools. Du Gay (2007) states that notions of the individual as being free to develop their own self-identity are very pervasive in assumptions about education, however, Jenkins (2004) cautions that such fluidity in identity development in schools may be the exception as opposed to the rule. Indeed, identities (various possible forms that may be attributed to an individual's 'self') existing as categories and labels, may still prevail in schools as learner identities are conflated with social identities such as race, ethnicity, disability, social class or gender. For example, Archer and Francis (2005) found students with British Chinese ethnic identities to be regarded as industrious, diligent students. Learner identities and disability identities may also be conflated in a similar way in light of students with special educational needs accounting for more than half of all permanent exclusions (Department for Education, 2016b).

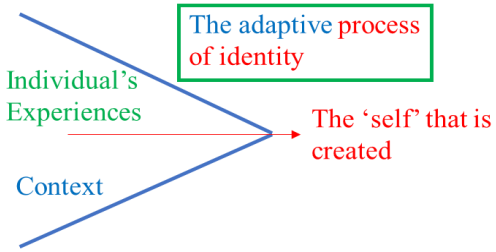
This would appear to lend support to the Social Model of Disability in implying that for young people with developmental disabilities, societal structures and organisation may generate the barriers which constitute disablement. It may be that a fixed category understanding of the identity of the young person in school can hinder the ability of the individual to adapt their self-identity to the school context. For young people who are likely to have difficulty constructing their self-identity, such as those with Autism Spectrum Disorder who are already working to integrate their diagnosis with their sense of self (Browning, Osbourne and Reed, 2009), this could present a significant challenge. Without appropriate support around the adaptation process, it could be easy for the school context to be at odds with the

individual's self-identity, potentially leading the young person to experience exclusion in a variety of forms.

Reay (2010) argues that there is a need to move from examining the outcome of the identity formation process to interrogating the process itself, looking at how self-identity changes in different contexts, spaces and times. Prince (2014) notes that a growing body of work across multiple disciplines indicates the salience of place in actively contributing to self-identity and offers evidence to show how place-based experiences including belonging and aversion, may be internalised and encoded into possible selves. Indeed, schooling plays a critical role in identity formation (Reay, 2010) and it would therefore appear that there is a need to gain insight into the individual experience of the school context in order to explore any relationship with identity construction. The study of identity development in the school context remains 'a wasteland' (Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma, 2006, p.87) and is in need of further research (Goosens and Phinney, 1996). School norms, practices and expectations provide the symbolic material that young people draw upon to make sense of their experiences and to define themselves (Perry, 2002). In this way identity is not a fixed quality of the self that requires introspection to be known. It is rather an adaptive process that utilises experience of the sociocultural context to generate a 'self', wherein the individual's experiences act as the material subject to the process, being shaped by, and interpreted in relation to, the sociocultural context.



Baumeister and Muraven (1996)



The proposed theory of identity

Key:
Baumeister & Muraven (1996)
McAdams (1996)
Clauses of the proposed argument

A Summary of the argument for the proposed theory of identity:

The proposed theory of identity builds on Baumeister and Muraven (1996) by further developing and applying the work of McAdams (1996).

1. There is an adaptive relationship between identity and context (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996).
2. Identity is a process with the 'self' as the product (McAdams, 1996).
3. If identity is a process, there must be a material for the process to act upon. It is proposed that an individual's experiences exist as this material as everything is experienced and experience is the most basic element; it cannot be reduced further. An individual's experiences are also, by nature, sociocultural.
4. Like the adaptive relationship between identity and context noted by Baumeister and Muraven (1996), it can be argued that an individual's experiences are shaped by, and interpreted in relation to the context. As implied by McAdams (1996), the process of identity influences the nature of the 'self' produced.
5. It can therefore be argued that identity is an adaptive process.

Figure 1. A summary and diagrammatic representation of the proposed argument and theory of identity.

2.3.5 The development of identity in early adolescence

Early adolescence is widely regarded as being from eleven to fourteen years, where biological changes, a redefinition of the self within the family, the development of the nature of peer relationships, and an adaption to the more complex demands of educational systems, all raise important identity considerations (Kroger, 2000). In particular, the biological changes associated with puberty and their impact upon psychological processes and societal responses contribute to the identity-related difficulties of concurrently undergoing multiple transitions across different areas of development (Kroger, 2000). Dorn, Crockett and Petersen, (1988) report that the biological changes of puberty appear to be viewed more favourably by boys than girls. Boys increase in size and strength, whereas girls increase in fat and gain weight, conflicting with the European cultural ideal of body shape (Petersen and Leffert, 1995). For any individual, assimilating a new body image into a sense of identity is a difficult task and Simmons and Blyth (1987) report that girls have a lower sense of self-esteem and a higher self-consciousness than boys during early adolescence. Physical changes that can be identified by others appear to affect the young person's sense of identity to a greater extent than those that are not visible, perhaps due to the associated cultural meaning that may impact upon the young person's sense of identity (Brooks-Gunn and Warren (1988).

Bulcroft (1991) identifies that such changes also impact on parental relationships, as parents appear to alter expectations on the sole basis of the physical appearance of their adolescent, which could also impact upon the young person's sense of identity. The findings of Berzonsky and Lombardo (1983) additionally indicate that the timing of physical maturity in relation to peers may affect an individual's sense of identity, with late maturing boys and early maturing girls having a greater likelihood of experiencing an identity-crisis. Berzonsky and Lombardo (1983) reason that experiencing the self as being different to peers may precipitate a crisis of personal identity. Erikson (1968) argues that a key task of early adolescence is beginning to come to terms with a new sense of sexual identity and Templeton, Lohan, Kelly and Lundy (2017) note that early adolescence is a critical period for embedding understanding of gender equality and sexual rights. However, further research needs to be carried out in order to understand sexual identity development.

Kroger (2000) proposes a number of psychological tasks for the early adolescent: beginning to differentiate one's needs, attitudes and attributions from those of significant others; integrating bodily changes and sexual desires into personal identity, taking account of previous identifications; and expressing new capacities in culturally appropriate forms using socially available outlets. Although Erikson (1963) does not detail specific psychological identity-related tasks relevant to early adolescence, Kegan (1982) suggests that a stage directly relevant to early adolescence has been missed, an 'affiliation versus abandonment' stage. Support for such a stage can be found in Kroger (1983) who identifies such themes in researching student attitudes towards the self and others. Marcia (1983) adds that early adolescence is a time of disorganisation, outlining a key identity task as beginning to liberate oneself from the dictates of the internalised prohibitions and aspirations of one's parents. In considering societal influences upon identity development in early adolescence, Elkind (1981) argues that clear social markers to recognise a young person's developmental level are necessary to adequately recognise adolescent needs. However, in line with Piaget (1972), who indicates that a certain lack of structure and experiential learning is needed for development, Marcia (1983) argues that a lack of imposed organisation through societal rites of passage provides ideal conditions for identity development. Indeed, it would appear that context can affect early adolescent identity development.

Identity conflict can arise when early adolescents seek a more equalitarian role in the family, causing change to the familiar ways of relating (Kroger, 2000). Bronstein, Fitzgerald, Briones, Pieniadz and D'Ari (1993) report that parental acceptance and supportiveness regarding a young person's non-hostile emotional expression predicts a greater ability of the young person to cope with the transition into adolescence. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with specific areas of family functioning have also been linked to identity development in early adolescents, with a higher level of adolescent identity exploration in families where the mother reported high frequencies of conflict with the adolescent and where the father and adolescent were most dissatisfied with one another's behaviour and with the affective quality of their relationship (Papini, Sebby and Clark, 1989). Equally, friends and peer groups play an important role in identity development, providing a reference for testing new identity-related skills (Harter, 1990). Jenkins (2004) contends that in adolescence the peer group moves to replace the family as the

primary context within which identity develops. As noted by Harter (1990), social support in the form of peer approval is a strong predictor of self-worth for young adolescents. Additionally, the nature of the educational setting appears to have an influence upon adolescent identity style in terms of the exploration of political and occupational alternatives (Roker and Banks, 1993). It would appear that the less institutions label, and the more they allow opportunities for adolescents to test possible values and future roles, the more helpful to the identity development of the young person (Emler, 1993). Indeed, Adams and Marshall (1996) argue that social contexts that offer a baseline of values for the maintenance and promotion of the individual self, offer optimal conditions for identity formation.

2.3.6 The development of identity in mid-adolescence

Mid-adolescence occurs between fifteen and seventeen years of age when physiological change has less of a central role in defining oneself (Kroger, 2000), although increased levels of physical endurance and muscular strength play an important part (Arnett, 1992). During Mid-adolescence, there is also a move towards more complex ways of thinking (Kroger, 2000). It is also a time when family relationships are re-negotiated, peer relationships gain further prominence and there is an exploration of love relationships and expressions of sexuality, as well as of potential vocations and community roles (Kroger, 2000). Such concerns appear to relate to both genders as Archer (1982) reports similarities in patterns of identity development for both males and females. It is a time to explore expressions of sexuality and gender roles, as Cobb (1995) notes, 'adolescents cannot simply add new sexual feelings to an old self. They must revise that self so that what they add fits…' (p.129). Breakwell and Millward (1997) highlight that for males, the emotional dimensions of sexuality are distinguished from relationship aspects, whereas both elements were found to be integrated in females' self-concepts. For both genders, it is a time to explore the implications of one's adult physique for defining self-identity through 'love' relationships (Erikson, 1968).

Piaget (1972) argues that at this stage of development, possibilities arise for imagining alternative futures through more developed and organised uses of formal operational logic, skills critical to the cognitive operations involved in identity formation, allowing flexible, abstract thinking skills and reality testing. Positive

correlations exist between many formal operational skills and the degree of identity attained (Marcia et al., 1993; Wagner, 1987). However, research by Klaczynski, Fauth and Swanger (1998), indicates that secondary school students' ability to make future-orientated decisions based on rational rather than experimental information may be a further prerequisite to attaining identity achievement. Expanding upon Erikson's (1963) adolescent task of 'ego identity versus role confusion', Marcia (1966) proposes the Identity Status Model, proposing that adolescents can adopt different styles of approach to identity-defining decisions: Identity achieved (exploration prior to the deciding on values / commitments); Moratorium (where one is in the process of exploring); Foreclosure (values / commitments adopted without exploration); or Diffusion (unable or unwilling to make commitments either with or without prior exploration). Côté and Levine (1988) criticise the model for being elitist, with only one in five achieving 'Identity achieved', and ethnocentric, with identity statuses reflecting character types in light of the sociohistorical context of its development. However, Waterman (1988) contends that Côté and Levine (1988) underestimate the use of the 'identity achieved' status, which when analysed by domain rather than overall status category, delivers a much higher percentage for those able to use this status (Waterman, 1985). It can also be argued that Côté and Levine (1988) have failed to appreciate the cross-cultural validity of the paradigm, which has been reviewed by Marcia (1993) and is able to demonstrate utility in a number of countries including Denmark (Matteson, 1974) and South Korea (Huh, 1984).

Keating (1980) suggests that thinking about possibilities, thinking ahead, considering hypotheses, thinking about thought and thinking beyond conventional limits, distinguish mid-adolescent thinking. All of which arguably play a role in beginning to develop meaningful life philosophies and values. Erikson (1968) argues that adolescents need ideological guidelines to bring order and meaning into their lives. However, Adams (1985) highlights that such concerns are not central in the lives of mid-adolescents, noting a relative lack of research on how commitment to a general political ideology and system of social values evolves. Indeed, Zeldin and Price (1995) identify that social policies aimed at mid-adolescents often focus upon trying to prevent problem behaviours and address perceived deficits, with minimal attention being given to the promotion of optimal identity development.

While research into the social contexts important in shaping the lives and identities of mid-adolescents has focused upon the family, peer group and school (Kroger, 2000), Zeldin and Price (1995) note the role of numerous additional contexts, such as youth organisations, religious organisations and public-sector institutions. Whalen and Wynn (1995) note the flexibility, intentionality, initiative, responsibility and connections to broader goals that such organisations offer, along with their role in promoting institutional and community membership, needed for identity development. As Yates and Youniss (1996) report, community service in mid-adolescence can be seen to encourage greater political-moral interest and a sense of ideological identity, although the kinds of service experience to best aid values meaningful to the development of identity warrants exploration. Additionally, mid-adolescence is often concerned with assessing one's abilities and goals for further education or work (Nurmi, Poole and Kalakoski, 1994; Skorikov and Vondracek, 1998). There is support for Erikson's (1968) claim that finding a meaningful sense of vocational direction is concerning to young people (Vondracek, 1992). Grotevant, Cooper and Kramer (1986) report that secondary school students who explore a variety of career possibilities make career choices more in line with their personality and needs. Although, Steinberg and Dornbusch (1991) share a less optimistic picture of the value of employment during mid-adolescence, not least due to the repetitive, isolated and unskilled nature of employment on offer to this demographic (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986). However, findings suggest that identity exploration has a role to play, being a stronger predictor of career maturity than self-concept (Wallace-Broscious, Serafica and Ospow, 1994).

Mid-adolescence involves exploring opportunities, life philosophies, social values and religious and spiritual orientations (Bishop and Inderbitzen, 1995; Markstrom-Adams and Smith, 1996), with peer support and opportunities for the mirroring of one's values playing a central role in self-definition (Kroger, 2000). Adolescents attempt to raise their profile through their behaviour, attitudes, appearance and style, attempting to actively play different roles without any depth of commitment or responsibility (Lungu, 2014). It is a time when peer groups and friendships take primary focus and new forms of relationships within the family emerge (Akers, Jones and Coyl, 1998; Coleman, 1974). Mid-adolescents begin to individuate, renegotiate external and intrapsychic links with parents and assume more responsibility for their decisions and lives (Kroger, 1996; Silverberg and

Gondoli, 1996). Adolescents in families that encourage individuality and connectedness are more likely to explore different identity alternatives (Bosma and Gerrits, 1985; Grotevant and Cooper, 1985, 1986). Additional familial factors related to identity development in mid-adolescence include the quality of the young person's affect towards both their mother and father, having a significant effect upon sense of self-esteem and coping ability, including exploration capacity (Paterson, Pryor and Field, 1995). Zani (1993) states that while parents influence attitudes towards the future and perception of social reality, peers enable new social skills to be learnt and offer support through shared experiences. Peers enable different possibilities for self-definition to be tested and reflected upon. Akers, Jones and Coyl (1998) note that mutually identified best friends amongst mid-adolescents have similarities in their identity status, behaviours, attitudes and identity goals.

School is also an important context affecting identity development for mid-adolescents. Roker and Banks (1993) highlight the importance of school setting, reporting that a significantly greater proportion of private school girls were foreclosed in their identity-defining decisions, contrasting with state school girls of comparable age and family background, who were far more likely to be 'moratorium' or 'diffuse' in their political decision making and 'achieved' or 'moratorium' in their occupational directions. Roker and Banks (1993) suggest that the relatively homogenous environment of the private school, where students are less likely to be exposed to competing ideological view-points and encouraged to make career choices at an early age, was likely to be associated with foreclosed identity development. Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan (1995), in their study of adolescent girls, report that secondary schools are not designed to support relationships, and school environments that provide opportunities for a strong sense of interpersonal connection for female students are central to facilitating identity development for these students. Additionally, Raphael, Feinberg and Bachor (1987) report that the identity status of an adolescent (defined using Marcia's (1966) paradigm) evokes different responses, with student teachers indicating a greater attraction for students engaged in the process of identity exploration ('moratorium') and rating this status most positively. This is likely to affect classroom interaction patterns and may be a factor in optimal identity development. Dryer (1994) proposes that identity formation can be encouraged by providing adolescents with educational environments that stimulate exploration and commitment, with an identity-enhancing

curriculum that promotes student exploration, responsible choice and self-determination. He writes of the value of stimulating role-play and appreciating how the past is connected to the present through multi-generational social interaction, in addition to enhancing self-acceptance and providing positive feedback from teachers and counsellors (Dryer, 1994). It would therefore appear that for those in mid-adolescence, different environments that promote identity exploration are likely to facilitate the identity-formation process.

2.3.7 A summary of the development of identity in adolescence

Adolescence is an important time in the development of identity. Key tasks of early adolescence include starting to liberate oneself from the internalised prohibitions and aspirations of one's parents (Marcia, 1983) and beginning to come to terms with a new sense of sexual identity (Erikson, 1968). Indeed, as Kroger (2000) identifies, the biological changes associated with puberty and their impact upon psychological processes and societal responses, contribute to the identity-related difficulties of concurrently undergoing multiple transitions across different areas of development (Kroger, 2000). Mid-adolescence is also a demanding time in the development of identity. It is a time for developing skills critical to the cognitive operations involved in identity formation (Piaget, 1972), a time for assessing one's abilities and goals (Nurmi, Poole and Kalakoski, 1994; Skorikov and Vondracek, 1998), a time to explore identity (Wallace-Broscious, Serafica and Ospow, 1994) and a time for new social skills to be learnt and possibilities for self-definition to be tested amongst peers (Zani, 1993). It is also a time when minimal attention is being given to the promotion of optimal identity development (Zeldin and Price, 1995). It can therefore be seen that adolescence is an important and difficult time for young people, and for young people with ASD, the existence of further challenges can make identity development all the more complex.

2.3.8 The construction of identity for young people with ASD

For young people with ASD, there is the additional task of integrating their diagnosis with their sense of self (Mogensen and Mason, 2015). As Browning, Osborne and Reed (2009) note, adolescents with ASD are likely to struggle with forming their

identity. It can be appreciated that attempting to reconcile your ASD identity, which is arguably 'much more a part of someone's identity in the same way that someone's gender is…' (MacLeod, Lewis and Robertson, 2013, p.43) alongside the identity of being a student in a mainstream school with all the assumptions of neurotypical functioning upon which that identity is based, must be a challenging undertaking. This is in line with Stevenson, Cornell and Hinchcliffe (2016), who state that understanding what ASD means on a personal level can be an important process for a young person. They highlight the importance of being able to understand what ASD is as a way of coping with the challenges and difficulties that it presents, reporting that for young people with ASD, sharing experiences with others who have ASD is beneficial (Stevenson, Cornell and Hinchcliffe, 2016). An alternative approach to aid understanding is noted by Fein (2013), who reports that adolescents with ASD draw upon shared mythologies from comic books and video games as a way of expressing and processing their experiences. Indeed, understanding the nature of ASD has been found to be a contributory factor to mental health difficulties for young people who have an ASD diagnosis (Hebron and Humphrey, 2014). Through the medium of a school-based project for students to explore and share their experiences of being autistic, Stevenson, Cornell and Hinchcliffe (2016) report findings that, in addition to making sense of an ASD diagnosis, experiencing difference and the transition into adulthood also emerge as key themes for young people with ASD.

Despite being so important to such individuals, little attention has been given to the construction of identity for individuals with ASD, not least due to the assumption that social worlds hold little importance for them (Bagatell, 2007). A result of such inattention appears to be that autistic adults experience living with the consequences of an identity that feels foreign to them (Milton and Sims, 2016). As Bagatell (2007) notes, constructing identities is hard work, it is a struggle to orchestrate conflicting discourses and to assimilate various roles, requiring creativity and ingenuity. As Giddens (1991) states, 'a person's identity is not to be found in behaviour…but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going…it must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self' (p.54). Identity development is arguably a largely social process (Levesque, 2011) and given this, along with recognition that the social world can be challenging for individuals with ASD, identity development is likely to

be a difficult process for adolescents with ASD (Artar (2007), Henry (1994), Willey (2003) and Ybrant (2008)). Indeed, Walker (1996) proposes that implicit and explicit feedback received from other people is crucial to the process, with identity development requiring interaction and feedback from family and peers (the main social groups for adolescents). There is also the task of making sense of different social roles, contributing to difficulties in identity development for young people with autism (Levesque, 2011). Adolescence is already a challenging time in the development of identity, as the adolescent transitions from the security of the family to experiment with peers before reaching complete autonomy (Levesque, 2011), but it would appear that the task is exacerbated for young people with ASD.

Baines (2012) argues that rather than assuming that young people with an autistic label are isolated from the sociocultural process of identity development, it should be recognised that such young people make a deliberate effort to promote a positive perception of themselves. Baines (2012) reports that being regarded as 'autistic' had a negative effect upon how young people in the ethnographic study were perceived, and that the young people responded by attempting to distance themselves from the label of 'autism' through various acts of positioning. Through different speech acts, individuals involved in the study positioned themselves to be heard and valued (Baines, 2012). For example, Baines (2012) reports that perceptions of ability continuously arose through social interaction for the young people and that these played an important role in shaping how their identities as learners were negotiated. Through their positioning, which went as far as compartmentalising their disability, these young people worked to be regarded as 'normal' and to be respected on their own terms, distancing themselves from their label and its associations (Baines, 2012). It should, however, be noted that while Baines (2012) uses original interview data to illustrate her interpretation, there is no triangulation of findings. Although, Baines (2012) does use a positioning analysis of video-recorded observations of a sample of 12 young people who each have a diagnosed disability (including the study participants) to create a positioning chart and contextualise participant cases. Sharing data from individual participant observation to further illustrate interpretation could have further supported the conclusions drawn. (Further critical consideration of Baines (2012), with findings in support of the overall quality of research design, can be found in Appendix A, Table 3).

Mogensen and Mason (2015) also draw attention to the significance of the autistic label for young people negotiating identity. They state that young people diagnosed with ASD are typically portrayed as being different to others, with generalisations made about their lives which tend to define the experiences of these young people as either positive or negative (Mogensen and Mason, 2015). King, Williams and Gleeson (2017) report the finding that young people with ASD have an understanding of themselves as being different from their peers through making social comparisons. In agreement with the findings of Baines (2012), Mogensen and Mason (2015) note that while young people with a diagnosis of ASD participating in their study were generally accepting of the ways in which they differed to others, some resisted autism as a social or public identity. Mogensen and Mason (2015) report that trying to pass as 'normal' is not an uncommon theme in the disability literature, and Goode (2007) illustrates that the perceived stigma associated with a diagnosis can lead people to attempt to mask or conceal their differences. Problems with publicly disclosing an ASD diagnosis can occur even when there is recognition that such a disclosure would be beneficial at a personal level (Davidson and Henderson, 2010). As Goffman (1963) identified in his Theory of Social Stigma, particular labels have the power to destroy an individual's identity. For young people, this may be particularly significant in light of their stage of development and the associated need to fit in with peers (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008). Indeed, Mogensen and Mason (2015) report that whether the diagnosis of ASD was experienced as an advantage or disadvantage depended on the extent to which it facilitated self-knowledge and control. This is illustrated in the findings of Hebron and Humphrey (2014).

In this respect, it is interesting to note that the use of identity-first language is preferred by a large proportion of the autistic community, such that one might speak of an 'autistic individual' as opposed to an 'individual with autism' (Goodall (2015). The findings of Kenny et al. (2016) also demonstrate such a preference amongst UK autistic community members (3470 autistic people, parents and those in their broader support network). Kenny et al. (2016) report the term 'autistic' being endorsed by a large percentage of autistic adults, family members, friends and parents but far fewer professionals, and the term 'person with autism' endorsed by almost half of the professionals surveyed but far fewer autistic adults and parents. This use of identity-first language appears contrary to the accepted convention when referring to an

individual with a disability (American Psychological Association, 2010). It must be considered whether such a preference amongst the autistic population is an attempt to take control of the impact of the diagnosis upon individual identity, positively structuring personal identity around difference and taking pride in the individual difference that the label attributes. As opposed to viewing the identity-first language as allowing the diagnosis to overshadow and dictate the identity of the individual.

However, Kenny et al. (2016) note that there is no single universally accepted way of describing autism that is preferred by the UK autistic community, implying that the approach taken to assimilating the diagnosis with individual identity is a matter of personal choice and preference. That the positive nature of an autistic identity is highlighted as a common thread in on-line discussion groups for autistic individuals (Brownlow and O'Dell, 2006) additionally implies that such assimilation may be an aspirational and difficult process. Such findings lend support to the argument of Baumeister and Muraven (1996), that identity is adaptation to context, as young people with autism work to adapt and construct preferred identities across a range of contexts including school and home (Baines, 2012). The result is a complex sense of identity in relation to others (Baines, 2012). Support can also be found here for the Social Model of Disability, highlighting the value of exploring the identity constructs of young people with autism and the impact of different contexts. As identified by Mogensen and Mason (2015), there is not only a need to minimize the stigmatisation and marginalisation of those with a diagnosis of ASD, but there is also a need to provide the spaces for young people to experience a sense of control in their own lives. As previously noted, a fixed category understanding of the identity of an autistic young person in the school context may hinder the ability of that individual to assimilate their diagnosis and positively adapt their identity.

It can therefore be seen that identity development is likely to be a difficult process for adolescents with Autism (Henry, 1994; Willey, 2003; and Ybrant, 2008). Young people with ASD have a complex sense of identity in relation to others (Baines, 2012) and are faced with the difficult additional task of integrating their diagnosis with their sense of self (Mogensen and Mason, 2015). As the perceived stigma associated with a diagnosis can lead to attempts to mask or conceal differences (Goode, 2007), many young people with ASD work to adapt and construct preferred identities across a range of contexts (Baines, 2012). School is one such important context and, as an autistic label may be particularly significant for

young people in light of the adolescent stage of development and the associated need to fit in with peers (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008), school experience may also have an important role to play in self-identity.

2.4 School Experience

2.4.1 How is the experience of school different for young people with ASD compared to their neurotypical peers?

DePape and Lindsay (2016) report 'experiences at school' as being a key theme in a qualitative meta-synthesis of lived experiences from the perspective of individuals with ASD. Within existing literature, Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016) identify four key areas that affect the quality of school experience for young people with ASD: perceived relationships with teaching staff; general school functioning; social skills; and the interpersonal strengths of the individual. Although Hebron and Humphrey (2014) identify the key domains of social and academic skills as yielding unfavourable comparisons for adolescents with ASD compared to their peers (domains particularly salient for adaptive functioning in the mainstream school), Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016) report that quantitative self-report measures indicate an overall school experience similar to that of neurotypical peers, with content analyses showing similarities in overall functioning. It should, however, be noted that the findings of Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016) come from a single school sample, raising questions about external validity. The single school sample enables contextual factors to be the same for participants in both the target group (individuals with a diagnosis on the Autistic Spectrum) and control group (typically developing individuals), reducing between group variance. However, it can also be seen to reduce the generalisability of findings, as the school involved could be a unique case.

Osborne and Reed (2011) report that the size of the secondary school and the class size positively impact upon students with ASD, with the availability of support staff being a positive factor in school progress and the reduction of emotional and behavioural difficulties, but reducing improvements in pro-social behaviour. It is interesting to note that there are apparent differences in the way that peer support is used and viewed between those with ASD and their neurotypical peers (Dillon,

Underwood and Freemantle, 2016), with those with ASD having far fewer close friends who are used as a means of social and academic support. Indeed, Saggers, Hwang and Mercer (2011) state the importance of receiving adequate support in the classroom for individuals with ASD.

Findings from the single school sample used by Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016) also found that students with ASD held generally positive views regarding their teachers, with good relationships being attributed to teachers having a caring and helpful manner, and where feeling comfortable in school was related to being known by teaching staff. The importance of having understanding teachers is also reported by Humphrey and Symes (2010) and by Gulec-Aslan, Ozbey and Yassibas (2013).

In addition, Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016) state that both neurotypical students and students with ASD express a preference for group work and demonstrate a preference for more interactive teaching styles, supporting research that effective teaching is interactive and explicitly delivered (Costley, Keane, Clark and Lane, 2012). Individuals with ASD have commented that they learn best when an activity is hands-on, such as carrying out an experiment (Marks, Scharader, Longaker and Levine, 2000), as well as when they have been given a choice of activity (Connor, 2000). Studies also report that individuals with ASD can have difficulty regarding assignment deadlines and heavy workloads (Carrington and Graham, 2001; Saggers, Hwang and Mercer, 2011) as well as difficulty with handwriting and taking notes (Krieger, Kinebanian, Prodinger and Heigl, 2012; Penney, 2013; Saggers, Hwang and Mercer, 2011).

Sanders and Munford (2016) report that school experience was a discordant element in the self-narratives of neurotypical young people who did not complete their schooling and note that if Giddens (1991) is correct, young people who experience school as frightening, hostile, foreign or unwelcoming are likely to struggle in sustaining a coherent self-narrative and will either remove themselves or precipitate circumstances whereby they are excluded. Behavioural expression of the difficulties of being in this position may also unintentionally contribute to an individual's permanent exclusion. It is therefore important to note that within the population of adolescents who have a diagnosis of ASD there is a high level of behavioural difficulties (Osborne and Reed, 2011; Ashburner, Ziviani and Rodger, 2009) with these young people experiencing significantly greater anxiety,

depression, anger, and lower self-concept than their neurotypical peers (Hebron and Humphrey, 2014). Reid (2015) reports findings that suggest that university students who have a diagnosis of ASD experience tensions as a result of their current educational experience, tensions ranging from incompatible options to competing perspectives.

The educational environment can also be a source of tension. Humphrey and Lewis (2008) share findings that for some individuals, the 'pushing and shoving' (p.37) in small school corridors presents a challenging situation. Changes to routines at school can also be a source of anxiety (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008). Issues around sensory processing, such as difficulty being able to work as a result of the level of classroom noise (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008; Penney, 2013; Smith and Sharp, 2012) and challenges associated with unstructured time at break and lunch (Connor, 2000) also presented difficult circumstances for individuals with ASD to manage. A further challenge is stated by Hebron and Humphrey (2014), that young people with ASD feel a sense of being different to others with bullying being a key concern. Although Hebron and Humphreys (2014) detail a relatively small sample size and a qualitative sample that is effectively self-selecting due to the requirements for interview participation, leading to concerns regarding external validity, minimum power requirements are met and interview findings do appear to be consistent with similar research in the area. Indeed, Humphrey and Symes (2010) state that bullying is a major issue for young people with ASD in mainstream schools. The findings of the 'state of the field' review by Hebron and Humphrey (2014) indicate a wide range of coping strategies being used, as young people with ASD work actively to hide their anger and anxiety, indicating a desire to not be treated differently to others and demonstrating a learned self-reliance.

As identified by Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016), ultimately it appears to be the effective integration of support that underpins a positive school experience for students with ASD. Discreet support, so as not to attract attention from classmates also appears to be preferred (Saggers, Hwang and Mercer, 2011). In aiding the experience of secondary school students with ASD, Hebron and Humphrey (2014) suggest that the following could be of benefit: a raised awareness of the prevalence of internalising problems; a better understanding of the triggers and responses in order to inform behaviour management strategies; additional monitoring and support with regard to bullying; and using regular dialogue as a collaborative

strategy for addressing difficulties. As Farrugia and Hudson (2006) note, the profile of behavioural difficulties amongst young people with ASD may be different from other adolescents. This could imply that an associated difference in the nature of the support available is necessary.

Oh (2012) reports that identity and inclusion were found to be indicators of the tension formed by student experience of the ethnic identity outside of school being at odds with that inside of school. Being aware of the identity constructs held by young people with ASD in relation to school and school practices may therefore be important in understanding their experience of school compared to that of their neurotypical peers. The recent study by Cox et al. (2017) exploring the college experiences of students with ASD is foundational in acknowledging identities in relation to educational experience for individuals with ASD. Cox et al. (2017) report tensions between the private and public identities of participants, revealing a struggle between their public efforts to be seen as the same as others and their private efforts to embrace ASD as part of their own unique identity. Cox et al. (2017) state that for these students, consideration of whether and when to share their ASD diagnosis with peers involved consideration of both who they were and how they would be perceived by the culture of their educational setting. It must, however, be noted that a study limitation exists in the participant sample, being disproportionately comprised of white male students of average or higher intellectual ability (Cox et al., 2017), limiting the generalisability of findings. It is also a participant sample that, due to a sampling frame which includes the criteria that participants had registered with the local Centre for Autism and Related Disabilities, is likely to have yielded participants who are more open to accepting an ASD diagnosis and who are likely to have had access to additional supports unavailable elsewhere. It can therefore be seen that confounding variables exist, limiting the external validity of findings. Despite such limitations, this study remains valuable in raising awareness of an important aspect of educational experience for students with ASD, one that warrants consideration and further investigation. It suggests the value of investigating the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD.

2.4.2 The need to hear the voices of young people with ASD

Young people have a right to freely express their views and perspectives, and for those views and perspectives to be heard, especially in relation to issues affecting their lives (United Nations, 1989). Young people are the group most affected by educational practices and are ideally positioned to voice their schooling experiences (Ajodhia-Andrews, 2016). However, they are the least consulted and least involved in collaboration as to how such practices and experiences affect their lives (Cook-Sather, 2002). This is particularly true for young people with disabilities (Wickenden, 2011). Support for the significance of school can be found in DePape and Lindsay (2016), who report 'experiences at school' as being one of four emergent themes in a meta-synthesis of lived experiences from the perspective of adults with ASD. However, accounts of such lived experiences are relatively unheard as research about ASD has primarily been based upon the Medical Model (Mogensen, 2011). This is despite research showing the importance of understanding ASD from first-hand accounts (Jones, Quigney and Huws, 2003), the ability of young people to actively engage in research concerning their lives (Dockett and Perry, 2007), and calls for children with ASD to be more directly included in the research process (Potter, 2015).

In addition, most research on ASD focuses on the accounts of parents, siblings and health care providers as opposed to children or adolescents (DePape and Lindsay, 2016), with little attention to what a diagnosis of ASD means for the lives and experiences of children and young people (Mogensen and Mason, 2015). As a result, DePape and Lindsay (2016) identify a need to explore the lived experiences of children and young people with ASD, recommending this as an area for further research. Recommendations for further study following a Local Authority research project into differing rates of school exclusion also call for this undertaking (Derbyshire County Council Educational Psychology Service, 2016). Such an exploration is particularly apt in light of recent research findings by Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016), that despite consistent school experiences for both students with ASD and age and gender matched neurotypical students, differences were found in the ways in which the groups perceived aspects of school. For example, analysis of data from semi-structured interviews revealed that peer group dynamics were operationally different between the two groups of students

(Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle, 2016). As identified by Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016), listening to student voice provides researchers with meaningful insight and empowers those individuals who may not have otherwise had an outlet, providing a valuable method to understand the experiences of young people within the education system (Harrington, Foster, Rodger and Ashburner, 2013).

2.4.3 The role of school in self-identity

With adolescents spending twenty hours a week over at least ten months a year at school (Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma, 2006), school remains the primary arena and key societal institution for young people to engage with differences and develop their identity (Reay, 2010). Within schooling, hierarchies of official school knowledge and peer group hierarchies must be negotiated, and status, reputation and public image, in the eyes of both teachers and peers, must be managed (Reay, 2010). Seiffge-Krenke (1993) identifies the establishment and maintenance of self-identity, along with school life and relationships, as being key areas of change and insecurity for young people. Accordingly, school is one of the most important domains in identity development in mid and late adolescence (Bosma, 1985; Van Hoof, 1998), not least because school provides the young person with access to peers.

Peer groups allow adolescents to compare themselves with each other and to establish a personal sense of identity (Nawaz, 2011). In adolescence, self-comparison becomes important as young people try to associate their identities with their peers (Hill, Bromell, Tyson and Flint, 2007). Active involvement in peer group activities allow the exploration of different values and norms, as well as the exploration of different experiences (Rageliene, 2016). It is also linked with a reached identity (Pugh and Hart, 1999). A peer group not only supplies emotional support as a young person negotiates their identity, but also provides a social status for identity development (Nawaz, 2011). Rassart, Luyckx, Apers, Goossens and Moons (2012) note that through communicating with peers, adolescents can discuss identity issues and can receive peer approval, in-turn, achieving their identity more easily. As reported in a systematic literature review into the link between adolescent identity development and relationships with peers (Rageliene, 2016), adolescents' identity development is positively related to their relationships with peers. Belonging to a peer group and holding relationships with peers based on mutual respect and

acceptance are positively related to adolescent identity development (Rageliene, 2016). More specifically, findings reveal that attachment to peers and belonging to peer groups, along with the support provided from good relationships with friends, are positively related to adolescent identity development (Nawaz, 2011; Pugh and Hart, 1999; Meeus, Oosterwegel and Vollebergh, 2002). Rassart, Luyckx, Apers, Goossens and Moons (2012) state that such good, supportive peer relationships are positively related to identity development because they can aid the prevention of stagnation in the process of identity exploration. Although it must be noted that in carrying out a correlation analysis, Rassart, Luyckx, Apers, Goossens and Moons (2012) cannot determine any causal relationship or identify predictive factors. It can, however, be seen that through providing wide and varied opportunities to interact with peers, school offers adolescents an important identity development opportunity.

Academic work in school can also afford such an opportunity. Reay (2010) states that the current focus on testing and measuring in education has led to the power of categories of ability for identity and identification. Brantlinger (2003) reports that middle class parents and their children, '…constructed intelligence as the essence of positive identity' (p.40) and Reay (2005) found that working class primary school girls spoke pessimistically when describing how they see themselves in relation to school testing. From the analysis of survey data (n=1648), focus group discussions (n=123) and semi-structured interviews (n=20), Denscombe (2000) argues that for young people at secondary school who are involved in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) work (work predominantly carried out in Years 10 and 11 in the school system of England and Wales), the evidence suggests that GCSEs are regarded by young people as a standard against which to measure 'the person' (p.360), as opposed to a standard of academic attainment. Denscombe (2000) states that in light of the diminished roles of previous anchors for self-identity, such as social class, ethnicity and gender, GCSEs are gaining in significance for the individual, providing an objective point of reference for the young person regarding who they are and a standardised measure of how they compare to others. For the young person, their GCSEs provide a symbol of their sense of self and identity (Denscombe, 2000), interweaving individual self-identity and school experience to the potential detriment of those students who require additional support. As Denscombe (2000) reports, success or failure at GCSEs is

perceived by young people as having a major impact upon their feelings of self-worth.

In exploring the identities and experiences of London school children identified by their schools as being at risk of 'dropping out' of education, Hollingworth and Archer (2010) argue that the way in which schools are materially and discursively constructed can impact upon young peoples' identities as learners and their engagement with learning, ultimately affecting their relationship with education. As Lee and Breen (2007) suggest, to avoid student 'drop out' it is important for young people to experience a sense of belonging to their school. Orientations to practice in schools that enable students to experience a sense of belonging, 'transforms school from a place that reinforces difference to one that creates possibilities for change' (p.169), assisting in the creation of a positive student identity (Sanders and Munford, 2016). In this way, identity development through adaptation may occur, in accordance with Baumeister and Muraven (1996). A young person's schooling can therefore be seen to exert an influence upon their self-identity through the various ways that their school is constructed, the level of GCSE attainment that they accomplish at school and the sense of belonging that they experience.

2.4.4 The need to explore the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD

To date, no research has explored the relationship between UK school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD. Appendix B details the systematic search strategy and method used for the identification of research studies relevant to the current question, along with search results. A search of five electronic databases, an electronic archive of theses and various hand searches resulted in the identification of one study (Cox et al., 2017) relevant to the current research question (see Appendix B). The recent study by Cox et al. (2017), which received a 'Medium' score according to the Weight of Evidence criteria (Gough, 2007) within a systematic review of literature relating to the self-identity of young people with ASD (Appendix A), describes tensions between public and private identities within the college experience of USA students who have a diagnosis of ASD, and is foundational in acknowledging identities in relation to educational experience for

individuals with ASD. It is a study that suggests the value of investigating the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD, reflecting calls for research into identity development in the school context (Goosens and Phinney, 1996). Indeed, students with ASD are likely to have difficulty constructing their identity (Browning, Osbourne and Reed, 2009), working to integrate their diagnosis with their sense of self, in addition to negotiating the challenges already involved in the development of identity during adolescence. These are challenges made more difficult by the very nature of ASD, which may act to restrict typical forms of adolescent developmental support, such as the peer group (Harter, 1990). During the context of adolescent development, reconciling an ASD identity with the experience of being a student in a mainstream school (with all the assumptions of neurotypical functioning), may be difficult, causing individuals to struggle to psychologically, socially and pragmatically integrate into mainstream school life. In this way, students with ASD are at high risk of permanent exclusion (Department for Education, 2016b).

A systematic review designed to identify existing research relating to the self-identity of young people with ASD (Appendix A), also revealed that few studies have offered insight in this area. Of the five studies that received a 'High' overall score according to the Weight of Evidence criteria implemented (Gough, 2007), indicating a high quality of research design and an appropriateness and relevance to the review question (see Appendix A, Table 4), only three studies explored the nature of self-identity for young people with ASD (Dritschel, Wisely, Goddard, Robinson and Howlin, 2010; Mogensen and Mason, 2015; Baines, 2012). Two of the five studies found that young people with ASD experienced impairments related to self-knowledge and self-concept (Robinson, Howlin and Russell, 2017, and Farley, López and Saunders, 2010, respectively). A third study (Dritschel, Wisely, Goddard, Robinson and Howlin, 2010) explored whether young people with ASD considered others to know them better than they know themselves. Findings implied that this was indeed the case and suggested that those with ASD have more pronounced difficulties with knowledge of their inner states (Dritschel, Wisely, Goddard, Robinson and Howlin, 2010). The remaining two studies sought to explore the construction of self-identity for young people with ASD (Mogensen and Mason, 2015; Baines, 2012), reporting respectively that young people with ASD negotiate feelings of being different in individually different ways and that young people with

ASD work to negotiate their identities, knowing that their interactions impact upon how they are perceived in different contexts. (See Appendix A, Table 2 for an overview of each of these studies). It is therefore apparent that the nature and construction of self-identity is an area warranting further research, particularly in light of findings that impairments exist for young people with ASD (Robinson, Howlin and Russell, 2017; Farley, López and Saunders, 2010).

Within this literature review it has been argued that identity is an adaptive process that utilises experience of the sociocultural context to generate a 'self', and the literature reviewed suggests that school may be an important domain of identity development. It is hoped that applying the insights gained through an original approach, exploring the relationship between school experience and self-identity, may be able to inform effective inclusive practice and support for young people with ASD, aiding wellbeing. This study also responds to the recommendation of a recent Educational Psychology Service project which compared data from high and low excluding schools across a Local Authority and recommended that further research explore student voice data in relation to inclusive and exclusive school practice (Derbyshire County Council Educational Psychology Service, 2016). As previously noted, the literature calls for young people with ASD to be more directly included in the research process (Potter, 2015). This research therefore seeks to examine the identity constructs within school experience narratives produced by young people who have a diagnosis of ASD, responding to the research question, 'What are the identity constructs of young people with ASD who attend a mainstream secondary school?'

3 Methodology and Method

3.1 Section Overview

This section starts by outlining and justifying the methodology selected for this study in light of broad methodological issues and considerations. Details of the method, designed to best address the research question, are then provided over three sub-sections: Participants; Procedure; and Plan of Analysis. Within these sub-sections, justification relating to the choice of method is provided, highlighting the steps taken to enhance the credibility, transferability and dependability of findings (the respective qualitative parallels to internal validity, external validity and reliability according to Guba and Lincoln (1989)). A further three sub-sections then respond respectively to additional considerations relating to dependability and credibility, researcher reflexivity and to additional considerations relating to ethics.

3.2 Methodology

As Danziger (1988) notes, methodology is not ontologically neutral. Methodological approaches to psychological investigation are necessarily grounded in an ontological position, a general view of what exists (Richardson and Fowers, 1997), and as Tuffin (2005) identifies, 'there is an important relationship between ontology and epistemology, since alternative realities will necessarily entail knowledge of those realities' (p.44). Ontological and epistemological assumptions can therefore be seen to have methodological implications within psychological research.

Experimental designs exemplify a quantitative methodology, grounded in the numerical and objective, where statistical analysis enables prediction and explanation, and where planned and controlled investigation produces generalizable results. This approach is built upon a realist ontology, where the external world is recognised as having independent existence, and as such, is quantifiable and subject to the laws that explain it. The epistemological position of Objectivism can therefore be seen as underpinning this ontological approach, as reason and logic work to organise perceptions in such a way that reality may have a mental representation. However, to subscribe to this position is to make the empirical claim that if the measure is accurate enough, one can state with some degree of certainty regarding

the object of study to which the measure is being applied (Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson, 2009). This is not only dismissive of the impact of context, but in being so, oversimplifies the subjective aspects of reality, not least the independent and autonomous nature of the human subject. It can therefore be seen that in order to address the research question, a more comprehensive ontological and epistemological perspective is required, one which allows for a methodology that is more inclusive regarding the subjective elements of reality. It is for this reason that Narrative Orientated Inquiry (NOI) (Hiles and Čermák, 2008) has been selected as an appropriate methodology for this study.

Grounded in Narrative Psychology, there is an implicit assumption that human beings make sense of experience through selecting and arranging the data according to story structures (Bell, 2002). This affords the opportunity to construct meaning, as experience of individual human actions and events are organised, contextualised and integrated into a coherent whole (Polkinghorne, 1988). As noted by Hiles and Čermák (2008), narrative accounts are performative and offer pragmatic responses to manage ambiguous and complex life events, enabling understanding of reality and having a primary role in the construction and maintenance of self-identity (Gergen and Gergen, 1983). Accordingly, it follows that there is the power to renegotiate identity by altering the narratives, empowering the author and challenging oppression (Hiles and Čermák, 2008). Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) contend that, 'the story is one's identity, a story created, told, revised…We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell' (p.7). A narrative methodology can therefore be seen to hold an epistemological stance that is Post-modernist, regarding truth and reality as subjective with knowledge and language being relational. More specifically, the epistemological position relates to both Social Constructionism and Constructivism. In co-constructing meaning with an interdependence between knowledge and the knower, enabling human experiences to be seen as socially positioned and culturally grounded, narrative methodology adheres to Social Constructionism. Equally, there is the recognition that individuals construct meaning through their own personal systems of belief, in accordance with Constructivism. As highlighted by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry moves between the internal and external world of the storyteller. Hiles and Čermák (2007) elaborate further in identifying the primary paradigm assumption of narrative approaches as being the synthesis of a

view of the individual as a situated subject within a wider influential context, with an appreciation that the individual is actively engaged in independently constructing meaning. It can therefore be seen that a narrative approach would be well suited to exploring the complexities and subtleties of human experience, particularly longer-term sequences of experiences and events (Carr, 1986) such as those experiences and events which jointly comprise a school career.

Narrative, unlike discourse analysis or thematic analysis, allows researchers to present experience holistically, capturing the 'whole story' as opposed to phenomena that occur at certain points. This is true to the complexity and richness that quantitative methods tend not to have the scope and depth to deal with (Webster and Mertova, 2007). Indeed, quantitative approaches are more concerned with outcomes than experiences. Narrative approaches not only raise lived experience, but also have the capacity to encompass factors of time and communication in change which may be important in exploring human centred-ness and complexity, and as such, can cross the boundaries between research and practice (Webster and Mertova, 2007), aligned with the intended outcome of this study. Phenomenological approaches such as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis also explore lived experience. However, a focus upon identity construction within the current research question, an aspect better informed when explored using a narrative approach, and a concern that phenomenological findings may comprise of an uncritical presentation of an individual's understanding of a phenomenon (Yardley, 1997) or indeed, of themselves, led to a narrative approach being favoured for this study.

Of the narrative approaches considered (Crossley (2000), Riessman (1993), McAdams (1993)) NOI was selected. A 'methodological approach', in that it involves planning narrative orientated research from initial research question formulation through to data analysis, NOI offers a psychological approach to narrative research that is reflective, exploratory and data-driven (Hiles, Čermák and Chrz (2009). In taking into account the work of Mishler (1986b) regarding the idea of a joint construction of meaning, the work of Labov and Waletsky (1967) in distinguishing referential and evaluative functions of narrative and that of Emerson and Frosh (2004), who note that narratives often relate to experiences of breaches between the ideal and the real and that this may have particular importance for the author, NOI offers a comprehensive approach to narrative analysis. This approach goes beyond the usual distinction found in other approaches to narrative analysis,

that between a focus upon either content or constructs of communication. NOI offers a systemised, structured analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998) while affording flexibility through allowing a number of interpretive perspectives to be adopted (Hiles and Čermák, 2008), enabling their selection in order to best inform the research question. It also offers insight into identity constructs through subscribing to the idea that the active processes of meaning making for the individual involves a creative tension between the subject positions of dominant social and cultural discourses and their often contestation and subversion by the self-construction of identity positions (Hiles, 2007). Indeed, NOI is well suited to investigating the current research question. However, as Haslam and McGarty (2001) argue, psychological research is a process of managing uncertainty and it is therefore necessary that findings are comprehensively justified. Transparency and researcher reflexivity are paramount and therefore, as detailed in the 'Method' section (chapter 3.3) to follow, such steps have been taken in order to enhance credibility and transferability, promoting confidence in the findings that result from this study.

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Participants

Morse (2000) argues that sample size in qualitative research depends upon, 'the quality of data, the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the amount of useful information obtained from each participant, the number of interviews per participant, use of shadowed data, and the qualitative method and study design used' (p.3). The current study has a clearly defined focus, with the nature of the topic requiring a comprehensive approach to analysis. NOI draws upon methods of interview that respect participants' ways of constructing meaning as outlined by Mishler (1986b), and as such, a single narrative, biographical interview will be conducted with each participant. NOI seeks to generate rich data which is critically and comprehensively analysed, necessitating only a small sample. However, to enhance transferability, the sample size has also been designed to take account of the need to ensure a representative sample in light of great variability in ASD profile and personal circumstances amongst members of the ASD community.

The selection criteria were that potential participants are UK mainstream secondary school students (students of state-maintained schools that cater for the general student population) with a diagnosis of ASD, sound expressive language skills (suggested minimum neurotypical age equivalence of 11 years) and no additional diagnoses. Individuals who have a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome (AS) were not excluded from taking part in the study. It is noted that within the most recent revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-5 (APA, 2013), AS is no longer a separate diagnosis to ASD on the Autistic Spectrum. Individuals diagnosed with AS (when it was a separate diagnosis) met the diagnostic criteria of experiencing a severe and sustained impairment in social interaction skills and demonstrating restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour and interest (APA, 1994), like individuals diagnosed with ASD. However, the difference in diagnosis for those diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome prior to 2013, resulted from the individual not having experienced any clinically significant delays in language development, cognitive development, self-help skills, adaptive behaviour (other than social interaction) or in curiosity about their environment (APA, 1994). Without experiencing delays in language or cognitive development, it may be that these young people are in a strong position to provide rich data and insight relevant to the research question. It is also hoped that including young people who have a diagnosis of AS within the sample population will enable findings to more accurately represent a cross-section of members of the ASD community who have received a diagnosis since 2013.

As a result of the considerations relating to sample size and variability in ASD profile and personal circumstances amongst members of the ASD community, it was intended that 4-6 participants would be recruited to take part in the study. From a total of nine potential participants identified as meeting the selection criteria, seven were interviewed, with data from two interviews having to be withdrawn (see ‘Recruitment’ section, chapter 3.3.2). As such, five participants have provided data that has been used in this study. Participants consisted of four male students (aged: 11 years 10 months, 12 years 8 months, 15 years 2 months and 16 years 9 months) and one female student (aged 16 years 8 months). All participants attended different UK mainstream secondary schools. It may be contended that this sample may not allow for saturation, but as O’Reilly and Parker (2012) identify, saturation does not necessarily refer to the point at which no new ideas emerge, but it can rather be

conceived in qualitative research as theoretical saturation, where variability is accounted for and a theory can emerge (Green and Thorogood, 2004).

3.3.2 Recruitment

Potential participants were identified by Educational Psychologists (EPs) within the Local Authority service acting as research stakeholder, through reference to the selection criteria and through their previous involvement with, and knowledge of, appropriate individuals who could meaningfully participate and who may be willing to take part. It was hoped that this approach would identify potential participants who meet selection criteria and would be able to provide rich data, in order to enhance credibility.

Initially, seven potential participants were identified. The parents of these seven identified individuals (all under 18 years of age) were contacted by the corresponding EPs to gain permission for contact details to be passed onto the researcher. All gave permission and the researcher made contact with parents to arrange an initial meeting. Consent was needed from both parents and the young person for participation in the research. At this point, one of the potential participants and their parents made the decision not to take part in the study and did not complete the consent forms. It was also the case that, during one of the interviews, the participant being interviewed was found to have a diagnosis in addition to ASD and, as a result, this participant and their data was withdrawn from the study. A further participant interview was unable to be carried out in keeping with a Narrative Interview (Mishler, 1986a, 1986b) and, as a result, the decision was taken to also withdraw this participant and their data from the study. (Participant hesitation at being audio recorded necessitated that the researcher led the interview in a question-response format, with the audio recorder being used selectively. This did not enable sections of unplanned personal narrative to be shared and recorded). In light of the withdrawal of two participants, a second request was made to EPs within the Local Authority service acting as research stakeholder, requesting identification of any further potential participants who meet the selection criteria and who they felt could meaningfully participate. Two further potential participants were identified and the decision was taken to contact the parents of both potential participants. While the parents of one potential participant declined the offer of an initial meeting and

involvement in the research, parents of the other potential participant arranged a time for the initial meeting and, along with the potential participant, subsequently gave consent for involvement. Data was therefore collected from a total of five participant interviews.

3.3.3 Procedure

In the initial meetings with potential participants and their parents, information was shared on the research study, its aims, potential contribution, details of what participation would involve and the right to withdraw. Information was explained in an age-appropriate way so that the young person was also able to give informed consent to participate, in addition to that of their parents. Time was also taken to answer questions and address any concerns, and information was left in writing (appendix C) along with researcher contact details. At the end of this meeting, parents and the young person were invited to complete the consent form (appendix D).

Once consent for participation had been received from participants and their parents, and a Narrative Interview Guide (NIG) established in accordance with Hiles and Čermák (2008) (see appendix E for NIG interview procedure), a date was arranged when a single Narrative Interview (Mishler 1986a, 1986b) could be conducted. Immediately prior to carrying out the interview, the study procedure, purpose and confidentiality parameters were explained in age-appropriate language (see appendix E) and participants were given the opportunity to withdraw from the research (see 'Additional Ethical Considerations' section, chapter 3.3.8). They were also reminded that they could stop the interview at any time (see appendix E). Only when the young person's willingness to participate was again established did the interview begin, the Narrative Interview (Mishler 1986a, 1986b) being carried out according to the NIG interview procedure (appendix E). The interviews were audio recorded to produce an audio text for transcription, with the raw transcript anonymised. (Audio texts have been securely kept in a locked cabinet for the duration of the study and will be confidentially destroyed following completion of the study as thesis and its acceptance by the university, the anonymised raw transcripts being retained). All interviews were conducted by the researcher to aid fidelity to the NIG and consistency of delivery across participants. They were carried

out in the familiar surroundings of the participant's home with a parent at home to place participants at ease and, in doing so, aid credibility of the data collected.

The interview process was designed to support participants to feel safe with the researcher and to share their views. Active listening skills were used throughout and time was taken to have general conversation with parents and participants, and then just with participants, prior to the interview to help participants to be at ease. During this conversation, content was reflected back to the participant to help them to feel that they were being listened to and that their views were valued. Key points were summarised and checked with participants to aid them in feeling that the researcher had a genuine interest, and to help them feel in control of the content and understood. Participants were also provided with options where possible, for example having the choice of where in their home they would feel most comfortable with the interview taking place and where they would like to sit. Throughout the interview non-verbal encouragement was given to participants to encourage them to share their stories, with the researcher smiling, nodding and leaning in to listen with interest to what the participant was sharing.

In accordance with Mishler (1986a, 1986b), participants were conceived of as informants, collaborators and advocates. As informants, it was important to enable participants to have control over the content being shared and the personal contexts introduced as grounds for interpretation. As such, an initial open question was used in the narrative interview, participants were given control over content and flow, and steps were taken to avoid interruption from the researcher during the interview, as detailed in the NIG interview procedure (appendix E). The story being shared was also recorded in its entirety so that aspects were not de-contextualised.

In conceiving of participants as collaborators, a process of co-construction was used in data collection. The researcher aimed for an even balance of power between participant and researcher. In order to work towards this, the aims of the research were shared with participants prior to the interview and a NIG interview procedure (appendix E) was followed (as opposed to a traditional question / answer format and corresponding uneven power dynamic). As previously stated, steps were taken to put participants at ease and active listening skills used to build relationships. To aid the process of co-construction, steps were also taken to involve the participant in the interpretation of their narrative. A member check, along with an opportunity for the participant to receive a de-brief, occurred during a third and final visit. In

carrying out member checks, researcher understanding of the key points made through each participant's narrative were checked with them in age appropriate language (see appendix F). During this process, statements of findings from analysis of the participant's narrative were shared, and they were asked whether they agreed with the interpretation and given the opportunity to contribute their views and feedback. Although seeking to enhance co-construction of interpretation of the narrative, a potential limitation exists in relation to this process. Sharing the findings from the researcher's analysis of a participant's narrative with them for feedback, is not as collaborative or co-constructive as involving the participant directly in the analysis procedure. However, a balance must be sought between the credibility of analysis, bearing in mind the knowledge and experience required to adhere to the analysis process of NOI, and the importance of co-construction.

In additionally providing a debrief during the third visit, the researcher explained the debriefing information in age-appropriate language and provided the participant and parents with a debriefing information sheet (appendix G). Where participants and /or their parents requested that they be informed of the outcome of the study once it was completed (a request made by all parents and by the two eldest participants), they were subsequently provided with an age appropriate summary of study findings, implications of the findings and reflections (see appendix H for an exemplar). Indeed, working collaboratively also meant that study findings were shared with participants on completion of the study, additionally working to empower them and promote their role as advocates.

3.3.4 Plan of Analysis

As outlined under NOI, the raw transcripts produced were read several times in order to aid understanding of the context and the story as a whole. As suggested by Hiles and Čermák (2007), regular reference was made back to the audio text to clarify details. Narrative analysis (Hiles and Čermák, 2008) was then carried out as the text from the raw transcript was divided into a numbered sequence of segments, with each segment relating to an episode or move made by the author in telling the story. The text was then converted into a working transcript by being arranged down the left side of the page, with a margin to the right for notes and annotations.

Three of the six different possible interpretive perspectives outlined in accordance with NOI were then used to analyse the text, being selected for their ability to inform the research question: The separation of 'fabula' from 'sjuzet' (Hiles and Čermák, 2008); The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998); and Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). As NOI is flexible in the number of interpretive perspectives used in the analysis of a narrative text (Hiles and Čermák, 2008), it was felt that these three perspectives together provided a comprehensive analysis in relation to informing the research question, applying analyses at various levels in respect to both the content of the narrative in relation to school experience and the construction of identity. Together these perspectives also enabled an increasingly detailed analysis to be undertaken without sections becoming significantly detached from their situation within the wider narrative, aiding credibility.

First 'fabula' (the content of the story) was distinguished from 'sjuzet' (the form of the narrative / how the story is being told), with 'sjuzet' being underlined in red in accordance with Herman and Vervaeck's (2001) distinction between 'bounded' and 'unbounded' motifs in narrative discourse. 'Sjuzet' was defined as words / phrases / segments that were concerned with emphasis, reflection, asides, interruptions or remarks, and included expressions representing the sequence, causality or significance of events (Hiles and Čermák, 2008). Hiles and Čermák (2007) identify 'sjuzet' as having a crucial part in understanding narrative identity. The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) was then applied, analysing the account of the narrative as a whole in order to identify content themes. Accordingly, the pattern, or form, of the narrative was identified and an initial global impression put into writing, noting exceptions or unusual features. The special foci of content or theme was then identified (by the space devoted to the theme in the text, its repetitive nature and level of detail, or alternatively, it's very brief reference or omission). Lastly, themes were marked (according to Brown et al., 1988) and read separately and repeatedly before conclusions were noted.

A personal narrative passage of interest was then selected from each participant's transcript for a more detailed interpretational perspective, that of Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). These passages were selected on methodological grounds as recognised as being appropriate by Emerson

and Frosh (2004, p.157). The methodological grounds included: sections marked by intense emotionality, contradictions or conflicts, in particular fragmented narratives or particularly rounded stories, unique claims or statements (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004) was selected for offering sensitivity to subject meaning-making and social processes in light of interpretations made in the construction of personal narratives around discordant aspects of the individual in their social context. In this way, analysis of a participant's narrative can inform understanding of their positioning and identity construction.

Critical Narrative analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004), applies Gee's (1991) Model of Narrative Analysis, consisting of a multi-level conceptual hierarchy characterised by a number of increasingly inclusive interpretive questions (see Table 3.1). The approach appreciates that discourse genres are socially situated and socially constructed and argues for an interpretation of the narrative that is sensitive to wider social contexts, organisational discourses and canonical narratives, as well as to spoken linguistic construction (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). In this way, the structural levels of narrative interpretation (Gee, 1991) are comprehensive and complimentary. The process of analysis both invites attention to wider social contexts and constrains the ways in which they can be used to interpret, through paying close attention to the spoken construction.

Table 3.1. A table to show the characteristics and interpretive questions raised by the five structural levels of narrative interpretation (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p.85)

Level	Characteristics	Interpretive questions raised
1	Organisation of text	How has this text been organised as speech?
2	Syntax and cohesion	Why has (have) the speaker (s) made this particular connection at this point? How does this connection make sense within the logic of particular narrative sections and of the overall, jointly produced interview?
3	Mainline / off main-line plot	What is the main point or significance of this plot? So what?
4	Psychological subjects	Who or what is the psychological subject of this stanza? Why does the narrator change subjects or shift positions / points of view? Are there patterns in these changes?
5	Focusing system	Why is this focus so important? How does it fit with other focused material?

Analysis proceeds inclusively through the levels of interpretation as levels mutually and recursively inform each other. Each level is inclusive of former levels and must be taken into account by those levels that follow it. In accordance with Level 1, the passage was re-transcribed drawing upon Gee's (1991) use of 'poetic' line breaks, acknowledging changes in pitch and cues internal to the text ('micro' linguistic tools), taking a grounded approach to narrative analysis and mapping the discourse structure. At Level 2, the discourse structure was mapped further using 'macro' tools to identify patterns of structure and meaning (Gee, Michaels and O'Connors, 1992). Definitions of the 'micro' and 'macro' linguistic tools used and their various notation conventions within transcripts are provided in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. A table to show the definitions and notation conventions of 'micro' (Level 1) and 'macro' (Level 2) linguistic tools used in Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004).

Level	Linguistic tool	Definition	Notation convention
1	Idea Unit	A sentence with one pitch glide (a rise and fall in intonation) is an idea unit	Slash (to separate idea units where there is more than one per line)
1	Line	A line is a central idea or argument organised by meaning and intonation, akin to a sentence in writing. (A line may include a change of speaker).	Line /Line break
1	Focus	Words bearing pitch glide and therefore emphasised.	Capitals
1	Mainline content	Mainline part of plot / on plot	Underlining
1	Pauses	Break in speech	Brackets denoting length of pause
2	Line pattern: Stanza	Groups of lines with a common theme or point of view	Labelled as a stanza, with number and headline referring to content
2	Line pattern: Strophe	A related / thematically connected set of stanzas (usually a pair, but can be more)	Labelled as a strophe, with number and headline referring to content
2	Line pattern: Part	Thematically related strophes that constitute episodes / sections of the story	Labelled as a part, with number and headline referring to content

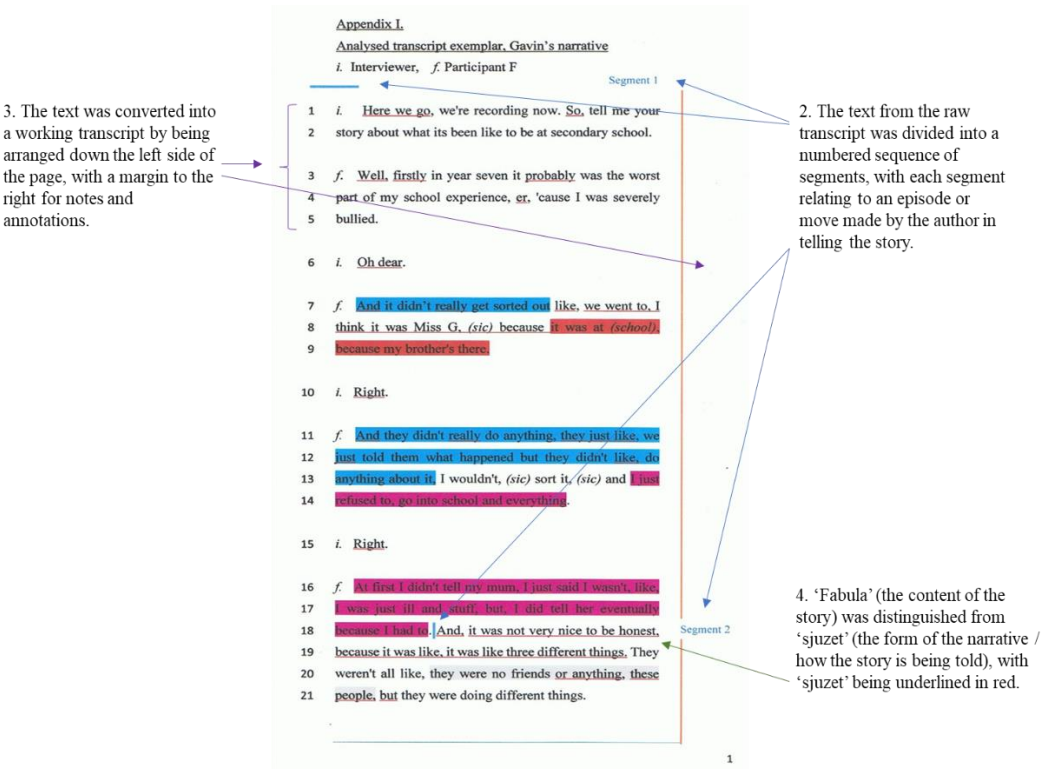
Analysis at level 3 distinguished the mainline of the plot (mainline content having been underlined during the first level of analysis) from material off the main-line (Gee, 1991), looking to identify how the narrative is working / the work that the author is putting it to. The fourth level of analysis considered the subject positions / points of view from which the material in a stanza is viewed, noting the grammatical subject of a main clause along with any relevant shifts in subject. This aimed to provide insight into how the participant is a narrative agent and subject to powerful discursive structures, aiding understanding of their identity position. The fifth level of analysis considered the focused material (marked using capitals during the first level of analysis) within the overall structure of the narrative in order to construct a thematic interpretation (identifying key images or themes). It explored contradictory, fragmented elements of the narrative, using the headline labels of level 2 to suggest a structural organisation. It also considered relations to situational and cultural discourses in seeking to reveal identity positioning. This was the most inclusive interpretive level, drawing upon all others.

3.3.5 A summary and illustration of the analysis process

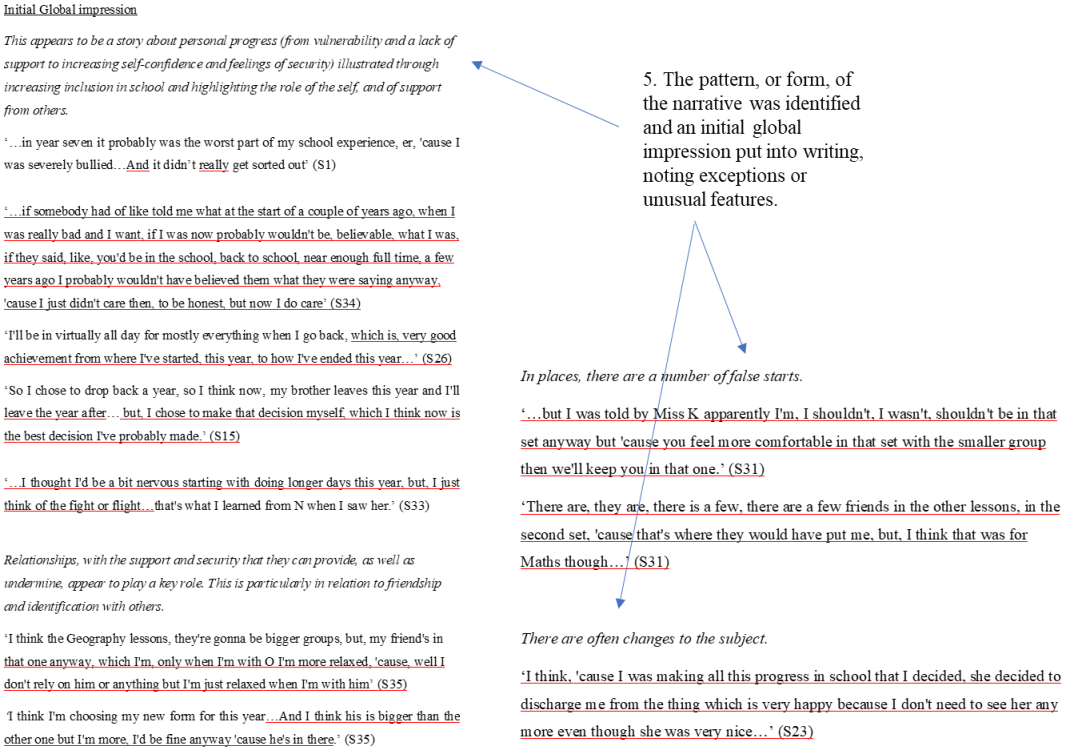
This summary and illustration of the process of analysis draws upon Table 3.2, p.66 (a table to show the definitions and notation conventions of ‘micro’ (Level 1) and ‘macro’ (Level 2) linguistic tools used in Critical Narrative Analysis) and the analysed transcript exemplar of Appendix I.

Stages 1 to 4 of the analysis process:

1. The raw transcripts produced were read several times.



Stages 5 to 8 of the analysis process (The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective):



6. The special foci of content or theme was identified (by the space devoted to the theme in the text, its repetitive nature and level of detail, or alternatively, its very brief reference or omission).

Key Theme appears to be: *Progress*

'if somebody had of like told me what at the start of a couple of years ago, when I was really bad and I want, if I was now probably wouldn't be, believable, what I was, if they said, like, you'd be in the school, back to school, near enough full time, a few years ago I probably wouldn't have believed them what they were saying anyway, 'cause I just didn't care then, to be honest, but now I do care' (S34)

7. Themes were marked (according to Brown et al., 1988) and read separately and repeatedly before conclusions were noted.



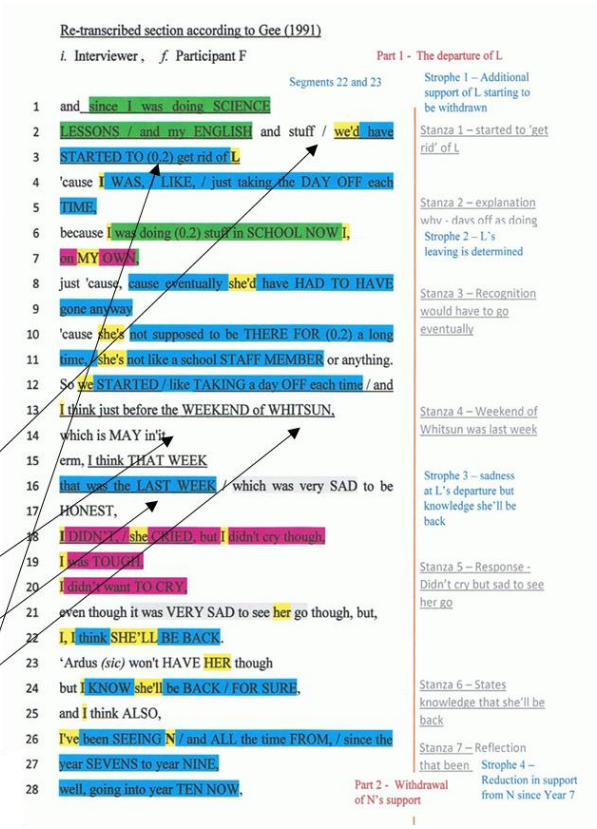
8. A personal narrative passage of interest was then selected from each participant's transcript for a more detailed interpretational perspective. These passages were selected on methodological grounds including: sections marked by intense emotionality, contradictions or conflicts, in particular fragmented narratives or particularly rounded stories, unique claims or statements.

Stage 9 of the analysis process (Critical Narrative Analysis of selected passage):

Level 1: The passage was re-transcribed drawing upon Gee's (1991) use of 'poetic' line breaks, acknowledging changes in pitch and cues internal to the text ('micro' linguistic tools), taking a grounded approach to narrative analysis and mapping the discourse structure.

Table 3.2. A table to show the definitions and notation conventions of 'micro' (Level 1) and 'macro' (Level 2) linguistic tools used in Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004).

Level	Linguistic tool	Definition	Notation convention
1	Idea Unit	A sentence with one pitch glide (a rise and fall in intonation) is an idea unit	Slash (to separate idea units where there is more than one per line)
1	Line	A line is a central idea or argument organised by meaning and intonation, akin to a sentence in writing. (A line may include a change of speaker).	Line /Line break
1	Focus	Words bearing pitch glide and therefore emphasised.	Capitals
1	Mainline content	Mainline part of plot / on plot	Underlining
1	Pauses	Break in speech	Brackets denoting length of pause



Re-transcribed section according to Gee (1991)

i. Interviewer , *f.* Participant F

Part 1 - The departure of L

Segments 22 and 23

Strophe 1 – Additional support of L starting to be withdrawn

Stanza 1 – started to 'get rid' of L

Stanza 2 – explanation why - days off as doing

Strophe 2 – L's leaving is determined

Stanza 3 – Recognition would have to go eventually

Stanza 4 – Weekend of Whitsun was last week

Strophe 3 – sadness at L's departure but knowledge she'll be back

Stanza 5 – Response - Didn't cry but sad to see her go

Stanza 6 – States knowledge that she'll be back

Stanza 7 – Reflection that been

Strophe 4 – Reduction in support from N since Year 7

Part 2 - Withdrawal of N's support

1 and since I was doing SCIENCE
2 LESSONS / and my ENGLISH and stuff / we'd have
3 STARTED TO (0.2) get rid of L
4 'cause I WAS, / LIKE, / just taking the DAY OFF each
5 TIME,
6 because I was doing (0.2) stuff in SCHOOL NOW I,
7 on MY OWN,
8 just 'cause, cause eventually she'd have HAD TO HAVE
9 gone anyway
10 'cause she's not supposed to be THERE FOR (0.2) a long
11 time, / she's not like a school STAFF MEMBER or anything.
12 So we STARTED / like TAKING a day OFF each time / and
13 I think just before the WEEKEND of WHITSUN,
14 which is MAY in'it
15 erm, I think THAT WEEK
16 that was the LAST WEEK / which was very SAD to be
17 HONEST,
18 I DIDN'T, / she CRIED, but I didn't cry though
19 I was TOUGH!
20 I didn't want TO CRY,
21 even though it was VERY SAD to see her go though, but,
22 I, I think SHE'LL BE BACK.
23 'Ardus *(sic)* won't HAVE HER though
24 but I KNOW she'll be BACK / FOR SURE,
25 and I think ALSO,
26 I've been SEEING N / and ALL the time FROM, / since the
27 year SEVENS to year NINE,
28 well, going into year TEN NOW,

Level 2: the discourse structure was mapped further using 'macro' tools to identify patterns of structure and meaning.

Table 3.2. A table to show the definitions and notation conventions of 'micro' (Level 1) and 'macro' (Level 2) linguistic tools used in Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004).

Level	Linguistic tool	Definition	Notation convention
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1	Focus	Words bearing pitch glide and therefore emphasised.	Capitals
1	Mainline content	Mainline part of plot / on plot	Underlining
1	Pauses	Break in speech	Brackets denoting length of pause
2	Line pattern: Stanza	Groups of lines with a common theme or point of view	Labelled as a stanza, with number and headline referring to content
2	Line pattern: Strophe	A related / thematically connected set of stanzas (usually a pair, but can be more)	Labelled as a strophe, with number and headline referring to content
2	Line pattern: Part	Thematically related strophes that constitute episodes / sections of the story	Labelled as a part, with number and headline referring to content



Level 3: the mainline of the plot (mainline content having been underlined during the first level of analysis) was distinguished from material off the main-line.

Mainline content (black underline)

Since increase in lessons, started to get rid of L, taking a day off each time. Her last week was just before weekend of Whitsun; he didn't cry but she did.

How it works:

Reinforces idea of progress, as progress in the form of increase in lessons leads to the reduction of support. Didn't cry as not sad – progress seen as positive?

Off the mainline content

Further explanation and detail

Reasoning to self that would have had to have happened eventually anyway

Sharing feelings

Desired responses - 'I didn't want to cry'

'I think' to 'I know' she'll be back – re-assuring himself

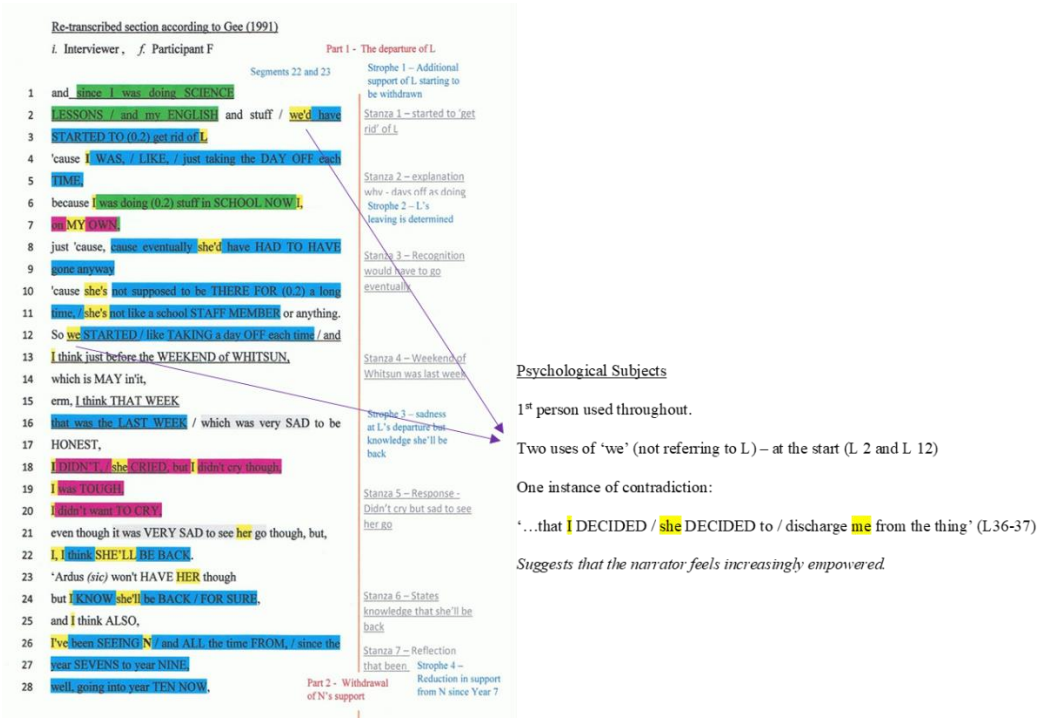
Reflection on progress, doing well

The work the mainline content is being put to

Highlights central role of progress and how it is affecting him.

Mainline emphasises the progress while off the mainline provides his response to it (his feelings, reasoning and reflections).

Level 4: The subject positions / points of view from which the material in a stanza is viewed were highlighted in yellow and considered, noting the grammatical subject of a main clause along with any relevant shifts in subject.



Level 5: The focused material (marked using capitals during the first level of analysis) within the overall structure of the narrative was considered in order to identify key images or themes.

Themes and imagery

Indicates happiness at progress and increased independence, but hesitancy and sadness around changes to reduce support. There appears to be an increase in self-confidence towards the end, as the narrator asserts that the support is no longer needed. The contradiction in the narrative also suggests increasing empowerment.

Overall theme – Progress

Themes of 'progress', 'consistency vs. change' and 'increasing independence and self-management' all overlap.

Progress – theme prominent at start and end of section.

Consistency vs. change – theme runs throughout.

Increasing independence and self-management – A more frequent theme towards end of the section as narrator assets that he no longer needs support.

Statements of emotional response - (Sadness and Happiness) associated with reduction of support. This theme does not overlap with others.

This level explores contradictory, fragmented elements of the narrative, using the headline labels of level 2 to suggest a structural organisation.

It also considers relations to situational and cultural discourses in seeking to reveal identity positioning.

Contradictions

Around ownership of decision to reduce support. (Key lines involving all themes).

'… I DECIDED / she DECIDED to / discharge me from the thing which is VERY / HAPPY / because (0.2) I don't need to SEE HER any MORE' (T2, L 36- 39)

Pauses

All around a reduction in L's support and her leaving.

'…we'd have STARTED TO (0.2) get rid of L …
because I was doing (0.2) stuff in SCHOOL NOW I,
on MY OWN' (T2, L 2- 7)

'…she's not supposed to be THERE FOR (0.2) a long time' (T2, L 10- 11)

'…because (0.2) I don't need to SEE HER any MORE' (T2, L38- 39)

Fragmented narrative

Around current reduction of support.

'I DIDN'T, / she CRIED, but I didn't cry though' (T2, L18)

'I've been SEEING N / and ALL the time FROM, / since the year SEVENS to year NINE' (T2, L26- 27)

Related situational and cultural discourse

The development of independence (the need for support to develop independence).

Stage 10 of the analysis process:

A summary of findings from the analysis process was produced.

Summary of analysis

This is a story about personal progress (increasing independence, inclusion and empowerment). It highlights the positive role of the decisions made by the narrator and of the support that he receives from others. Although an area of growth and development, the narrator appears to lack feelings of security and self-confidence (role of O in helping cope with school; use of 'I think…'; hesitancy around the reduction in formal support) and a secure self-knowledge. (Security and acceptance seem to come through identification of the self with others – identification with O and with cousin; diagnosis accepted as the narrator identifies that his relationship with his cousin (who has ASD) has the same nature as the relationship that his brother has with his friend (who both have ASD)).

Further illustration of how transcripts have been annotated and sections re-transcribed in applying the various stages of analysis can be found in Appendix I.

3.3.6 Additional considerations relating to dependability and credibility

In order to aid dependability, the analysis of all transcripts was carried out by the researcher, enabling consistency and therefore enhancing the positive contribution that researcher reflexivity can make (see 'Researcher Reflexivity' section, chapter 3.3.7). In addition to specifying analytic categories in terms of discernible features of the text (Table 3.2) and basing theoretical interpretations upon these structures, features specified by Mischler (1990) as being critical for the validation of narrative studies, the researcher further enhanced credibility by becoming familiar with each of the interpretational perspectives to be used in analysis. This was done through close reading of the work of Herman and Vervaeck (2001), Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) and Emerson and Frosh (2004), in addition to becoming familiar with exemplars of each perspective being applied in analysis.

Transparency of the analysis procedure is important if the rigour of NOI is to be upheld in the study. It is the over-arching concern in establishing the quality of qualitative research (Hiles, 2008). Transparency sought to be aided through the reflexivity of the researcher, such that the interpretations actively constructed were questioned, along with the interpretative process by which they came about (see 'Researcher Reflexivity' section, chapter 3.3.7). A further step to enhance transparency is through the inclusion of excerpts of narrative text used to illustrate analysis and support findings (see 'Results and Analysis', chapter 4). Member checks were also carried out wherein researcher understanding of the key points made through each participant's narrative were checked with them in age appropriate language. Indeed, Emerson and Frosh (2004) note that overinterpretation is a risk, but is better than misconstruing a discourse to be meaningless or impoverished, advising those analysing narratives to 'err on the side of overinterpretation' (p.62). Carrying out member checks therefore plays an important role in enhancing the credibility of research findings.

Emerson and Frosh (2004) note the impact that different ways of transcribing can have upon interpretation, and as such it is important to note that Gee's (1991) use of 'poetic' line breaks was selected over Labov's framework (Labov and

Fanshell, 1977) for its role in helping to raise the teller's experience and assumptions from within their own language use (Emerson and Frost, 2004). By contrast, Labov's framework (Labov and Fanshell, 1977) is at odds with Mishler (1986a, 1986b) and largely ignores transcribable linguistic and affective cues to instead promote the core plot (Emerson and Frosh, 2004).

3.3.7 Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is important in enhancing the transparency of qualitative research, promoting the credibility of the research study and the transferability of its outcomes. Clarity and transparency are aimed for in explanations of the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation used within this study, seeking to highlight the potential impact of the researcher. In aiming to identify and acknowledge the impact of the researcher, it is valuable to have an appreciation of researcher background and an awareness of study circumstance. The researcher is a 34-year-old White British female, who is on a Doctoral programme in Applied Educational Psychology. In addition to working with, and working to support, young people with ASD while on placement with an Educational Psychology Service (a significant part of the Doctoral programme), she was formerly a secondary school teacher. As a teacher, she worked to support the learning and development of a number of young people with ASD in a variety of different school settings as she taught Religious Education, Philosophy and Psychology. The researcher has also previously carried out research using a narrative methodology when completing an MSc dissertation which explored the therapeutic potential of blog writing in the development of a positive self-identity for individuals with ASD. This study, as thesis, is intended to contribute towards the award of Doctor of Applied Educational Psychology.

Yardley (2015) defines reflexivity as the explicit consideration of the various ways in which the researcher may have influenced the study. A detailed research diary has therefore been kept to promote reflection upon factors that may have had an impact upon the research process and outcomes, enabling explicit consideration of the decisions made (see appendix J).

3.3.8 Additional Ethical Considerations

While it was hoped that participants would find the opportunity to share their story with the researcher validating and cathartic, there was the risk that the personal, potentially negative content of their school career narrative may be upsetting to recall and share. Participants were therefore reminded at the start of the interview that they were free to withdraw at any point (appendix E), but as the interviews took place in their own home, there was the consideration that participants may not feel able to remove themselves from the situation with ease and may feel uncomfortable in asking the researcher to stop / leave. With this in mind, it was decided that the researcher would briefly leave the room before the interview commenced to allow the young person a chance to speak with their parent and to inform them about their willingness to participate. The parent would then inform the researcher as to the young person's willingness to participate. If the young person was still willing to participate, the researcher would return to the room to conduct the interview. If they were no longer willing to participate, the researcher would leave. A further consideration was that, should the researcher identify any signs of discomfort or distress during the interview, the participant would be offered the opportunity to stop, repeating the procedure outlined above with the parent conveying to the researcher the participant's willingness to continue the interview. It was also planned that, should the researcher identify that the participant has any difficulties or discomfort at having shared their experiences and taken part in the study, the participant would be provided with an information sheet signposting them to support information relevant to their particular difficulties or concerns and including the contact details of relevant support groups and organisations. It would also contain the website address of the National Autistic Society (for information on ASD more generally, and on local Autistic social groups and community services across the UK), the telephone number of the National Autistic Society Helpline and website addresses for the following on-line communities: 'Asperger's and ASD UK on-line forum'; 'Autism and Asperger's in the Family Support Forum'; and 'Talk about Autism'.

The risk that episodes described in excerpts of the transcript used to illustrate and support findings may enable other individuals to identify the participant through shared experience, also warrants additional ethical consideration. In order to guard

against this, it was decided that the researcher would be mindful of this risk and take it into consideration in selecting illustrative excerpts. Participants would also be informed that anonymised transcripts of their interview would be analysed, that anonymised excerpts may be used in the study write-up for illustrative purposes and that anonymised interview data including anonymised transcripts may be used in the future publication of the research study. Participants and their parents were therefore provided with a detailed information sheet describing what participation in the study would involve, specifically detailing these points (appendix C). The consent form also asked for confirmation that they had read and understood this information sheet (appendix D). Further ethical considerations in relation to the role of the researcher can be found in appendix K.

4 Results and Analysis

4.1 Section Overview

This section presents key findings from the analysis of each of the participant's narratives, raising the voices of the young people interviewed. Contextual information in relation to each participant, along with the findings from each narrative, will be presented in turn. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of participants. The analysis process is inclusive, building upon prior stages and drawing upon different interpretive perspectives. As such, for each narrative, findings will be presented in relation to The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998) and in relation to Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004), prior to the presentation of summative findings resulting from the completion of the analysis process. This approach to presenting findings aims to further enhance transparency, helping to show how findings have been generated out of the raw narrative data and demonstrating the contributions of the different interpretive perspectives used.

4.2 Liam's Narrative

4.2.1 Contextual information

Liam is a boy of 11 years and 10 months of age. He is of White British ethnicity and lives with his mother and younger brother. Liam has an Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and received a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome at 8 years, 0 months. According to his EHCP, areas of difficulty for Liam include: social communication, interaction and understanding of social situations; motivation and engagement; maintaining social relationships; emotional regulation and empathy; and wellbeing. Liam has received fixed-term school exclusions at both primary and secondary school. He receives a Teaching Assistant provision of 17 hours a week and has had involvement from Community Paediatrics, Educational Psychology, Clinical Psychology and a Local Authority service who work to promote the inclusion of young people who have a diagnosis of Autism within mainstream school settings.

The content of Liam's narrative focuses upon the nature of his character and his behaviour at school. In particular, he speaks about his experience of being moved to new tutor groups and of getting into trouble. He also speaks of his debating skills.

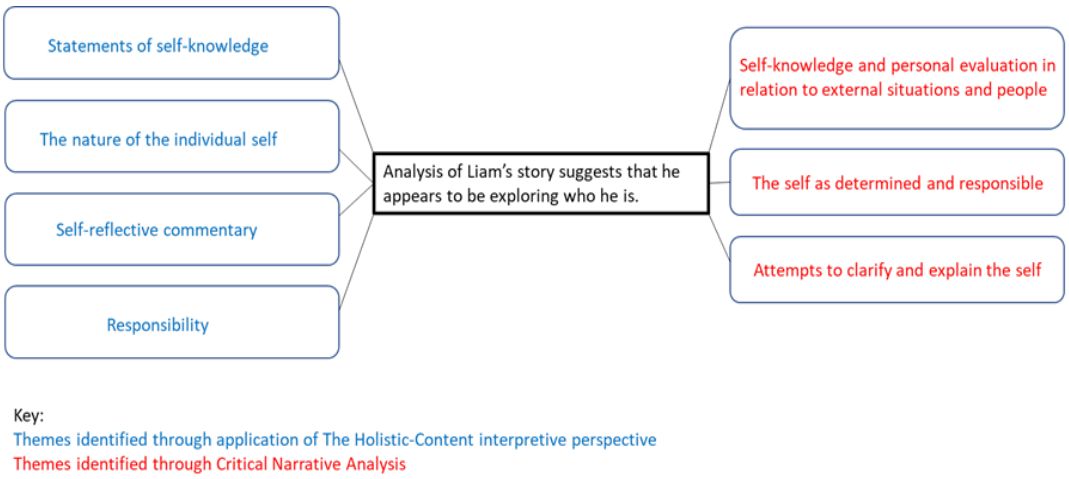


Figure 2. An overview of the themes identified in relation to Liam's story

4.2.2 Findings in relation to The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective

Liam's narrative gave an initial global impression of being an introspective and reflective story, often making use of the phrase, '…to be honest…' (L 158). Indeed, the account appears honest, open and self-descriptive, he states, 'I find it hard to trust in others' (L 340). It appeared to be a story about self-understanding and self-efficacy as, through the story, Liam appears to be exploring who he is and the extent to which this is determined, being fixed and outside of his control. 'It's mostly me getting in trouble…it's me being me. Not really me, but merely being a jerk.' (L 187-189). This contradiction indicates an uncertainty as he considers what he is like. He also integrates and questions other people's perceptions of him: '…I tend to have, apparently I have a sense, a good sense of humour according to some people (L 208-210).

In his story, Liam asserts his nature using phrases that have a tone of resignation, for example stating, '…it's just my, how I am' (L 174); 'It's just my logic, basically' (L 149-150); 'It's sort of a me thing…' (L 329). Predominantly speaking in the first person, there are occasions when the third person is used, such as when he is reflecting upon actions that have caused him difficulty at school: '…it

happens to me during movies as well about every five minutes he has to comment…' (L 198-199). In this way, Liam appears to position himself as a passive force in his own life. His speech at this point is preceded by two long pauses which perhaps suggest a discomfort or difficulty. However, it does not look like he has given-up, as he considers explaining his behaviour to school: '…I'm going to actually tell, I think I might actually tell school it's not me being…just me being…it's something I do…' (L 202-204). Accordingly, Liam seems to be exploring the nature of his individual self and the extent to which this is determined.

The narrative also expresses an apparent need to feel secure and superior: '…I see that as a threat, predatory, and I'm the sort of person… who wants to be on top…' (L 382-384). This is alternated with a vulnerability: 'I'm rather a sensitive person emotionally. I can be very easily upset…' (L 361-362), and a trusting confidence: '…I'm going to actually tell.' (L 202). This suggests that Liam may be desiring the security that can come from greater self-understanding. Indeed, Liam's story seems to convey a passive resignation: 'It's sort of a thing there, it's just my, how I am' (L 174), accompanied by a hopeful desire to be a 'good person' (L 344-345). He notes that school's actions can be unhelpful: '…it wasn't done properly and I wasn't happy about it' (L 90). However, the tone of the story is both accepting and hopeful: 'To be a good, truly amazing debater I'd need to learn how to choose the things that are relevant to the debate…' (L 300-301). As narrator, Liam takes responsibility: 'I was quite the trouble maker' (L 76), but also recognises the role of school in difficulties that he has faced: '…I see some of them as my fault and others the school's partial fault…school do certain things to…pump me up…' (L 353-357). He identifies areas for improvement: '…I'm discrimitive [*sic*] against them…it's basically prejudice…I'm not happy or proud about it…' (L 176-180), and questions his strengths: '…I'm very good in debates… (L 237) …I don't think I'd make a good debater…' (L 296-297). While few self-identified strengths are mentioned in his story, Liam does share those noted by others: '…apparently I have a sense, a good sense of humour according to some people' (L 208-210) and acknowledges his good intentions: '…I'm trying to be a good person…' (L 344-345).

Key themes identified across Liam's story also suggest that his story is about exploring his understanding of himself. Four key themes were identified: statements of self-knowledge; the nature of the individual self; self-reflective commentary; and responsibility. The first theme, that of 'statements of self-knowledge', highlighted

that the narrative contained a greater range and number of statements relating to difficulties and dislikes compared to abilities and likes. Difficulties were found to often be regarded as having always been the case: '…PE's always been my weak point…' (L 26). Positive statements made by Liam about himself were tentative and qualified, conveying a hesitancy and uncertainty: 'I try to look on both sides of the argument, sometimes.' (L 236). The second theme, 'the nature of the individual self', also identified that Liam often speaks tentatively of his self-knowledge, appearing unsure: 'I've been told a lot that I'm…' (L 237). At times he presents himself as being unique and different: '…it's just my logic, basically.' (L 149-150). This theme also identified that he appears to regard aspects of himself as determined: '…it's just a fact that I…' (L 264-265), and suggests that Liam feels that he lacks control: '…I'm on the edge constantly…' (L 428). Indeed, the third theme of 'self-reflective commentary' also indicates that feelings of insecurity are being experienced, with commentary being used by Liam to explain difficulties that he is having: '…erm I'm awful at explaining.' (L 5). The final theme identified was 'responsibility'. Within this theme Liam can be seen to regard himself as someone who gets into trouble: '…I was quite the troublemaker…' (L 76). It appears that he is not proud of aspects of his behaviour and sees such aspects as determined: '…take the mick out of people and that sort of thing. I don't see that as a good quality about me but…it's just who I am. (L 268-270). He takes responsibility: '…it's completely not the school's fault, that is, it's me…merely being a jerk.' (L 188-189), but later also attributes some responsibility to his school: '…supply teachers and teachers I really don't like have always been the main cause of it. To be honest I see some of them as my fault and others the school's partial fault…' (L 351-354). Liam can therefore be seen to illustrate uncertainty as to the level of responsibility held by himself and by school, again suggesting that his story is exploring his self-understanding.

4.2.3 Findings in relation to Critical Narrative Analysis

In segments 14-16 of Liam's narrative, the segments selected for re-transcription according to Gee (1991) (see 'Plan of Analysis' section for segment selection criteria, chapter 3.3.4) and referred to as the second transcript (T2), the mainline content works to highlight discrepancy between the external world and the internal world of the narrator. The mainline content starts by considering the external as Liam speaks of his

behaviour and behavioural patterns: ‘Getting into quite a bit of trouble, a lot of trouble…it was worse at the start of the year…’ (T2, L3-5). There is then a move to content that focuses on the internal world, as Liam considers his nature and evaluates his responsibility for his behaviour, concluding that his behaviour is not a true reflection of himself: ‘…it's me being me. Not really me, but merely being a jerk.’ (T2, L 57-58). The content then moves to focus again on the external, as Liam explains his behaviour and recognises a potential need to share such explanations with his teachers: ‘…I might actually tell school it's not me being…just me being (*inaudible*) to the teachers, it's something I do…’ (T2, L 76-79). Content off the mainline also includes explanation as well as elaborative comments, reinforcing the idea that Liam feels an apparent need to explain about himself to others. ‘Oh, blank then trying to think of something to say, I don’t know why I froze in places…’ (T2, L 17-18). In this way, the mainline content reinforces that the narrative is being used to explore the nature of the self, as understood by Liam himself and by others.

Analysis of the psychological subjects (the subject positions / points of view of the narrative) used in segments 14-16 of Liam’s narrative revealed that initial claims to self-knowledge: ‘…it’s me being me.’ (T2, L 57), give way to a passive view of the self: ‘It happens to me…’ (T2, L 70), and a distancing of the self from the behaviour through commenting on the self in the third person. ‘Every five minutes he has to comment on something one of the characters does, I’m like, it’s just a habit sort of thing.’ (T2, L 71-73). The section ends with an affirmation of self-knowledge: ‘It’s not me being…’ (T2, L 77), and an apparent integration of the views of others into the view of the self: ‘I tend to have, apparently I have a sense, a good sense of humour according to some people.’ (T2, L 85-86). Findings from analysis of the psychological subjects used in the narrative can therefore also be seen to support the view of Liam’s narrative as being about self-understanding, functioning as an exploration of who he is.

The themes identified in segments 14-16 of Liam’s narrative also support this view. Three key themes were found: self-knowledge and personal evaluation in relation to external situations and people; the self as determined and responsible; and attempts to clarify and explain the self. Under the first theme, ‘self-knowledge and personal evaluation in relation to external situations and people’, quantifiers were regularly used: ‘I’ve been rather unkind to some people for a good majority of the year, which I’m not proud of.’ (T2, L 13-15). There was also some contradiction and

fragmentation in the narrative: 'Getting into quite a bit of trouble, a lot of trouble, not quite a bit...' (T2, L 3-4). The second theme, 'the self as determined and responsible', also contained some fragmentation: '…it's completely not the school's fault, that is, it's me being me.' (T2, L 56-57), as did the third theme, 'attempts to clarify and explain the self': 'But it's sort of, I wouldn't class…' (T2, L 16). This theme also demonstrated uncertainty through its content: '…it is that, it is that, isn't it.' (T2, L 41). Indeed, the thematic consideration of segments 14-16 of the narrative enable it to be seen that Liam appears to be trying to produce a coherent narrative around the apparent discrepancy between the internal self and his external behaviour as he explores his nature and attempts to better understand himself and his responsibility in relation to his behaviour. 'It's mostly me getting in trouble as I said earlier, and it's completely not the school's fault, that is, it's me being me. Not really me, but merely being a jerk.' (T2, L 54-47).

4.2.4 Summative findings

In his story, Liam appears to be exploring who he is. Analysis of Liam's narrative reveals a difference between how he sees himself and the ideal of how he would like to be: '…I'm discrimitive (*sic*)…its basically prejudice…I'm not happy or proud about it, it's how I work' (T2, L39-46). He appears not to want to be causing trouble but sees the self as determined, fixed and unable to change. Indeed, his experiences at school seem to be accentuating his difficulty in establishing a coherent, enhanced understanding of himself that marries his behaviour with who he feels he is, leaving him confused as to his level of responsibility regarding his behaviour at school. Accordingly, Liam seems to be finding it difficult to recognise his strengths and qualities and shows uncertainty as to the nature of his true self, as further illustrated by expressions of insecurity in the narrative.

A member check carried out with Liam confirmed that he feels insecure and that he feels that his experience of school is enhancing difficulties for him although, he voiced a joint responsibility when it came to getting into trouble at school. He agreed that he found it hard to identify his strengths and qualities but disagreed with the finding that he would like to be different, stating that he is happy with who he is. He also disagreed with the finding that he considers the self to be determined, saying that he could change what he is like if he wanted to, although it would not be easy.

Differences between member check responses and the findings from the analysis of the narrative may be due to the impact of individual self-awareness, a desire to appear secure and confident, or due to the influence of Liam's Mother being present during the member check meeting, at his request (see appendix J for further consideration). It will also be important to critically consider the analysis procedure (see 'Discussion Part 2.', chapters 6.3.4 and 6.3.5). However, that there is a discrepancy in findings relating to self-identity from the analysis compared to those from the member check, is itself of interest in learning more about self-identity. Not least, it raises questions in relation to conscious awareness and the ability to self-reflect upon self-identity (see 'Discussion Part 2.', chapter 6.3.6).

4.3 Edward's Narrative

4.3.1 Contextual information

Edward is a young man of 16 years and 9 months of age. He is of White British ethnicity and lives with his mother. Edward has an Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and received a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome at 7 years, 8 months. According to his EHCP, areas of difficulty for Edward include: social interaction and communication; flexibility of thought; and behaviour. Edward is entitled to a Teaching Assistant provision of 25 hours a week and has had involvement from Community Paediatrics, Clinical Psychology, Educational Psychology, Behavioural Support Services and a Local Authority service who work to promote the inclusion of young people who have a diagnosis of Autism within mainstream school settings.

Following a reluctance to attend school in Year 8, Edward received a bespoke timetable at secondary school. In Year 8 he worked predominantly at home with the support of his mother, going into school twice a week to attend a one-to-one session with a staff member and to take part in an after-school GCSE class. In Year 9 Edward attended school for 10 hours a week, taking a GCSE class and an AS class. In Year 10 Edward attended school full-time, continuing to attend the A-level lessons in order to take his A2 examination, and attending classes to take a further 11 GCSEs. He also had sessions of self-directed study. Having achieved his GCSEs, Edward joined Year 12 the following academic Year (a year ahead of his

chronological age) to attend the school sixth form on a full-time timetable without any bespoke provision.

The content of Edward's narrative focuses upon his experience of his bespoke timetable; his classes and timetabled sessions, the curriculum and his academic performance. He also speaks about his teachers and the behaviour of his peers. At the end of his narrative, Edward additionally talks about misunderstanding in relation to the concept of a person being Autistic.

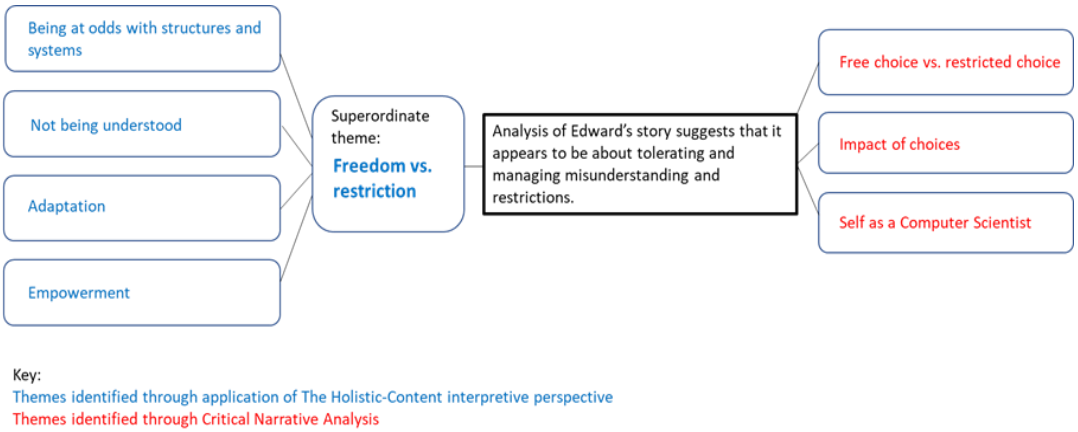


Figure 3. An overview of the themes identified in relation to Edward's story

4.3.2 Findings in relation to The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective

Edward's is a long narrative that gave an initial global impression of being reflective and insightful: '…pressures of the school in secondary were considerably larger mainly because the teachers dealt with their students on an industrial scale…from my primary school I was so used to being dealt with on a really personal level…' (L 119-122). Edward also demonstrates reflective practice in his narrative through regular fragmentation at the start of sentences, where a number of different starts are made before one is continued. Additionally, there is much sjuzet, with some segments of the narrative being almost entirely sjuzet, as Edward often shares his thoughts, reflections and past conversations: '…it slightly spooked the examiner when I got up to walk out, er, and she said, "are you sure you're done, are you really sure?" Yes, yes, I was sure, erm, and, a few, a few months later it was confirmed that I actually was done and I hadn't been hallucinating…' (L691-695).

The story has a tone of endurance and resilience: '…they've never encountered someone who's ready to ask questions when they don't get it, and what

they see is stupidity, erm, they've, they've learned now, because I got decent results…' (L 1106-1109). Edward appears self-assured and recognises his own confidence: '…because I've gone round the cycle more than once, I have, well, honestly a cocky attitude, but it's the attitude everyone gets in the end...' (L 1111-1113). However, Edward also appears to be very conscious of being misunderstood. Being aware that his story is going to be analysed as part of this study, he states at the start of his narrative that, '…the discipline of psychology has in the past had a notable tendency to over analyse small traits that are in reality entirely unimportant and random, not every aspect of my behaviour and, or, speech, is going to reflect some deeper meaning…' (L 6-10). In clarifying meaning throughout the narrative, he overtly speaks of the communicative gestures and facial expressions that accompany his words but are unavailable to the recording: '…the recorder can't see the face I'm making here, it's a slightly, it's a slightly humorously exaggerated confused face…' (L 584-585). Such clarification is highly relevant in light of the initial global impression, which suggests that Edward's story is about tolerating and managing misunderstanding and restrictions: '…they didn't put me in a year twelve form this time, they've actually got me in the same form year as the year that I was studying in, thank you school, thank you, eventually you worked this out.' (L 1130-1133). He states, '…everyone else would be in non-uniform, our sixth form is a non-uniform sixth form, but I would be in uniform because I was in year, year nine, so I would get kicked out …so I eventually, I put up a petition to the Head Teacher…' (L 270-275).

Edward seems to present himself as being different, at odds with the structures and systems of school: '… The teachers were not very thrilled about me going off-piste with these things, they felt really uncomfortable because they wanted everyone to be stamped out identical copies of each other, clearly, but, considering I turned both of them into A stars I think they were fine…' (L 726-730). At times, he appears to feel alienated: '…I was still kind of the outcast because I was younger than everyone else and I was a nerd…' (L971-972), and he can be seen to creatively adapt and use the opportunities available to empower himself: '…so I, I, turned that into something different that was far more interesting, er, you describe a busy crossroads, well they never said it had to be a modern crossroads, just because everyone else did…those were my two A star pieces…'(L 722-731).

A key superordinate theme identified across Edward's story was that of 'freedom vs. restriction'. Edwards states, '…the first time in my life I had a list of subjects… I looked at the list and I realised because I hadn't had the chance to choose things I was interested in…I didn't have GCSE's in any of these things, and, that was depressing, so very quickly I could cross a lot of those off the list…' (L 930-937). Four subordinate themes were identified: being at odds with structures and systems; not being understood; adaptation; and empowerment. These themes can be seen to support the suggestion that Edward's story is about tolerating and managing restrictions and misunderstanding. The first theme of, 'being at odds with structures and systems', was the most frequently occurring subordinate theme, co-occurring at points with all other themes. With a timetable comprising of classes across different year groups, Edward appears to be at odds with the school year group structure: '…year ten which was also year thirteen and year eleven from my point of view and also slightly year twelve…' (L 446-447). His actions can also be seen to be at odds with systems used by the school: '…the final exams, I refused to learn a, an essay for the final subject matter and decided to do what the exams should actually expect us to do, which is go in blind and rely on my German speaking ability, because I thought, it felt too much like cheating…' (L 420-424). This theme highlighted a range of structures and systems imposed upon Edward: '…I also got dumped into some year eleven, so one year ahead of what I should be in…' (L 455-456). It can therefore be seen to directly relate to the superordinate theme of 'freedom vs. restriction'.

The second theme, 'not being understood', was found to co-occur at points with the theme of 'being at odds with structures and systems' and with that of 'adaptation': '…ah, there must be a link between you wearing non-school uniform, you must feel more comfortable, no, no, as time progressed I got better and better at dealing with you…' (L 287-290). Most notably within this theme, Edward begins his story with the caveat, '…not every single aspect of my behaviour and, or, speech, is going to reflect some deeper meaning…' (L 8-10), appearing concerned about being overinterpreted. At points in the narrative he also takes care to clarify his meaning: '…because of the stigma around Autism and the inability to understand metaphor, if I say something like, "I chased him down" this will be…taken literally…no, no, I, metaphorically, in the metaphorical sense chased him down…' (L 69-73). The narrative ends with Edward explaining that there is misunderstanding that exists

around the very concept of a person being Autistic: '…It's not that some people will get something wrong with them that separates them from reality, it's that some people are like this…I don't feel like there is some obfuscating layer separating me from reality, I feel like I am me and because I have certain character traits you label me in a certain way…' (L 1193-1199). He appears to feel that there is a need to defensively assert his position: 'We don't want to be cured.' (L 1232). This suggests that he feels misunderstood.

The third theme, 'adaptation', highlights the range of ways that Edward has adapted to his school and the challenges that he has faced: '…it took me a long time to integrate into that class because there was a massive age gap, er, but I eventually did…' (L 353-355). In addition to adapting to take classes across year groups, he speaks of adapting to restricted subject choices: '…so I didn't get to take that, er, in, instead I picked up Psychology…' (L 946-947), and to curriculum demands: '…so, I, I, turned that into something more interesting…The teachers were not very thrilled about me going off-piste with these things…' (L 722-726). He also adapts to restrictive changes to education policy: '…. I needed to stay in full time education somewhere and so I thought, okay, next two years I'll go to sixth form college, erm, I will, I will farm some more UCAS points, do some more A levels until I can get into a university…and then go to that so I can still be in education until I eventually turn eighteen…' (L 833-838). Throughout this theme there are only two instances of his school adapting to Edward: through the generation of a more personalised timetable, '…the school tried to do a bunch of things at me, and I must say at rather than with…they said okay the classes you're going to participate in are A level…' (L 185-191); and through staff adaptation, '…they've never encountered someone who's ready to ask questions when they don't get it, and what they see is stupidity, erm, they've, they've learned now…' (L 1106-1108). This theme of 'adaptation' can therefore be seen to co-occur at points with the theme of, 'being at odds with structures and systems', as does the fourth theme identified, that of 'empowerment'.

The theme of 'empowerment' appears to relate to efforts to be heard, managing systems and removing barriers to aid achievement: '…I thought…taking this till the end of the year, will only waste my time more, I will not be able to get an AS out of it. So I'm going to drop it…in the end I just said, look, Miss, I'm a sixth former now, you cannot order me to come into lessons any more I'm sorry I'm dropping the subject…' (L994-1001). Consideration of these themes can therefore be

seen to demonstrate a superordinate theme of ‘freedom vs. restriction’. Examination of the themes supports the view that Edward’s story is about tolerating and managing misunderstanding and restrictions.

4.3.3 Findings in relation to Critical Narrative Analysis

Segment 31 of Edward’s narrative was the segment selected for re-transcription according to Gee (1991) (see ‘Plan of Analysis’ section for segment selection criteria, chapter 3.3.4), referred to as the second transcript (T2). Within this segment the mainline content works to highlight the impact of circumstances upon Edward, in particular, how restrictions are making him feel and how they are impacting upon his choices, actions and outcomes. The mainline content begins with an apparent choice: ‘…this is the first time I had a choice about what to study.’ (T2, L 4-5). There is then a move to the restricted reality: ‘…so very quickly I could cross a lot of those off the list while looking mournfully at them and wishing I could take them.’ (T2, L 42-44). The mainline content ends with Edward adapting to the situation by using a rational tool to help him to select subjects to study in light of his preferences being unavailable: ‘With those that were left, erm, I then looked at them for a long time and thought how do I choose…decided to do a computer scientist’s trick which I had learned…I performed what’s called a Bubble Sort *(a sorting, computer algorithm*).’ (T2, L45-54). In this way, restrictions upon him can be seen to have an impact upon his choices, how he makes those choices and the outcomes. Content off the mainline promotes how restrictions are making Edward feel, as he shares his reactions and feelings. With the subject of Maths having been selected by the Bubble Sort, he remarks, ‘I hate Maths, it’s really annoying. I don’t want to have to study it ever again but I need to do it…’ (T2, L 68-72). He also gives examples and elaboration which work to provide further insight into his feelings: ‘…there were the two A Levels which I could choose not to take and not have (*one word inaudible*), you know, there was never a, you can take this or this…’ (T2, L 21-26).

Analysis of the psychological subjects (the subject positions / points of view of the narrative) used in segment 31 of Edward’s narrative suggests that Edward sees himself as being different to others and that his current self-perceived identity may be different to his preferences. In speaking of the Bubble Sort tool, there is a shift in psychological subject away from the ‘I’ of the narrator. The Bubble Sort is

positioned as being at odds with what a 'normal person' would have done. The 'I' of the narrator is then aligned with the Bubble Sort as a 'Computer Science person' (T2, L 62), additionally referred to as a 'nerd' (T2, L 64) and used as an explanation by the narrator as to why he has few friends. '…a normal person would have just looked at them for a long time and then ordered them, but I'm the Computer Science person, so I did a Bubble Sort, I'm a nerd, yeah. Erm, this is why I have few friends.' (T2, L 60-66). The Bubble Sort is then positioned at odds with the narrator before Edward appears to concede and accept the Bubble Sort outcome: '…the Bubble Sort had ended up with Maths, I hate Maths, it's really annoying I don't want to have to study it ever again but I need to do it, so I'm going to put it at the top…' (T2, L 68-72). It can therefore be seen that Edward appears to see himself as being different to others, with indication that his perceived identity may be different to his preferences. This once again highlights the impact of restrictions upon him.

The themes identified in segment 31 of Edward's narrative also relate to the impact of restrictions upon him, not least upon how he sees himself. Three themes were identified: free choice vs. restricted choice; impact of choices; and self as a Computer Scientist. In the first theme, 'free choice vs. restricted choice', Edward highlights that he has not had real free choice: '…I don't want to have to study it ever again but I need to do it…' (T2, L 71-72). The second theme of 'impact of choices' makes it apparent that the choices that Edward has been able to make have not enabled his desired outcomes: 'I realised because I hadn't had the chance to choose things that I was interested in I didn't have a GCSE in Drama, darn it, didn't have a GCSE in History, didn't have a GCSE in Geography, didn't have a GCSE in…' (T2, L 29-36). The third theme, 'self as a Computer Scientist', sees Edward use a Computer Science tool that he has learnt to aid him in considering his choices: 'how do I choose…decided to do a Computer Scientist's trick which I had learned during my Computer Science thing…' (T2, L 48-53). It also shows Edward to be exploring his identity as a Computer Science person: '…a normal person would have just looked at them for a long time and then ordered them, but I'm the Computer Science person, so I did a Bubble Sort…' (T2, L 60-63). Through these themes, Edward appears to be exploring his freedom of choice, past and present, and the impact that this has had upon him and his self-identity.

4.3.4 Summative findings

Edward's story appears to be about tolerating and managing misunderstanding and restrictions. Edward seems to be restricted and at odds with the structures and systems of school, having to adapt and use the opportunities and learning available to him to assertively empower himself. He reflects upon his restricted freedom of choice and explores the impact that this has had upon outcomes for him and in shaping who he is.

A member check carried out with Edward confirmed these findings, although Edward commented that he did not feel that he had done anything significant in empowering himself and felt that the need to adapt in light of restrictions particularly related to his career path.

4.4 Faith's Narrative

4.4.1 Contextual information

Faith is a young lady of 16 years and 8 months of age. She is of White British ethnicity. Faith lives with her mother, her older and younger brothers, her older sister, her sister's partner and her niece. Faith has an Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and received a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at 13 years, 2 months. According to her EHCP, areas of difficulty for Faith include: social communication, interaction and understanding of social situations; building and maintaining positive relationships; and emotional wellbeing. Faith receives a Teaching Assistant provision of 15 hours a week and has had involvement from Community Paediatrics, Educational Psychology, Clinical Psychology and a Local Authority service who work to promote the inclusion of young people who have a diagnosis of Autism within mainstream school settings.

The content of Faith's narrative focuses upon the interactions that she has experienced with school staff. In particular, she speaks of the conflict that she experienced with one of her English Teachers and the support that she received from other staff in relation to this, as well as in relation to difficulties that she had following the loss of her friend and the loss of her dog.

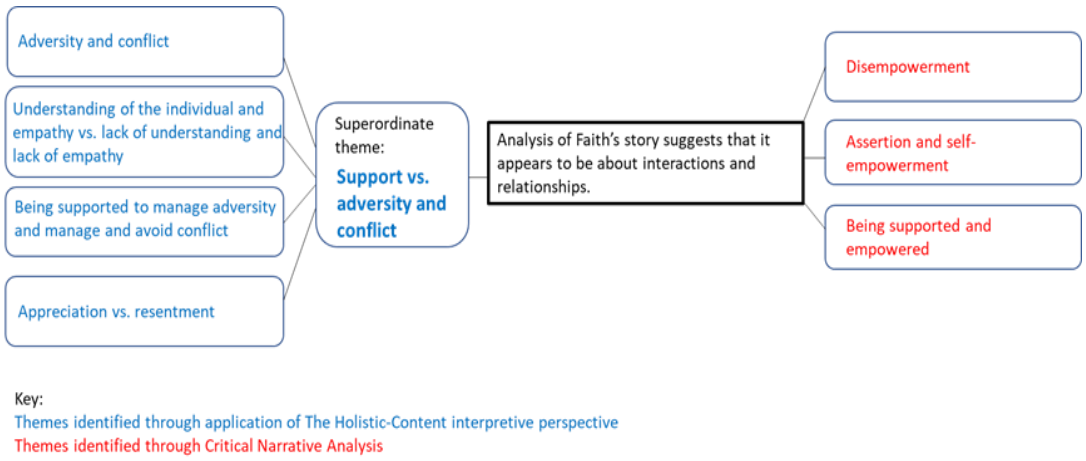


Figure 4. An overview of the themes identified in relation to Faith's story

4.4.2 Findings in relation to The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective

Faith's long narrative gave an initial global impression of being inconsistent in shape, having high and low points. Within the narrative, considerable space is given to a day in Year 11 where conflict with, and support from, school staff are both illustrated (segments 20-24). However, despite involving adversity, the story as a whole maintains a positive tone and evaluations of school are positive. Faith states, '…they (*school*) didn't give up on me when I said I don't want to come back here again…they didn't give up on me when I lost dog, my dog, or B, they didn't give up on me once, in fact they, they pushed me further and further out, and, they were just incredible.' (L 1046-1051).

Faith's story appears disjointed in places, with false starts and grammatical errors making the narrative difficult to follow: '…I said, "no," I said, I said, "did she told me [*sic*] that I was like, did she, she [*sic*] tell you that I was outside the room until five to twelve, no," I said, "I was, so I didn't come in until five to..."' (L 566-569). There are some apparent contradictions: '…I just said, "why are you, why are you annoyed with Miss? you should be annoyed with me, I am going, I'm not, so it's not Miss."' (L 243-245). At times, episodes are confused, as identified by Faith later in the narrative: '…sorry no, in year nine I lost my friend and in year ten I lost my dog so I've got completely mixed up, I'm so sorry.' (L 881-883).

The narrative is distinctive as Faith speaks in the first person for herself as well as for others, recalling interactions in terms of what was said: '…I said, "you left me outside." "No I didn't." I said, "yes you did". And then she said, erm, "look, I

don't like conflict." I said, “if you were a proper English teacher this is confrontation not conflict…”’ (L 544- 547). Within the narrative the frequent use of, ‘Sort of’ and ‘like’ without more specific explanation, also leads to the consideration that this distinctive approach to story-telling could possibly be a communicative tool in relation to potential difficulties with expressive language, as opposed to a selected narrative style: ‘…I went in with it sort of, something like, oh I've done it a year, I've done a year now so I may as well do another one.’ (L 10-12).

However, such a distinctive approach, if it was an intentionally adopted narrative style, would appear relevant, as Faith’s narrative appears to be a story about interactions and relationships. Specifically, interactions and relationships centred around the need for understanding and support in order to manage adversity and conflict. She states, ‘“…don't let her ruin your year of hard work…'cause you've done amazing,” so she said, “all you've got to do is just… let her apologise”…she said, “if you don't want to go back… I'll have you as my group”…I said, “thank you so much Miss”…them words just meant everything…’ (L 634-641). In this way, Faith can be seen to express feelings of appreciation for receiving understanding and support: ‘…even when days were tough she was the, the one person I knew I would always be able to count on, that, that was always going to be there for me…I will never forget what that woman did for me…’ (L 908-913).

Accordingly, a superordinate theme of ‘support vs. adversity and conflict’ was identified across Faith’s story. ‘…I looked at my friend and my friend just looked right reassured me…she (*teacher*) looked me from the bottom of my feet to the top of my toes, head…I thought…this is gonna [*sic*] go wrong, quickly, and then she said, erm, “I want an apology also,” I said, “for what?” and that was it, I snapped…’ (L 645-653). The four subordinate themes identified were: adversity and conflict; understanding of the individual and empathy vs. lack of understanding and lack of empathy; being supported to manage adversity and manage and avoid conflict; and appreciation vs. resentment.

The first theme, that of ‘adversity and conflict’ can be seen to co-occur at points with a lack of understanding and empathy, and with resentment. ‘…she said, “for those who want to work, ignore the stupid people,” that was it, I erupted…I said, “you’re nasty, what was the need for that?” And she just went, “continuing”… she wasn’t a nice woman and I didn’t like her.’ (L 482-487). Whereas this theme is not introduced into the story until segment 8, the second theme, ‘understanding of

the individual and empathy vs. lack of understanding and lack of empathy', runs throughout the narrative. Within this second theme, understanding and empathy frequently co-occur with support: '"I'm going to ask your Mum to take you to the doctors because losing your dog has really, actually, it's hurt you…"' (L 183-185). Such occurrences receive appreciation from Faith: '"…Dr J saw you earlier on and she said that this is what she was gonna [*sic*] do"…I was like, that's just so thoughtful…you knew I was in a bad mood and that's just lovely for you to think of me.' (L 516- 521). By contrast, a lack of understanding and empathy often co-occurs with conflict: '…I was on a really bad day…I was in a mood, I didn't feel very well, everything with my dog was being racked up…as the bell went I walked in, "you're late," I said, "do not start" and she said, "out"…' (L 449-463).

The third theme of 'being supported to manage adversity and manage and avoid conflict' highlights the support that Faith received from some of her teachers: '…then Miss Se came out…and she was like, I know how wicked you are at English, she said, "don't let her ruin it, don't let her ruin your year of hard work…all you've got to do is just…let her apologise, and then go back in the room…"' (L 632-637). Faith comments, '…they were just so understanding, and they sent me home when I wanted, they allowed me in school when I needed to be, they listened to me when I needed it, and they kicked me up the bum sometimes when I needed it as well…' (L 418-421). In this way, this theme can be seen to co-occur with episodes of understanding and empathy. Faith also receives support to help her to manage and avoid conflict from her friend, A: '"…I've been sent out," she said, "sit on the stair don't, don't shout back," and A was quite clever, she put a piece of paper near the door so the door wasn't shut properly and she said, "as soon as I hear you shouting I'll come straight out."' (L 464- 468).

The fourth theme, that of 'appreciation vs. resentment' is the most frequently occurring theme and runs throughout the narrative. '…she was…horrible to Miss G which I didn't like, because no one could be horrible to G 'cause I just adored her…I said, "you're annoyed because you're not getting your own way…I need you to actually help me and support me," I said, "that's all I need…"' (L 240- 249).

Findings from analysis of the themes therefore suggests that understanding and empathy are associated with support and appreciation, while a lack of understanding and empathy is associated with conflict and resentment. This appears to support the view that Faith's story is about interactions and relationships, centred

around the need for understanding and support in order to manage adversity and conflict.

4.4.3 Findings in relation to Critical Narrative Analysis

Segment 26 of Faith's narrative was the segment selected for re-transcription according to Gee (1991) (see 'Plan of Analysis' section for segment selection criteria, chapter 3.3.4), referred to as the second transcript (T2). Within this segment the mainline content works to highlight the role of power. Faith appears to be afforded empowerment by some members of school staff and can be seen to be put in a disempowering position by others. Indeed, the mainline content begins with Faith setting her terms and asserting herself: '…she said, "so come to my staff room tomorrow break time"…I said, "okay," I said, "but all I want off her is sorry"…I said, "I just need to eat before please"…and she…said, "okay go and get something to eat."' (T2, L 8-25). Faith appears to be placed in a disempowering position by Miss H: '…I just glanced up and she looked me from the bottom of my feet to the top of my toes, head.' (T2, L 62-63), before the segment ends with attempts to reassert and empower herself. '…I said… "I am not going in that room with her," and I walked away…' (T2, L 71-82).

The mainline content demonstrates that Faith has positive relationships with members of staff who allow her to empower herself: '…she said, "if you don't want to go back come to my classroom I'll have you as my group"…I said, "thank you so much Miss…"' (T2, L 45-50). It also shows that conflict occurs with staff members who seem to place her in positions of disempowerment: '…then she said… "I want an apology also," I said, "for what?"…I snapped…' (T2, L 71-75). The off mainline content compliments the mainline content, emphasising the positive impact of knowledge and understanding in empowerment. The off mainline content in the selected segment initially shows Faith's recognition of the knowledge and understanding that others have of her: 'she knew that if she pushed me any further I wouldn't have accepted the apology, so she just left it at that…' (T2, L 17-19). It then appears to demonstrate Faith's self-knowledge and understanding: '…I will not be able to keep myself calm if I'm on my own, so I took my friend with me…' (T2, L 28-30). Both forms of knowledge and associated understanding having a positive impact upon her empowerment and relationships with others: '…them words just

meant everything, so I thought…for Miss S to have a quiet life…I will go in and I will listen to her (*Miss H*).' (T2, L 51-56).

Analysis of the psychological subjects (the subject positions / points of view of the narrative) used in segment 26 of Faith's story, suggests that she could benefit from further, enhanced, self-knowledge and understanding, aiding the development of a more coherent narrative. In the narrative, Faith speaks in the first person for herself as well as for others, such that the first-person speaker is not always Faith. '…and then she said, erm, "I want an apology also," I said, "for what?"' (T2, L 71-74). There is therefore a lack of consistency in the psychological subjects of the story. Analysis of the psychological subjects also reveals that the second-person pronoun, 'you', is frequently used when narrating the speech of those members of school staff whom Faith appears to like and respect. For Miss Se, who appears to be highly regarded by Faith: 'so I thought you know what, for Miss Se… to have a quiet life… I will go in, and I will listen…' (T2, L 53-56), this second-person pronoun can be seen to be frequently used when her speech is conveyed: 'I know how wicked you are at English…"don't let her ruin your year of hard work…'cause you've done amazing…all you've got to do is…if you don't want to…I'll have you as my group."' (T2, L 38-47). This serves to highlight Faith's awareness that certain members of staff are considerate of her, reinforcing the idea that Faith's story is about the value of being understood and subsequently, supported.

The themes identified in segment 26 of Faith's narrative relate to empowerment and disempowerment. Three themes were identified: disempowerment; assertion and self-empowerment; and being supported and empowered. With all themes being illustrated in the following quotation, it can be seen that being directed, with associated disempowerment, leads Faith to assert herself, while the support that she receives aids her empowerment: 'she knew that if she pushed me any further I wouldn't have accepted the apology, so she just left it at that…' (T2, L 17-19). Following the narration and recollection of disempowering events, the narrative can be seen to become fragmented: '…she looked at me from the bottom of my feet to the top of my toes, head. And I was like… what is the need for that…I thought, you know what, we're not gonna [*sic*] we're not, this is gonna [*sic*] go wrong…' (T2, L 63-69).

Segment 26 of the narrative therefore highlights the role of support in empowerment and the need for such support. This appears to relate to the situational

and cultural discourse of teachers as authority figures, relating to wider values of respect and equality. Indeed, an appeal for understanding made directly to the interviewer, serves to reinforce that Faith's story is about relationships, centred around the need for understanding and associated support. '…and honestly (*interviewer*) I don't know who I spoke to nastily, I don't know if I was nasty to, erm, teachers, anything, I can't tell you (*interviewer*), because, just, the anger, was, was just too strong…' (T2, L 94-102).

4.4.4 Summative findings

Faith's story appears to be about interactions and relationships, highlighting the importance of relationships with school staff. It conveys a need and desire for understanding, empathy and associated support, in order to aid in managing adversity and avoiding and managing conflict. The narrative emphasises the role of power dynamics and suggests that where there may be a lack of understanding, disempowerment, conflict and resentment may also occur, but where there may be understanding and support, empowerment and appreciation might additionally be found.

A member check carried out with Faith confirmed these findings, with Faith reflecting that the central message of her story was that it is important to receive empathetic understanding at school, with such understanding being important for effective partnerships with school staff. As Faith states at the end of her story, '…all I want to promote, is that schools with children like me, who don't look visibly to have anything wrong, they *(school)* just need to have the same mind-set as us really…' (L 1075-1077).

4.5 Gavin's Narrative

4.5.1 Contextual information

Gavin is a young man of 15 years and 2 months of age. He is of White British ethnicity and lives with his mother and twin brother (who received a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at 7 years of age). Gavin does not currently have an Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP). After visiting four different

Community Paediatricians, with three informing him that he was 'borderline' with regard to a diagnosis of ASD, he received a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome at 13 years old. Gavin stopped attending Year 7 at secondary school after 2 months, following difficulties with peers. He was enrolled in a different secondary school but there was long term non-attendance. A graduated response was taken to increasing his attendance, involving an out-of-school tuition service and a bespoke part-time timetable. Consultation with Gavin's Mother suggested that the main areas of difficulty for Gavin include social communication, interaction and relationships, and emotional wellbeing. Gavin has had involvement from Community Paediatrics, Educational Psychology, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), a Local Authority out-of-school tuition service, and a Local Authority service who work to promote the inclusion of young people who have a diagnosis of Autism within mainstream school settings. Gavin now attends school full-time and is being educated out of his chronological year group (Year 10), having joined the year below.

The content of Gavin's narrative focuses upon his experience of bullying in Year 7 and his journey back to being in a school full-time. He speaks about his experience of the various contributions made by out-of-school professionals, school staff, his friend, and his mother, as well as of the decisions he made himself.

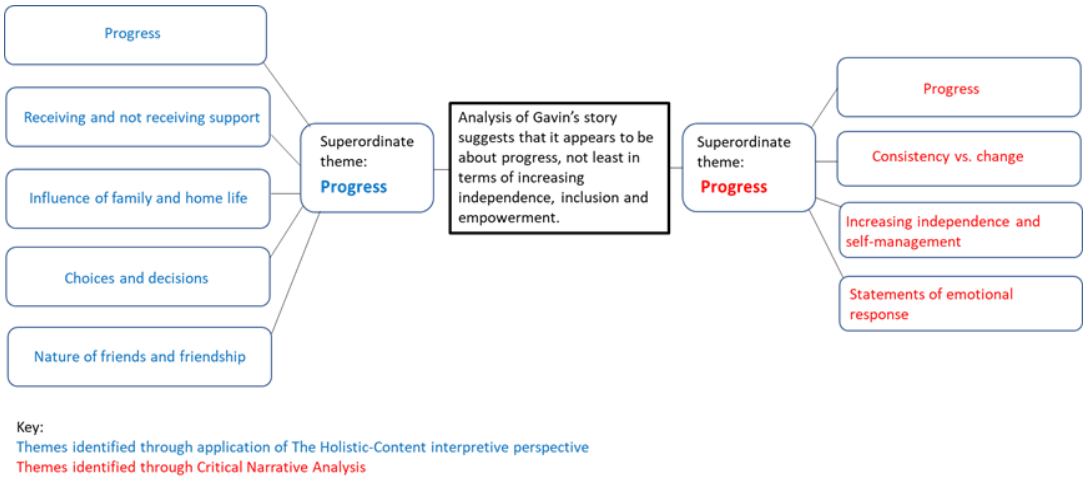


Figure 5. An overview of the themes identified in relation to Gavin's story

4.5.2 Findings in relation to The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective

Gavin's narrative gave an initial global impression of being a reflective story about personal progress: 'I'll be in virtually all day for mostly everything when I go back, which is, very good achievement from where I've started…' (L 406-408). The story follows Gavin move from vulnerability and a lack of support: '…in year seven it probably was the worst part of my school experience, er, 'cause I was severely bullied…And it didn't really get sorted out…' (L 3-7), to increasing feelings of security and self-confidence, not least illustrated through increasing inclusion in school. '…if somebody had of like told me what at the start of a couple of years ago, when I was really bad…if they said, like, you'd be in the school, back to school, near enough full time, a few years ago I probably wouldn't have believed them…'cause I just didn't care then…but now I do care.' (L 566-573). The regular use of 'I think' throughout the narrative may also indicate that Gavin could possibly feel unsure, lacking conviction in what he is saying, and that he may therefore benefit from continuing to enhance his self-confidence. However, it is relevant to note that the use of this phrase becomes far less frequent towards the end of Gavin's story, lending further support to the idea that this is a story about personal progress.

Gavin's story highlights the positive role of the individual: 'So I chose to drop back a year…but, I chose to make that decision myself, which I think now is the best decision I've probably made.' (L 204-212), and of support from others: '…I thought I'd be a bit nervous starting with doing longer days this year, but, I just think of the fight or flight…that's what I learned from N when I saw her.' (L 540-544).

Relationships, with the support and security that they can provide, as well as undermine, also appear to play a key role in Gavin's story. This can particularly be seen in relation to friendship. From speaking about being bullied by peers at the opening of his story: '…I thought they were my friends but clearly not.' (L 27-28), Gavin moves to speak of a 'true friend' (L 270). '…O's a true friend, which I've not really had for, ever, basically…I've been like, making more friends when I've been with O and stuff, and, it's been very nice, to have new friends…' (L 270-277). The security offered by this 'true' friendship appears to be important to Gavin: '…I think the Geography lessons, they're gonna be bigger groups, but, my friend's in that one anyway, which I'm, only when I'm with O I'm more relaxed, 'cause, well I don't rely on him or anything but I'm just relaxed when I'm with him…' (L 588-592). The

important role of relationships can also be seen through Gavin's identification with others: '…we already knew we'd be in the same Maths an English and Science 'cause we're virtually the same.' (L 597- 599). Such identification appears to inform self-knowledge for Gavin: '…I think it was, like my cousin, Asperger's, because...my brother, has a friend called Q and he has the same type of autism to my brother, and they got on like really well…And, and it was me and my cousin, we're exactly the same…' (L 441-448).

Gavin appears more assertive and empowered towards the end of the narrative compared to the beginning, testament to the progress that he has made. Early in his story Gavin states, '…I was just in my room doing with the curtains closed and just sat there doing nothing really, didn't even eat my meals with my mum or my brother…I wanted to go to one school but they couldn't get me in…so I had to go to one in (*town*)…' (L 41-49). However, towards the end of the story he reflects, '…at the start of this year I decided I wanted to, to do something about it, instead of sitting there doing nothing. I didn't want to be curled up in a ball and stuff in my room anymore.' (L 506-509). However, the fact that the narrative is hard to follow in places suggest that this has been a difficult journey for Gavin: '…when I was really bad and I want, if I was now probably wouldn't be, believable, what I was, if they said, like, you'd be in the school, back to school, near enough full time, a few years ago I probably wouldn't have believed them…' (L 568- 572). Indeed, there are a number of false starts as Gavin speaks of implications of his difficulties: '…I was told by Miss K apparently I'm, I shouldn't, I wasn't, shouldn't be in that set anyway but 'cause you feel more comfortable…with the smaller group then we'll keep you in that one.' (L 474- 477). The regular use of 'just' throughout the narrative works to reduce the impact of the information being shared, perhaps in an attempt to normalise such implications, aiding Gavin in reflecting upon the difficulties that he faced. '…I think I met this woman called Mrs C, she was very nice, she was like, just this tutor woman, because I needed to have some sort of education…' (L 58- 61, theme of 'Receiving and not receiving support').

Key themes identified across Gavin's story also suggest that his story is about personal progress, the role of the individual and of the support of others. Analysis of the narrative revealed a superordinate theme of 'progress', identifying subordinate themes of: progress; receiving and not receiving support; influence of family and home life; choices and decisions; and nature of friends and friendship.

The subordinate theme of ‘progress’ first occurs in segment 10 and runs throughout the remaining 27 segments of the narrative, most frequently co-occurring with the theme, ‘nature of friends and friendship’, and reinforcing the idea that relationships play a key role in Gavin’s progress. ‘…since I'd like, made friends and stuff I felt confident to now go outside and stuff at break time…’ (L 562-563). The theme of ‘progress’ can also be seen to co-occur at points with the themes of ‘receiving and not receiving support’ and ‘choices and decisions’: ‘…I was like doing well in school and stuff, just, so I was seeing her once a month, and, I think, 'cause I was making all this progress in school that I decided, she decided to discharge me from the thing…’ (L 332-335, themes of ‘progress’, ‘receiving and not receiving support’ and ‘choices and decisions’).

The second most frequent subordinate theme following ‘progress’ was identified as the theme, ‘receiving and not receiving support’. This theme runs across 33 of the 37 segments of the narrative and co-occurs at points with the theme ‘influence of family and home life’, indeed, Gavin comments, ‘…my mum was there for me…’ (L 149). This second theme highlights an initial lack of support at the start of the story: ‘…they *(school)* didn't really do anything, they just like, we just told them what happened but they didn't like, do anything about it…’ (L 11-13). It then charts the support that occurs outside of school: ‘…I met this woman called Mrs C, she was very nice, she was like, just this tutor woman, because I needed to have some sort of education…we met at… this building in *(town)*…’ (L 58-62), before support is gradually moved onto the school site to aid Gavin’s transition into school: ‘…then there's N who was helping me with, like, when seeing me in the hut at school, so we decided to go in there and sometimes she would, like, say do you want to go in the school corridor…’ (L 80-83). Content within this theme also indicates the support received from school staff: ‘…I met this one called Mrs K…she is, like, really nice, she understands virtually everyone who has their problems, and, and also there's Miss W…she helped a lot with my schooling and stuff.’ (L 117-122), and the systemic barriers that have hindered Gavin in receiving support at school: ‘…I had work to do from lessons…well we tried to get work but it wasn't really going anywhere… I think it was very hard to get work off the actual teachers from lessons…’ (L 108-114). However, towards the end of the narrative, the theme highlights the withdrawal of support, no longer felt to be needed: ‘…since I was doing Science lessons and my English and stuff we'd have started to get rid of L

(*tutor*)…because I was doing stuff in school now I, on my own…' (L 314-317). The content of the theme ends with reflection upon the nature and value of the support received: 'Basically she would just ask you, like, what number you are at, and then, you'd like, 'cause you'd just, you'd just calm down after a while…which was very helpful.' (L 536-540). In this way, through this theme, Gavin shows the important role of support in the progress that he has made.

The role of the individual also appears to relate to progress within Gavin's story, as a third subordinate theme identified was that of 'choices and decisions', a theme that runs throughout the narrative and co-occurs at points with the subordinate theme of 'progress'. '…I was like doing well in school and stuff, just, so I was seeing her once a month, and, I think, 'cause I was making all this progress in school that I decided, she decided to discharge me from the thing...' (L 332- 335). This theme demonstrates how Gavin moves from arguably negative decisions and restricted choices at the start of his story: '…I just refused to, go into school…At first I didn't tell my mum…but, I did tell her eventually because I had to.' (L 13-18), to making decisions that he regards as being positive and having free choice: 'I chose to drop back a year…I chose to make that decision myself, which I think now is the best decision I've probably made.' (L 204- 212). At points in the narrative there is contradiction around the free choice and ownership of a decision: '…they said, like, we're gonna put me in this, like, group of people, for, a Maths lesson…I thought it was my choice so, I chose to do that lesson…' (L 171-176). This potentially highlights the significance for Gavin of being able to have free choice and make decisions for himself. It also enhances the idea that the role of the individual has had a part to play in Gavin's progress.

A fourth subordinate theme, 'influence of family and home life' co-occurs at points with the subordinate theme of 'receiving and not receiving support' and indicates that support from Gavin's Mother has played a role in his progress. This can be seen in terms of both practical support: '…eventually I think they started doing stuff cause mum had these meetings…' (L127- 128), and emotional support: '…my Mum was there for me…' (L 149). In addition, the positive role that Gavin's friends have had in his progress is demonstrated by the fifth subordinate theme, 'nature of friends and friendship', and its incidences of co-occurrence with the subordinate theme of 'progress'. '…since I'd like, made friends and stuff I felt confident to now go outside and stuff at break time, play with, with my friends…'

(L562-564). Indeed, from having initially experienced friendship difficulties: '…one of them strangled me in lessons…the other one just was, just calling me names and stuff and then the other one was just bossing me about…I thought they were my friends but clearly not…' (L 23-28), by the end of his story, Gavin has made a friend with whom he identifies and feels secure: '…when I'm with O I'm more relaxed… we're virtually the same. I think me and him may as well be brothers to be honest…' (L 590- 600). Gavin states, '…out of all the friends I've like ever had in my life he is probably the best one…' (L 265-267). This is further testament to the progress that Gavin seems to have made and the apparent significance of the support that he has received from others.

4.5.3 Findings in relation to Critical Narrative Analysis

Segments 22 and 23 of Gavin's narrative were selected for re-transcription according to Gee (1991) (see 'Plan of Analysis' section for segment selection criteria, chapter 3.3.4), referred to as the second transcript (T2). Within these segments the mainline content works to highlight the central role of progress and how it is affecting Gavin. It starts with explaining a reduction in support in light of Gavin now attending more lessons: '…since I was doing science lessons and my English…we'd have started to get rid of L *(tutor)*…' (T2, L 1- 3), before explaining how the support was being reduced: '…we started…taking a day off each time…' (T2, L12). Finally, the mainline content recollects the last support session: '…that was the last week…I didn't, she cried…' (T2, L 16-18). In this way, progress is made apparent through the reduction of support. This is emphasised further through content off the mainline, as Gavin provides further detail and explanation for his support being reduced: 'because I was doing stuff in school now I, on my own.' (T2, L 6- 7). Content off the mainline also provides insight into how Gavin may feel about this change: '…it was very sad to see her go…' (T2, L 21). He appears to need to reassure himself that the separation will not be final: '…I think she'll be back…but I know she'll be back for sure.' (T2, L 22- 24). However, within the content off the mainline, Gavin's reflection on the situation ultimately frames the reduction in support positively, highlighting once again the progress that he has made. '…I was making all this progress in school that I decided, she decided to discharge me from the thing, which

is very happy…the thing is I don't need her or anything because, she's done her job, which was very nice.' (T2, L 36- 44).

In light of such progress it is not surprising that analysis of the psychological subjects (the subject positions / points of view of the narrative) used in segments 22 and 23 of Gavin's story, suggests that he may feel empowered. Gavin uses the first person, initially occasionally using the pronoun 'we' at the start of the selected segments: '…we started like taking a day off each time…' (T2, L 12). As the narrative continues a contradiction occurs: '…that I decided, she decided to discharge me from the thing…' (T2, L 36- 37). Such a contradiction appears to show that Gavin feels ownership for the decision described, as he initially attributes the decision to himself before stating that it was the decision of his tutor. By the end of the selected segments, Gavin appears self-assured and 'I' is consistently used as subject: 'I don't need her…' (T2, L 41).

A superordinate theme of 'progress' was identified across the selected segments, with subordinate themes of: progress; consistency vs. change; increasing independence and self-management; and statements of emotional response. Indeed, with the exception of 'statements of emotional response', all themes were found to co-occur at points, highlighting how progress has been accompanied by change and increased independence for Gavin. Accordingly, the subordinate theme of 'progress' was found to most frequently co-occur with the theme, 'increasing independence and self-management', a more frequently occurring theme towards the end of the selected segments, suggesting empowerment and an increase in self-confidence towards the end. '…I think from where I was, to I was seeing her like, virtually twice a week to like just seeing her like once a month.' (T2, L 29- 31). While the theme of 'consistency vs. change' runs across the narrative section, the theme, 'statements of emotional response' occurs far less frequently, each time relating to the reduction in support: 'That was the last week which was very sad to be honest' (T2, L16- 17).

Pauses within the narrative also appear to occur in relation to the reduction of support, suggesting that this is difficult for Gavin and that he may be hesitant and sad around the changes. '…we'd have started to *(0.2)* get rid of L (*tutor*)…because I was doing *(0.2)* stuff in school now…she'd have had to have gone anyway 'cause she's not supposed to be there for *(0.2)* a long time…' (T2, L 2- 11). Despite such changes, content within the theme of 'statements of emotional response' indicates that Gavin feels happy with his current situation, brought about by the progress that

he has made: '…'cause I was making all this progress…decided to discharge me from the thing, which is very happy…' (T2, L37- 38).

4.5.4 Summative findings

Gavin's story appears to be about progress, not least in terms of increasing independence, inclusion and empowerment. Gavin appears to move from vulnerability and a lack of support at the start of his story to increasing feelings of security and self-confidence. His story highlights the role of the individual and the importance of being able to have free choice and make decisions. It also conveys the value of receiving support from others, in particular referring to the support provided by his mother, out of school professionals, school staff and his friend. A member check carried out with Gavin confirmed these findings. At the member check meeting, Gavin reflected that he values the support that he has received from others and commented that he now feels far more confident.

4.6 Kyle's Narrative

4.6.1 Contextual information

Kyle is a boy of 12 years and 8 months of age. He is of White British ethnicity and lives with his parents and older sister. Kyle has an Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and received a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome at 5 years old. According to his EHCP, areas of difficulty for Kyle include: social communication, interaction and understanding of social situations; motivation, concentration and engagement with learning; fine motor skills, particularly in relation to handwriting; and managing his emotions. Kyle receives a Teaching Assistant provision of 17 hours a week and has had involvement from Community Paediatrics, Educational Psychology, Speech and Language Therapy and a Local Authority service who work to promote the inclusion of young people who have a diagnosis of Autism within mainstream school settings.

The content of Kyle's narrative focuses on his experience of friendship at school, charting the development and breakdown of his friendship with a peer, M.

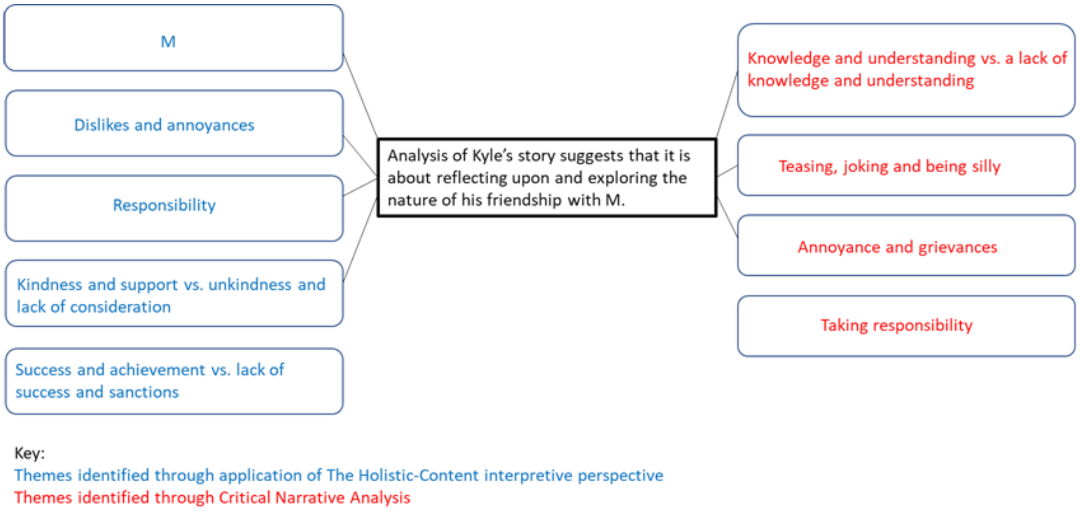


Figure 6. An overview of the themes identified in relation to Kyle's story

4.6.2 Findings in relation to The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective

Kyle's narrative gave an initial global impression of being a reflection on, and an exploration of, the nature of friendship and of his level of responsibility for the breakdown of a friendship. He states, 'I feel I'm not being a good enough friend. But, M isn't really doing the friendship any favours either. I don't, I'm really trying to get her back on track, well, actually I didn't, I only did it like, once, and then, it's gone.' (L 386- 389).

Much of the narrative content is devoted to his friendship with M, as the narrative keeps returning to this topic, and it appears that Kyle could possibly benefit from an enhanced understanding in relation to friendship. 'I guess we slowly developed to be friends, I don't know how, we just, I guess that's the really, the only thing that, bonds the friendship.' (L 89 -91). Indeed, he speaks tentatively about his friendship, often using the phrase, 'I guess' (L 7), and frequently saying, 'Er' (L 19), implying a lack of confidence and understanding. Additionally, the narrative has a tone of resignation: '…It isn't going to work.' (L 133). Kyle wants to do well: 'I wish every, I wish that was every PE lesson, like, something that I'm good at.' (L 193- 194), but appears resigned, particularly in relation to achievement at school: 'Well why can't there be a bottle flipping peel or something, that would so be my thing. But of course, well thing's banned there, so, I can't see that happening.' (L 196- 198). His accepting endurance also extends to his consideration of his social skills: '…my friends are kind of distancing out and I don't, and I'm not, I'm not really that social. Like, I have

Autism like, being social with autism is like, trying to be funny when you're super depressed…' (L 129- 132).

Despite a tone of accepting endurance, Kyle appears to value kindness and support: '…my teaching assistants…they were just like so nice to me. They were there to help me.' (L 274- 275). Although, it seems that he does not always receive consideration and kindness from his peers: '…screaming really out loud...I told them to stop doing it, they still wouldn't stop, and R was actually laughing about it, she doesn't really care…and it was only until I cried… that she actually learned something, but…she still did it…' (L 478- 485). Kyle does appear to value and desire his friendship with M: 'M is a really only good friend in my year, and I don't want to let her go…' (L 97- 98), not least for the support that it affords: '…she's basically like, my babysitter, or something, like, she helps me in a lot of situations…' (L 439- 440). However, he appears conflicted, also feeling annoyed with M's contribution to the relationship: '…she's been bugging me a bit.' (L 26). He indicates that M lacks responsibility: '…the thing that kind of puts me off M is that, it's never her, like, if, she does something bad, and I call her out on it, she just, *(Kyle)* just stop acting so horrible…' (L 44- 46). He also speaks of M having been inconsiderate: '…smell really bad, and she kept putting them near my nose and, though I didn't like the smell…And when I tried to take them off M, M wouldn't let up.' (L 83- 86), and unkind: '…made her a bit, like, of old M…the M who used to tease me...' (L 73- 76). Ultimately, Kyle appears to feel unsure as to whether he is justified in speaking negatively about his friend: 'I think that's a horrible thing to do…I wouldn't want to really call my own friend annoying, but…not really that close of a friend so much, although I guess she can make some decent points why I haven't been the best friend, but, but I'm going to do it anyway.' (L 399 -405). In this way it can be seen that Kyle is reflecting upon and exploring the nature of friendship and of his level of responsibility for the breakdown of his friendship with M.

Key themes identified across Kyle's story also suggest that his story is about understanding friendship. Analysis of the narrative revealed five key themes: M; dislikes and annoyances; responsibility; kindness and support vs. unkindness and lack of consideration; and success and achievement vs. lack of success and sanctions. The first theme, 'M', is the most frequent theme, running from segment 2 to segment 31 of the 34 segments of narrative. It co-occurs at points with the themes of 'dislikes and annoyances', 'kindness and support vs. unkindness and lack of consideration' and

‘responsibility’ as it charts Kyle’s relationship with M. This theme, ‘M’, follows the friendship from its initial development: ‘…D said, “say Hi to, to, say Hi to M,” and I went, “Hi M,” in this, really, silly voice…eventually we, we became good friends…’ (L 19- 23), to its breakdown: ‘…we became good friends, as of recent not really…She's been a bit, but, she's been bugging me a bit.’ (L 23- 26). Within this theme Kyle reflects upon what aided the development of the relationship: ‘I guess we slowly developed to be friends, I don't know how, we just, I guess that's the really, the only thing that, bonds the friendship.’ (L 88- 91), and what contributed to its breakdown: ‘…Oh I guess the thing, I guess the thing that really broke me and M's relationship is that she was getting bullied…’ (L 66- 68). He also reflects on the nature of the friendship: ‘…she's basically like, my babysitter, or something, like, she helps me in a lot of situations, that, and, she just, [*sic*] like a great friend overall, like I always have fun with her.’ (L 439- 442), and the important role that it played: ‘…I guess the most important aspect would be to talk about my friend, er, M.’ (L 7-8).

The second key theme, ‘dislikes and annoyances’, relates to his friendship with M on all but one occasion within the narrative, when it relates to Kyle’s peers more generally: ‘…being annoying because, like, I told them to stop doing it, they still wouldn't stop…’ (L 478- 480). This theme punctuates the narrative, occurring in segments 3 to 6, 26 to 28 and segment 32. It co-occurs at points with the themes of ‘M’ and ‘kindness and support vs. unkindness and lack of consideration’: ‘I guess the bullying made her a bit, like, of old M…Like the M who used to tease me a bit… And, it was not on, at all.’ (L 73- 78). At times, the theme also co-occurs with that of ‘responsibility’, highlighting that not only do acts of unkindness by M relate to Kyle’s annoyance, but also to his perception of her lack of responsibility: ‘…the thing that kind of puts me off M is that, it's never her, like, if, she does something bad, and I call her out on it, she just, “*(Kyle)* just stop acting so horrible…”’ (L 44- 46).

The third theme of ‘responsibility’, occurs at the start (segments 4-10) and end of the narrative (segments 26 and 30) and can be seen to relate to Kyle and M. ‘…think, a part of the problem is mostly my fault…I feel I'm not being a good enough friend. But, M isn't really doing the friendship any favours either. I don't, I'm really trying to get her back on track, well, actually I didn't, I only did it like, once, and then, it's gone.’ (L 384- 389). As illustrated, this theme includes much self-reflection and is the second most frequent theme, highlighting Kyle’s attempt to understand what part, if any, he played in the breakdown of the friendship and accordingly, enhance his own

understanding of friendship and appropriate friendship behaviour. Indeed, when sharing his story, he appeared unsure as to whether he was right to be speaking negatively of his friend, ultimately appearing to decide to honestly report how he felt: '…that's a horrible thing to do…I don't, I wouldn't want to really call my own friend annoying, but…not really that close of a friend…although I guess she can make some decent points why I haven't been the best friend, but, but I'm going to do it anyway.' (L 399- 405).

The fourth theme, 'kindness and support vs. unkindness and lack of consideration', highlights the challenge that Kyle faces in understanding his friendship with M. In fact, when identifying themes during analysis of the narrative, it became difficult to interpret whether the narrative was presenting M's behaviour as good-natured teasing or unkindness, possibly reflecting Kyle's apparent difficulty in making this interpretation. This theme occurs sporadically across Kyle's story, co-occurring at points with the themes of 'M', 'dislikes and annoyances' and 'responsibility', further supporting the idea that Kyle's story is an exploration of the nature of his friendship with M. At times M is described as being supportive: '…she helps me in a lot of situations…' (L 440), and a '…great friend overall…' (L 441). While at other points in the narrative she is described as less kind: '…now M is a bit, like, M's being a bit mean' (L 128- 129), and lacking consideration: '…I didn't like the smell…And when I tried to take them off M, M wouldn't let up.' (L 84- 86).

That Kyle received support, through his friendship with M and from teaching assistants: 'they were just like so nice to me. They were there to help me. No, nobody else in the classroom was, doing that.' (L 274- 276), may be particularly relevant to the fifth theme identified, that of 'success and achievement vs. lack of success and sanctions'. This theme appears to stand alone. It does not overlap with any other themes, only occurring at three points in the narrative. It shows that Kyle wishes to do well: 'I wish every, I wish that was every PE lesson, like, something that I'm good at.' (L 193- 194), and that he takes pride in his achievements: 'everybody else was like, doing, er, like, twenty, like, the highest that people got, was twenty something, but I was the highest, I got like… on my first go… I got like, forty-four or something.' (L 219- 224). However, within this theme there is a tone of accepting endurance: '…why can't there be a bottle flipping peel or something, that would so be my thing. But of course, well thing's banned there, so, I can't see that happening.' (L 196- 198). Kyle comments, '…I never really had like a really, like a really, good, year eight day so

far.' (L 294- 295), stating that a good day would involve achievement and a lack of sanctions: '…just that nothing bad happened, no D three's, no homework…and just like, like if I do good in some things, like, that'll probably be my favourite school day.' (L 317- 320). In light of his apparent desire to achieve in the face of difficulties, this theme serves to raise the consideration that the potential support afforded by friendship may be of particular value for Kyle, which may place him in a more vulnerable position in relation to his peers and complicate his friendships. This is a consideration that can be seen to cohere with the interpretation that Kyle's story is a reflection on, and an exploration of, the nature of friendship.

4.6.3 Findings in relation to Critical Narrative Analysis

Segments 2 to 4 of Kyle's narrative were selected for re-transcription according to Gee (1991) (see 'Plan of Analysis' section for segment selection criteria, chapter 3.3.4), referred to as the second transcript (T2). Within these segments it appears that the mainline content works to highlight that Kyle may be reflecting upon and exploring the nature of his friendship with M. Mainline content traces the course of the friendship and in doing so, highlights its nature. It charts the initial development of the relationship: '…I went, "Hi M," in this really silly voice, and, so many people went hysterical…we got on…M used to be a bit of a tease…but eventually we became good friends…' (T2, L 21- 28). The content then turns to apparent annoyances and grievances that Kyle has in relation to M, indicating a decline in the relationship: '…she's been bugging me' (T2, L 31). Kyle states, '…the thing that kind of puts me off M is that, it's never her.' (T2, L 57- 58), additionally referring to M as being, '…a bit over reactive…' (T2, L 65). While mainline content follows the course and nature of the friendship, content off the mainline provides contextual information: '…D… that's just his short name, his real, his full name is DS…' (T2, L 16-18), shares thoughts and reflections: 'I kind of forgot about that.' (T2, L56), and expresses Kyle's feelings: 'I'm like, aah, [*sic*] yeah.' The off mainline content also provides illustrative examples to compliment expressions of thoughts and feelings: '…if she does something bad, and I call her out on it, she just, "*(Kyle)* just stop acting so horrible."' (T2, L 59- 61). In this way the off mainline content compliments and enhances the mainline content in highlighting that Kyle appears to be reflecting upon and exploring the nature of his friendship.

Analysis of the psychological subjects (the subject positions / points of view of the narrative) used in segments 2 to 4 of Kyle's story suggests that Kyle no longer feels part of a supportive friendship with M and that he may feel the need to seek understanding in relation to the breakdown of the friendship. Speaking in the first person, Kyle initially uses the pronoun 'we' when explaining how he became friends with M: '…we got on…' (T2, L 23), however, as the narrative continues and the subsequent course of the relationship is shared, M is referred to as 'she' or 'her': '…I call her out on it…' (T2, L 60). This implies that Kyle feels further removed from his friend as the friendship breaks down. Analysis of the psychological subjects also highlighted that when Kyle is recalling an event from the friendship, there is an instance in the narrative when he interchanges the noun 'M' with the pronoun 'I', indicating an identification with his friend: '…when L was talking to H I said, "*(Kyle)* look, he's saying bad things about me to H…"' (T2, L 75- 76). Such findings arguably highlight the impact of the friendship upon Kyle, suggesting a need for understanding when the friendship breaks down.

Themes identified across the selected segments additionally indicated that Kyle may benefit from, and desires, an enhanced understanding in relation to friendship and that he appears to be experiencing uncertainty as to whether his feelings in relation to his friend are justified. Four themes were identified: knowledge and understanding vs. a lack of knowledge and understanding; teasing, joking and being silly; annoyance and grievances; and taking responsibility. 'Knowledge and understanding vs. a lack of knowledge and understanding' was the most frequently occurring theme, particularly at the start of the selected segments. The content of this theme suggests that Kyle wants to have knowledge and understanding: 'I don't know why so many people know my name.' (T2, L 14), and is trying to offer explanation: 'M's real name is B, it's odd, I know, but if you're wondering how B got the nickname, allow me to explain…' (T2, L 5- 8).

The theme, 'teasing, joking and being silly' also occurs most frequently at the start of the selected segments, with only one later occurrence half way through (strophe 7). This theme demonstrates how Kyle is interpreting the nature of M's interactions: '…B *(M)* as a joke decided to…just to like, tease me a bit.' (T2, L 9- 12). A third theme, that of 'annoyances and grievances', occurs throughout the second half of the selected segments (strophe 5 to strophe 11), as if continuing on from the theme 'teasing, joking and being silly'. In this way, it appears that Kyle's interpretation of

the nature of his friend's interactions has changed, now interpreting them as irritating: '…she's been bugging me…she, she was like, poking me…' (T2, L 31- 40). This highlights not only a change in how Kyle feels in response to M, but also suggests that he may be unsure as to how to interpret her interactions. Pauses within the narrative relate to this content, highlighting that Kyle may be unsure how to interpret and present interactions with M: 'So *(0.2)* B *(M)* as a joke…' (T2, L9). They additionally suggest a discomfort, implying that Kyle is unsure if he should be saying that his friend is annoying him: '…she's been bugging me a bit. *(0.5)* …' (T2, L 31- 32), and speaking negatively of her: 'erm, *(0.4)* she, she was like poking me.' (T2, L 40).

The final theme, 'taking responsibility', co-occurs at points with 'annoyances and grievances', which along with the content of the theme, suggests that Kyle is exploring whether his feelings in relation to his friend are justified. '…the thing that kind of puts me off M is that, it's never her, like if, she does something bad, and I call her out on it, she just, "*(Kyle)* just stop acting so horrible"…' (T2, L 57- 61). Analysis of the themes present in the selected segments of the narrative therefore suggests that Kyle may be reflecting upon and seeking further understanding of his friendship.

4.6.4 Summative findings

Kyle's story appears to be about reflecting upon and exploring the nature of his friendship with M. As Kyle notes in his opening response to being asked the interview question, 'Well, I guess the most important aspect would be to talk about my friend, er, M.' (L 7- 8). His story appears to attempt to understand what part, if any, he played in the breakdown of the friendship and accordingly, enhance his own understanding of friendship. A member check carried out with Kyle confirmed these findings.

5 Discussion Part 1. - Analysis and Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Research Question

5.1 Section Overview

This section considers how the findings from each participant relate to the reviewed literature (see 'Literature Review' section, chapter 2), identifying the contribution of each story to informing a response to the research question. This section will initially consider the contributions of the stories of Liam and Edward, exploring how school experience may hinder the development of self-identity. It will then consider the contributions of the stories of Gavin, Faith and Kyle, exploring how school experience may help the development of self-identity. Findings will then be synthesised and considered in light of the proposed theory of identity in order to provide a response to the research question (to be subsequently considered and reviewed in light of the study limitations identified in the 'Reflections and Limitations' section, chapter 6.3).

5.2 School Experience May Hinder the Development of Self-identity

Findings from the analysis of Liam's story (chapters 4.2.2 and 4.2.3) appear to show that he is exploring his identity, revealing a difference between how he sees himself and the ideal of how he would like to be. His experience of getting into trouble at school seems to be accentuating Liam's apparent difficulty in establishing a coherent, enhanced understanding of himself that marries his behaviour at school with who he feels he is. This appears to support the findings of Baines (2012), that young people work to adapt and construct preferred identities across a range of contexts, including home and school. It also supports Bagatell (2007), who notes that constructing identities is difficult, particularly the struggle to orchestrate conflicting discourses. Indeed, Liam's experience of school systems and structures in relation to behaviour appears to be reinforcing an identity that Liam does not desire (that of a student who gets into trouble), hindering him in forming a coherent self-identity. This supports Connell (2001), who notes that identity development may be a great deal less fluid than expected in the reality of the institutional contexts of everyday lives. Liam's story can therefore be seen to highlight the potential role that

behavioural systems and structures within school may have in hindering the development of self-identity for young people with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). That school systems and structures can play a restrictive, hindering role coheres with the case study findings of Dean, Adams and Kasari (2013), who identified that autism-related behaviours manifested in inflexible interactions that systematically led to the exclusion of the individual with ASD. Indeed, it is here worth noting that Liam had received fixed-term school exclusions (see 'contextual information' relating to Liam's narrative in the 'Results and Analysis' section, chapter 4.2.1). It would therefore appear that consideration of Liam's story highlights that understanding what ASD means on a personal level, in relation to identity, is not only important for a young person (Stevenson, Cornell and Hinchcliffe, 2016), but also important for their school.

Findings from the analysis of Edward's story also seem to be about school misunderstanding and restrictions, highlighting the potentially hindering impact of school systems and structures. His story appears to be about tolerating and managing this, adapting and using the opportunities and learning available to actively empower himself. Such findings support Baumeister and Muraven (1996) in stating that people do exert choice, where possible, in their identity development, highlighting that both individual and contextual (sociocultural) factors play a role. In particular, Edward's story seems to show him reflecting upon his restricted freedom of choice and exploring the restrictive impact that this has had upon outcomes such as his career path, as well as in shaping who he is. This can be seen to support Emler (1993), who states that the more institutions allow opportunities for adolescents to test possible values and future roles, the more helpful to the identity development of the young person. Consideration of Edward's story therefore appears to suggest that school systems and structures may lack insight and could restrict individual freedom of choice for young people with ASD, potentially restricting opportunities and outcomes, hindering the development of self-identity.

Consideration of Liam and Edward's stories therefore lead to the perception that schools may lack insight in relation to young people with ASD, with systems and structures potentially hindering the development of self-identity. This would appear to lend support to the Social Model of Disability. While it may be contended that self-identity does not feature in the DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for ASD (APA, 2013), and as such, is not an area formally constituting disablement for young people

with ASD, as Browning, Osborne and Reed (2009) note, adolescents with ASD are likely to struggle with forming their identity. Through raising the voices of young people with ASD, the comparative point can therefore be made that it is the institutional structures and systems that appear to be hindering the development of self-identity for young people with ASD.

5.3 School Experience May Help the Development of Self-identity

In contrast to the potentially hindering impact of school structures and systems, other aspects of school experience can be seen to help the development of self-identity. Findings from the analysis of Gavin's story appear to show that his story is about progress, with increasing independence, inclusion and empowerment. His story seems to highlight the role of the individual and the importance of having free choice and making decisions. As also indicated through findings from the analysis of Edward's story, the importance of having freedom of choice at school lends support to Erikson's description of adolescence as involving the psychosocial crisis of 'ego identity versus role confusion' (Erikson, 1963), where different possibilities, roles and places in society are explored as the individual re-examines their sense of self in preparation for adulthood.

Findings from Gavin's story also appear to support Dryer (1994), who proposes that a curriculum that promotes responsible choice and self-determination can encourage identity formation. Indeed, Gavin experienced a bespoke part-time timetable as part of a graduated approach to increasing his attendance and inclusion, and within his story he speaks favourably of the decisions that he has been able to make regarding his education. Gavin's story also appears to demonstrate the value of receiving support from others, implying that receiving an adequate level of support is important for young people with ASD, in accordance with the findings of Saggers, Hwang and Mercer (2011).

Indeed, findings from the analysis of Faith's story appear to demonstrate the importance of relationships with school staff, conveying a need and desire for understanding, empathy and associated support. This can be seen to resonate with the findings from Liam and Edward's stories which imply that schools may be perceived to lack insight in relation to young people with ASD. Faith's story appears to suggest that where a lack of understanding and empathy exists there is disempowerment,

conflict and resentment, but where there is empathy, understanding and associated support, there is empowerment and appreciation. Such findings support those reported by Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016), that perceived relationships with teaching staff is a key area affecting the quality of school experience for young people with ASD, with good relationships being attributed to teachers having a caring and helpful manner. Such caring and helpful staff within Faith's story can be seen to offer her choices, while findings from the analysis of Gavin's story appear to highlight the role of free choice in the development of self-identity. In light of considering such findings, it may be argued that understanding by others, such as school staff, may be a foundational factor in promoting the development of a young person's self-identity. Indeed, as highlighted through consideration of Liam and Edward's stories, it can be seen to be a perceived lack of understanding on the part of the school that is associated with the restrictions that Liam and Edward are experiencing. It therefore appears that the task of understanding lies not only with the individual young person as they seek to develop their self-identity, but also with those school staff who are trying to support them.

Findings from the analysis of Kyle's story also has a focus upon relationships, specifically upon friendship. Kyle's story seems to be about reflecting upon and exploring the nature of his relationship with a friend, as Kyle appears to be attempting to enhance his understanding of friendship. In this way the friendship can be seen as a learning opportunity for Kyle, particularly in light of Kyle's apparent self-reflection upon his actions and the role that he has played in the breakdown of the friendship. This can be seen to support the claim of Zani (1993), that peers not only enable new social skills to be learnt, but also enable different possibilities for self-definition to be reflected upon. Indeed, Harter (1990) notes that friends provide a reference for testing new identity-related skills and as such, play an important role in identity development. Findings from the analysis of Kyle's story suggests that Kyle felt that he received support through his friendship. This concurs with the findings of Dillon, Underwood and Freemantle (2016) that individuals with ASD use their few close friends as a means of social and academic support. It can also be seen to relate to findings reported by Meeus, Oosterwegel and Vollebergh (2002), that the support provided through friendship is positively related to adolescent identity development.

Consideration of Gavin and Kyle's stories therefore suggest that schools may be able to help young people with ASD to develop their self-identity through enabling them to have free choice and providing the opportunity to receive support and to learn about themselves through friendships with peers. Consideration of Faith's story additionally raises the possibility that understanding on the part of school staff may be a foundational factor in aiding the development of self-identity.

5.4 Study Findings in Response to the Research Question

It can therefore be seen that study findings support Reay (2010) in claiming that school is a key societal institution for young people to develop their identity. It appears that school experience can either hinder or help the development of self-identity for young people with a diagnosis of ASD. Consideration of Liam and Edward's stories suggests that schools may lack insight in relation to young people with ASD, with systems and structures potentially hindering the development of self-identity. By contrast, consideration of Gavin and Kyle's stories implies that school experience can help young people with ASD to develop their self-identity through enabling them to have free choice, providing support and affording the opportunity to learn about themselves through friendships with peers. Consideration of Faith's story additionally raises the possibility that school staff understanding may be a foundational factor in aiding the development of self-identity, arguably enabling the recognition of restrictions and enhancing free choice.

These findings serve to support and illustrate the proposed theory of identity, which relates sociocultural and narrative approaches. This theory builds upon the work of Baumeister and Muraven (1996), who argue that identity is adaptation to the sociocultural context, by applying and further developing the argument of McAdams (1996) that one's identity is a process; the process of creating a 'self' through narration. In the theory of identity proposed, identity is seen as an adaptive process that utilises experience of the sociocultural context to generate a 'self' (see Figure 1., p. 31). The raw material, proposed to consist of the individual's experiences, is shaped by, and interpreted in relation to, the sociocultural context, influencing the nature of the 'self' that is created, a 'self' which in turn can exert influence over the context and resultant experiences. Accordingly, it is argued that the sociocultural experience of the individual is the material subject to the process of identity. This is

illustrated by the findings of this study. Indeed, the material of the young person's school experience appears to be influenced by the context; the structures and systems of the school. This can be seen to influence the nature of the 'self' that is created, as illustrated in Liam and Edward's stories, by the implications of perceived restrictions in school structures and systems. In turn, the 'self' can exert influence over the context and resultant experiences as highlighted by the role of the individual in Gavin's story, not least his decision to join the year below and be educated outside of his chronological year group. This is also illustrated in Edward's story as he adapts to restrictions using the opportunities and learning available to him, and in Faith's story, through the differing responses of Faith to those school staff who showed empathetic understanding compared to those who did not. Such findings not only support the proposed theory of identity, illustrating it in relation to young people with ASD, but also necessarily lend support to the theory of Baumeister and Muraven (1996), upon which the new, proposed theory is based (see Figure 1., p.31). Baumeister and Muraven (1996) argue that identity is adaptation to sociocultural context and findings suggest that this is indeed the case for at least some people, namely, young people with ASD.

In this way the findings from this study suggest that the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with a diagnosis of ASD may be an adaptive one, where school experience is the material subject to the process of identity. Findings also suggest that where young people with a diagnosis of ASD are able to experience free choice, receive support and have the opportunity to learn about themselves through friendships with peers, they may be aided in their development of self-identity.

6 Discussion Part 2. – Strengths, Limitations and Implications of the Study

6.1 Section Overview

This section is divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section considers the original contribution of the study and strengths of the work. The second sub-section then shares reflections and considers study limitations, reflecting upon the process with a particular focus on the challenges faced during recruitment, data collection and analysis. The third and final sub-section considers implications in relation to the school experience of young people with ASD, in addition to considering implications for practice and future research.

6.2 The Original Contribution and Strengths of the Study

This study makes an original contribution as, to date, no other study has explored the relationship between UK school experience and self-identity for young people with a diagnosis of ASD. This is despite calls for research into identity development in the school context (Goosens and Phinney, 1996). This study also proposes a new theory of identity, building upon the work of Baumeister and Muraven (1996) and further developing the argument of McAdams (1996). A further strength of the study relates to its role in raising the voices of young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), amidst calls in the literature for young people with ASD to be more directly included in the research process (Potter, 2015). This approach has been valuable, with findings from this study not only informing the research question, but also enabling the generation of practical suggestions as to how schools may enhance the development of self-identity for young people with ASD (see ‘Implications for Practice’ section, chapter 6.4.2).

6.3 Reflections and Limitations

6.3.1 Reflections upon apparent parental isolation

An important anecdotal reflection relating to the study is the apparent isolation experienced by parents as they work to support their children with ASD. The

mothers of two participants informed that it would be easier for them to support their child with ASD if school enhanced communication with them. Equally, it would appear that parents may not be receiving information from their children with ASD about experiences at school, as the Mother of another participant expressed her relief that her child's school experience had been a positive one following revelations from the initial meeting wherein her daughter chose to comment about her experience of school. Indeed, with only one exception, the parents of participants spontaneously chose to tell their story of their child's school experience during the initial meeting and appeared to value the opportunity to do so. This indicates that the parents of young people with ASD may value enhanced communication and support and suggests that the systems around the child may not always be working coherently.

6.3.2 Reflections and limitations in relation to data collection

In reflecting upon the study, it is also important to note the difficulty faced identifying potential participants. Frequently, potential participants did not meet the selection criteria, often having additional diagnoses such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Tourette's Syndrome or Anxiety. Indeed, it became apparent that young people are often initially diagnosed with Anxiety prior to being diagnosed with ASD. There was also difficulty in recruiting participants who did meet the selection criteria, most notably due to apparent concern that others would find out that they were autistic. In this respect there was the potential limitation that participants may effectively be self-selecting, however, some potential participants who initially voiced such concern did go on to become participants in the study. The worry of potentially being identified and, through association with the study, being regarded as a young person with ASD, was stated as being the cause behind concern expressed separately by two participants at the prospect of their respective stories being recorded. This lends support to Baines (2012), that young people regarded as being 'Autistic' work to distance themselves from the label and its associations. Indeed, one of these interviews was unable to be carried out in keeping with a Narrative Interview (Mishler, 1986a, 1986b) as participant hesitation at being audio recorded necessitated that the researcher led the interview in a question-response format, with the audio recorder being used selectively for responses that the participant had planned, scripted and was happy to record. This did not enable

sections of unplanned personal narrative to be shared and recorded and, as a result, this participant and their data were withdrawn from the study. Additionally, a third participant was initially hesitant about becoming a participant in the study as he did not want to self-identify with the label of 'Autism'. Indeed, a section of his narrative appears to be dedicated to the expression and justification of the rejection of such a diagnostic label, eloquently arguing that labelling individuals who are united by sharing certain character traits does not warrant a 'disorder'. 'It's not that some people will get something wrong with them that separates them from reality, it's that some people are like this.' (Edward's transcript, L 1193-1195). He states that the very use of the term 'Autism' is insulting: '…autism is a Greek insult meaning selfishness… being insulted in Greek… is no better than being insulted in English.' (Edward's transcript, L 1161- 1169).

6.3.3 Reflections and limitations in relation to the study sample

In addition to meeting study selection criteria, the five young people whose narratives were shared and recorded offered a fairly representative sample of mainstream secondary school students with a diagnosis of ASD, aiding transferability (the qualitative parallel of external validity (Guba and Lincoln, 1989)). With four males to one female, participants were representative of the gender ratio of young people with ASD (Hundert et al., 2005). Participants varied in age and year group, providing narrative content on the different key stages (phases) of school experience from both immediate and retrospective perspectives, all participants attended different mainstream schools, living in different areas. However, it must be noted that the sample was not ethnically diverse (reflecting the limited ethnic diversity of the county within which the study was conducted). It must also be acknowledged that four out of five of the participants have a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome (AS), as opposed to ASD. Although no longer separate diagnoses (APA, 2013), in order to have received an AS diagnosis, participants must not have experienced delays in language or cognitive development (APA, 1994), and this may relate to the limitation that, necessarily, only those young people with sound expressive language skills (minimum neurotypical age equivalence of 11 years) were included in the study. This may have an impact upon transferability. It is therefore in response to such potential limitations relating to the sample that contextual

information in relation to each of the participants has been shared, in order to aid transparency, transferability and demonstrate credibility (the qualitative parallel of internal validity (Guba and Lincoln (1989)). Indeed, the contextual information in relation to Gavin shares that he was initially informed by three different Community Paediatricians that he was 'borderline' with regard to a diagnosis of ASD. In light of this it could be contended that Gavin may not meet the study selection criteria of having ASD. However, Gavin has received a formal diagnosis of AS by a Community Paediatrician and it can be argued that his position reflects the fact that ASD is a spectrum condition, with great variability existing amongst young people who have a diagnosis. In this respect the inclusion of Gavin in this study can be seen to enhance transferability.

6.3.4 Reflections and limitations in relation to the analysis procedure of The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective

Limitations to the study can also be found with regard to the analysis of the narratives. In relation to The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998), it can be difficult to separate fabula (the content of the story) from sjuzet (the form of the narrative / how the story is being told) when the narrative question being asked requires participants to reflect upon their experiences. It was therefore important to work to distinguish between experiences being recalled, which were considered fabula, and those reflections being made in relation to them, considered to be sjuzet. Distinguishing between fabula and sjuzet can also be difficult when content is embedded in large sections of reflection and commentary. Additionally, it can be hard to distinguish between fabula and sjuzet when the narrator speaks in the first person for his or herself as well as for others, recalling interactions in terms of what was said (as was the case in Faith's narrative and in parts of Kyle's). In light of such difficulty and the associated limitation, an analysed transcript exemplar has been provided (appendix I) to aid transparency. The concern also existed that there could be misinterpretation when identifying narrative themes. For example, where data was not as rich and a broad theme existed, such as in relation to Kyle's narrative, it was noted that it was more challenging to identify themes, raising concerns about overinterpretation. There was also the risk that themes identified in those narratives already analysed may become more salient for

the researcher, working to hinder the identification of new and different themes from the narrative data under analysis. It was therefore important to check that all themes were grounded within the narrative data. However, there was also the risk of overinterpretation in identifying narrative content in relation to a theme, necessitating clear theme titles and content criteria. For example, during the analysis of Gavin's narrative the theme initially identified as 'support' was clarified, being re-titled as 'receiving and not receiving support' in response to difficulty identifying the narrative content relevant to the theme. Although, it is worth noting that if overinterpretation has occurred, concern may be unwarranted, for as Emerson and Frosh (2004) advise, it is better to 'err on the side of overinterpretation' (p.62) than misconstrue a narrative to be meaningless. Ultimately, it is hoped that researcher awareness of the risk of overinterpretation during the analysis process will have helped in guarding against it.

6.3.5 Reflections and limitations in relation to the analysis procedure of Critical Narrative Analysis

Limitations relating to the analysis process can also be found in relation to Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). Re-transcription according to Gee's (1991) use of 'poetic' line breaks can be challenging, requiring a well-tuned ear in order to identify pitch glide (a rise and fall in intonation) and those words bearing the pitch-glide (the 'focus'). Although the researcher practised this skill and checked the re-transcription, there is concern that errors may still have occurred. There is also the consideration that some English words appear to naturally contain a certain emphasis in light of their phonemes, which could have an impact upon the accurate identification of those words intended by the narrator to bear pitch glide, ultimately affecting the analysis and interpretation of meaning. However, it is hoped that in being situated within a pitch glide, those words bearing the pitch glide will have been apparent, avoiding such misinterpretation. In addition to such challenges, aspects of the procedure of Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004) lack clarity. When re-transcribing according to Gee (1991), it is unclear how to identify a 'line break' (the end of an idea organised by meaning and intonation) as there is little distinction between this and the separation of 'idea units' (a sentence with a 'pitch glide' (a rise and fall in intonation)), where there can be more than one

'idea unit' per line. The only distinction offered is that 'lines' involve organisation of 'idea units' by meaning, in addition to organisation by intonation, with Emerson and Frosh (2004) noting that this is akin to a sentence in writing. However, as the purpose of the re-transcription is to identify the meaning of the narrator, to focus solely on this element in making the distinction appears to bring a degree of circularity, arguably limiting the value of the process. Therefore, with respect to this difficulty, 'line breaks' were distinguished from collections of 'idea units' through consideration of the presence of natural pauses in the speech as well as through its content, in an attempt to use all available indications of a change in 'meaning' and so enhance the value of the process.

6.3.6 Reflections and limitations in relation to study procedure and the discrepancy found between some member check and analysis findings

A further potential limitation of the analysis process is highlighted by Liam's disagreement with some of the findings shared with him during the member check meeting. However, any apparent misinterpretation / discrepancy in relation to findings from the analysis of Liam's narrative may not be a consequence of the analysis procedure, but rather of the study procedure. In relation to the study procedure it is important to note that in contrast to the narrative interview, Liam's Mother was present during the member check meeting (at his request). It is therefore possible that Liam may not have wanted to openly share such personal information in front of his mother. That he asked his mother to stay also suggests that he may have not felt at ease and it may also be relevant that he had just had an argument with his mother prior to the member check. Liam may therefore have been less able to self-reflect and openly share his thoughts in light of his emotional state.

At this point it is also worth noting that one of the other participants, Kyle, asked for his mother to stay while the narrative interview was carried out. This may also potentially have had an impact upon the narrative content shared and it is important to note that during the interview Kyle was distracted by his mother's activity on the computer in the room, and that he engaged her in conversation at two points during the interview. Kyle's narrative interview also deviated from the Narrative Interview Guide (Appendix E). After providing an initial brief narrative, he appeared to find it difficult to know what to talk about and despite reassurance

and prompting this ultimately resulted in a more traditional interview of question and answer format, at odds with the Narrative Interview (Mishler 1986a, 1986b). These circumstances are likely to have had an effect upon the quality of the narrative data collected, and subsequently upon the credibility of the findings in relation to Kyle's story, specifically that friendships with peers may afford young people with a diagnosis of ASD the opportunity to learn about themselves.

Discrepancy in relation to Liam's member check findings and the findings from the analysis of his narrative may alternatively be a consequence of the nature of the topic being investigated. Liam may not be consciously aware of these aspects of his self-identity. It is interesting to note that of all the member check meetings, Liam's was the only one that involved content that referred to self-identity explicitly, and that the two findings with which Liam disagreed are the two more reflective findings, relating to Liam's conception of his self-identity. The findings with which he agreed were related to his feelings and experiences, which may be easier for him to access. Equally, his member check responses could reflect that it may be difficult for him to acknowledge aspects that imply that things are not ideal, or that challenge his understanding of his self-identity. He may also want to keep up the appearance of confidence and control in front of others, particularly in front of the researcher as someone relatively unknown to him (see Appendix J).

6.3.7 Consideration of Researcher Reflexivity

Reflection upon my own position and its potential influence upon this study have led me to consider that my previous experience as a secondary school teacher, managing interactions with young people, could potentially have made Faith's story more salient to me. This could have had an impact upon the themes drawn during the analysis of this narrative and ultimately, of the interpretations made. Additionally, having worked with a number of young people with ASD who are having difficulty attending school while I was on placement with an Educational Psychology Service, Gavin's story was also of particular interest. It may therefore be that prior experience of similar cases to Gavin's could potentially have had an impact upon the analysis of his narrative, with certain aspects of the narrative having greater resonance and being priviledged.

Some of the participants (particularly Faith and George) were also more socially engaging and it should also be considered that this could have had an impact upon my engagement with them in comparison to that with other participants. For example, there is a risk that that the process of conducting the narrative interview could have been affected by the heightened use of active listening techniques such as body language, which may have had an effect upon the data collected. Such a risk may also exist with regard to Edward's interview, as he spoke particularly eloquently and passionately when telling his story.

In proposing my own theory of identity there is also the potential risk that I have unconsciously paid more attention to aspects of the narratives that could lend support to the proposed theory. However, a clear outline of the steps of analysis was used to enhance the transparency and creditability of the study (see 'Method' section, chapter 3.3).

6.4 Implications for Practice and Research

6.4.1 Implications in relation to the school experience of young people with ASD

This study serves to highlight the value of raising the voices of young people with a diagnosis of ASD. Findings from the analysis of their stories indicate that being a young person with ASD at a mainstream secondary school may be a restrictive and disempowering experience that can leave the young person feeling vulnerable. Indeed, it appears that for young people with ASD, school may feel restrictive as a result of the school systems and structures, as Edward's story suggests and, where there is an apparent lack of empathy and understanding from school staff, it may cause the young person to feel disempowered, as Faith's story can be seen to highlight. The stories of Gavin and Kyle also suggest that young people with ASD may feel vulnerable in school, valuing any additional support from school staff (as Gavin appears to convey in his story) or from friends (as Kyle's story seems to illustrate).

Indeed, school also appears to have the potential to aid the development of self-identity for young people with ASD. As Faith's story seems to suggest, it may be valuable for young people with ASD to experience understanding, empathetic relationships with school staff. Edward and Gavin's stories can also be seen to

indicate the potential value of providing young people with ASD with opportunities for free choice at school. Accordingly, developing opportunities for free choice and enhancing school staff understanding of ASD, so that appropriate additional support can be provided, may be beneficial in aiding the school experience of young people with ASD.

6.4.2 Implications for practice

Findings from this study suggest that the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD may be an adaptive one. School experience can have an impact upon self-identity for young people with ASD. Findings also imply that enhanced insight on the part of schools in relation to young people with a diagnosis of ASD may be beneficial in aiding the development of their self-identity through the identification of school structures and systems that may be restrictive. Enabling these young people to have enhanced free choice in school along with providing support, not least through school staff showing empathy and understanding, could enable schools to help young people with ASD in the development of their self-identity. This highlights a role for the Educational Psychologist in delivering training, guidance and support to school staff in order to enhance their knowledge and understanding of ASD. Educational Psychologists may also be able to make a valuable contribution in facilitating schools in the development of systems to enhance communication with young people with ASD, in addition to carrying out work to promote a child-centred perspective, raising the voice of the young person with ASD and helping school staff to develop insight in to the experience of being a young person with ASD in school.

Whilst there are limitations relating to the finding that friendships with peers may afford young people with ASD with the opportunity to learn about themselves, warranting further research in this area, it remains that schools could potentially aid the development of self-identity in young people with ASD through the promotion and support of peer friendships in school. Reflection upon the study process also suggests that young people with ASD may hold concerns around association with the autistic label and it may be helpful for schools to be mindful of this as they work to support these young people and enhance inclusion. It could also be helpful for Educational Psychologists to be aware of this as they seek to understand difficulties

and remove barriers for young people with ASD, working to build positive relationships and to promote engagement with appropriate forms of intervention and support. Reflection upon the study has also led to the consideration that there may be a lack of coherence in the systems around the young person with ASD, which may be aided through enhanced communication between the school, parents and the young person. It may therefore be that an important role for schools is in finding and establishing effective channels of communication with both parents and young people with ASD. Educational Psychologists can also help with this task, being ideally positioned to assist in bringing about such change. As Miller (2003) notes, the Educational Psychologist appears to be able to provide a temporary overlapping boundary across systems, which can work to aid communication and unite the systems around a young person.

6.4.3 Implications for research

This study has raised considerations for future research. It would be beneficial for this study to be repeated using a larger, more ethnically diverse sample of young people with ASD from across the United Kingdom, in order to further investigate findings. This is not least in relation to the finding that friendships with peers could potentially afford the opportunity to learn about themselves. In this case, recruitment would involve Educational Psychologists (EPs) from a number of different Educational Psychology Services across the country, services who would be willing to take part. However, if carried out again, only those young people meeting the selection criteria who feel happy to be interviewed and have a member check meeting without a parent or guardian being in the same room (although still present in the house) would be chosen as participants. Indeed, more time would also be taken to build trusting relationships with potential participants, not only so that they have confidence in the researcher such that they are happy to take part in light of potential anonymity concerns, but also so that they feel at ease without having a parent or guardian in the room during the interview and member check. Inter-rater reliability checks would also be used in relation to the only objective aspect of the analysis process, namely in identifying pitch glide (a rise and fall in intonation) and those words bearing the pitch-glide (the ‘focus’) when re-transcribing according to Gee’s

(1991) use of 'poetic' line breaks as part of Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004).

Personal reflection upon the use of a narrative approach with young people who have a diagnosis of ASD suggests that this would be an effective approach to use again, should the study be repeated using a larger, more ethnically diverse sample of young people with ASD. Use of a narrative approach within the current study provided enough data of sufficient depth to produce a response to the research question. A further personal reflection is that such an approach appears to yield a higher quantity and quality of data when used with young people in mid-adolescence (fifteen to seventeen years of age) as opposed to young people in early adolescence (eleven to fourteen years of age). When using the narrative approach of this study with participants in mid-adolescence, these young people appeared less daunted and more relaxed than the participants in early adolescence, seeming to require less prompts and being quicker to produce a free-flowing narrative. The participants in mid-adolescence also produced longer narratives, not only in respect of their longer school careers, but also appearing to give greater elaboration and reflection. In this way, participants in mid-adolescence appeared to provide richer data than that produced by their younger counterparts, and it may be helpful to be mindful of this in planning any future research.

It would also be of value to carry out further research to investigate specifically whether friendships with peers can afford the opportunity for young people with ASD to learn about themselves, as Kyle's narrative implies. Further research could also be valuable in investigating why a discrepancy occurred in relation to Liam's member check findings and the findings from the analysis of his narrative, as this could further inform understanding of the nature of self-identity. Indeed, this finding suggests that it could be beneficial to investigate conscious awareness of self-identity and the ability of young people to self-reflect upon self-identity. It may also be valuable to further investigate the proposed theory of identity (that identity is an adaptive process that utilises experience of the sociocultural context to generate a 'self', wherein the individual's experiences act as the material subject to the process, being shaped by, and interpreted in relation to, the sociocultural context). In particular, investigating whether or not this theory applies to all young people, not just to those with ASD. Further research could also investigate the relationship between educational experience and self-identity for

young people with ASD who attend a particular alternative form of educational provision compared to mainstream school, in order to further contribute towards the identification of any factors that may have a beneficial role in supporting the development of self-identity for these young people. A longitudinal study could also be of value in identifying how the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with ASD may change across a school career.

7 Conclusion

This study highlights the value of raising the voices of young people with a diagnosis of ASD, voices that imply that being a young person with ASD at a mainstream secondary school can be perceived to be a restrictive and disempowering experience that can leave the young person feeling vulnerable. Findings from the analysis of school experience narratives of young people with ASD support the proposed theory of identity (that identity is an adaptive process that utilises experience of the sociocultural context to generate a 'self'), suggesting that the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with a diagnosis of ASD may be an adaptive one, where school experience is the material subject to the process of identity. Accordingly, findings appear to show that school experience can either hinder or help the development of self-identity for young people with a diagnosis of ASD. The narrative findings appear to suggest that schools may lack insight in relation to young people with ASD, with systems and structures potentially hindering the development of their self-identity. Equally, the narrative findings suggest that where young people with ASD are able to experience free choice and receive support, not least through school staff empathy and understanding, they may be aided in their development of self-identity. In addition, friendships with peers may potentially afford the opportunity for young people with ASD to learn about themselves, however, significant limitations exist in relation to this finding, warranting further research in this area.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A.

A systematic review of the literature relating to the self-identity of young people with ASD

A systematic approach was applied, according to the guidance and stages of a Systematic Review outlined by Gough (2007) (Figure 1).

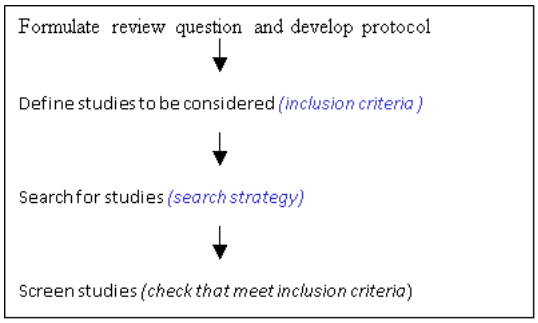


Figure 1. Systematic map of research activity

Two further stages of appraising study quality and relevance and synthesising findings, as outlined by Gough (2007) for a systematic synthesis of research evidence, were also carried out.

Review Question

What can existing research tell us about the self-identity of young people with ASD?

Search Strategy

The search strategy remained the same as that outlined above, in Appendix B. It was considered that this approach would enable a comprehensive review of the literature.

Study Selection Criteria

Only research studies were selected. Studies were chosen if each of the following criteria were met:

1. Individuals described as having ASD (with no co-occurring diagnoses stated) had been selected to participate.

2. Participants included young people (up to and including 25 years, so as to include young people in higher education and to correspond with the definition of a young person according to the SEND Code of Practice (2015))
3. The aim and / or outcome of the study related to self-identity. (This was defined as including: self-identity; aspects of self-identity (for example, gender identity); self-concept; self-awareness; and self-understanding. Following a pre-review exploration of database studies, it was decided that the term 'self-perception' would not be included. Initial exploration found the term to relate to cognitive processing within a specific area (for example, face perception), as opposed to having a broader role linked to self-identity).

Studies were excluded if their aim was solely to explore the validity of research tools. This approach aimed to comprehensively identify studies to contribute to a review of current findings relating to the self-identity of young people with ASD.

Search Method for Identification of Studies

Boolean logic was used to produce more refined search results. The search criteria, '(autis* OR asperger* OR ASD OR ASC) AND (identity OR self-concept) AND (adolescen* OR teenage* OR student OR pupil OR young person)' was used to identify relevant studies. Table 1. shows the filter terms used for databases / electronic archive searches where high numbers of records were raised by the search. In searching the electronic archive of e-theses, where Boolean logic could not be used, terms 'identity' and 'self-concept', were both combined with each one of the following terms: 'Autism', 'Autistic', 'Asperger,' 'ASD' and 'ASC' to methodically work through the range of relevant search terms. Once filtered, where required, records were screened according to the study selection criteria before full-text articles of any studies selected through screening were assessed for eligibility (against the same study selection criteria).

Table 1. A table to show the filter terms used according to database / archive search

Database / Electronic Archive	Web of Science	PsycINFO	ERIC	ProQuest	CORDIS	University of Nottingham electronic archive of theses	British Journal of Educational Psychology
Primary Filters	**Year:** 2000 – Present (2017) **Subject:** Psychology, Psychology Developmental, Psychology Educational, Psychology Experimental, Psychology Clinical, Psychology	**Year:** 2000-Present (2017) **Subject:** Identity Formation, Self-Concept.	N/A	**Year:** 2000-2017 **Source:** Scholarly Journals **Subject:** **Inclusion Criteria:** Adolescent, Autism, Self-Concept, Psychology, Asperger Syndrome, Students, Teenagers. **Exclusion Criteria:** Adult, Animals, Proteins, Middle-aged, Attention, Index Medicus, Cognition, Mutation, Language, Schizophrenia,	N/A	N/A	**Year:** 2000-2017 **Source:** Journals

	Multidisciplinary, Psychology Social, Psychology Biological, Psychology Applied.			Risk Factors, Semantics, Age, Cognitive Ability, Parents / Parenting, Aged, Linguistics, Medical Research, MRI, Reaction Time, Animal Cognition, Infant, Non-fiction, Photic Stimulation, Parents, Questionnaires, Genomes, Mice, Animal Behaviour, Genetics, Gene Expression, Neuropsychology Tests, Face, Rodents, Neurons, Models, Culture, Evolution, Pattern Recognition, Theory, Genes, Empathy, Recognition (Psychological), ADD, ADHD, Cues, Mothers, Politics, Intelligence, Society, Psychotherapy, Age Factors,			

				Decision Making, Quality of Life, Education, Memory, Visual Perception, Families, Facial Expression, Brain Research, Interpersonal Relations, Learning, Communication, Social Interaction, Social Behaviour, Behavioural Sciences, Mental Disorders, Preschool, Emotions, Brain, Cognition and Reasoning, Behaviour, Adult.			
Secondary Filters				**Subject:** **Inclusion Criteria:** Identity, Self-Conception **Exclusion Criteria:** Foreign Countries, Personal Relationships, Peers,			**Search Criteria:** Terms present in Abstract

				Neurosciences, Educational Environment, Correlation, Collaboration, Bullying, Barriers, Sexual Behaviour, Personality Traits, Academic Achievement, Neurology, Friendship, Diagnosis, Depression, Anxiety, Age Differences, Symptoms, 20th Century History, Teaching, Soul, Schools, Pathology, Measures (individual), Gender Differences, Siblings, Interventions.			

Systematic Search Results

See Figure 2.

A description of the selected studies is provided in Table 2. and an assessment of the extent to which each study contributes evidence to answering the review question, made through the application of the 'Weight of Evidence Framework' (Gough, 2007) assessment criteria, is provided in Table 3.

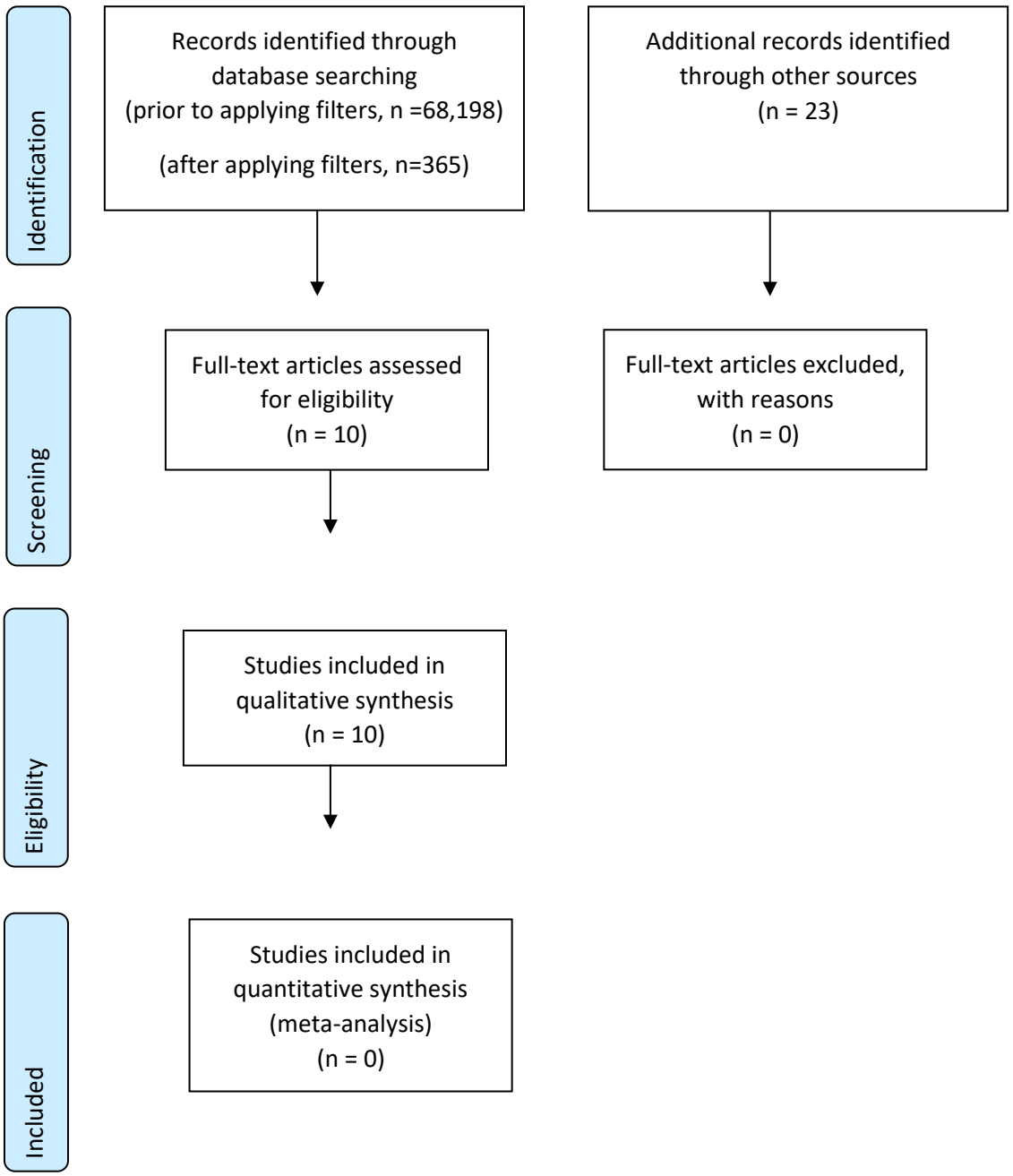


Figure 2. Outcome of systematic search of literature relating to the self-identity of young people with ASD.

Table 2. A description of selected studies from the systematic search of literature relating to the self-identity of young people with ASD

Study	**Design / Methodology /Applied framework**	**Aim**	**Participants**	**Outcome measure(s) / Method of data collection**	**Findings**	**Availability**
Baines (2012)	Case studies with in a larger multi-sited ethnography. Grounded theory approach to analysis. (Analysis process combines discourse and positioning analysis in relation to the framework of Harré's (2003) Positioning Theory).	To examine how young people with ASD construct identities through social interactions	2 USA high school students on the high-functioning end of the Autistic Spectrum	Interview and participant observation	Participants worked to distance themselves from being labelled as autistic, negotiating their identities with the knowledge that their interactions impact upon how they are perceived in different contexts.	Full text
Cox, Thompson, Anderson, Mintz, Locks, Morgan,	Conceptual framework of Astin's (1991) inputs, environments and	To explore how students with ASD make sense of their experiences with higher education and	9 participants with a diagnosis of ASD (8 male, 1 female). Age range of 18-50+.	Semi-structured interview. Video data collected to complement the analyses of	Tensions found to exist between participants' public and private identities. Academic, social, emotional, self-	Full text

Study	Design / Methodology /Applied framework	Aim	Participants	Outcome measure(s) / Method of data collection	Findings	Availability
Edelstein and Wolz (2017)	outcomes (I-E-O) model applied. A constant comparative approach to analysis (Straus and Corbin, 1998) is used.	how they respond to potential barriers to postsecondary success.	All registered with the local Centre for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD).	transcripts by providing a more comprehensive understanding of participant responses (video data not directly coded).	advocacy and communication challenges exist for individuals with ASD in college.	
Dewinter, De Graaf and Begeer (2017)	Quasi-experimental, survey design. Questions answered by participants with ASD formed part of a broader survey. Survey questions were taken from a populations study	To compare sexual orientation and romantic relationship experience in adolescents and adults with ASD and general population peers. To explore gender identity amongst individuals with ASD in relation	675 adolescent (> 15 years) and adult participants, all registered in the Netherlands Autism Register. Diagnosis self-reported by participants. 48.3% male participants with ASD compared to	9 questions from a populations study survey (Sexual Health in the Netherlands 2011) were added to a survey on 'functioning in different aspects of life', completed by participants with	Compared to general population peers, more people with ASD (especially women) reported sexual attraction to both same and opposite sex partners. Around half of participants with ASD were in a relationship (mostly heterosexual). A	Full text

Study	Design / Methodology /Applied framework	Aim	Participants	Outcome measure(s) / Method of data collection	Findings	Availability
	on sexual health (Sexual Health in the Netherlands 2011), allowing comparison with a general population control group.	to assigned gender at birth.	51.7% women. Participants with ASD included 30 boys and 44 girls under the age of 25. General population control group (n=8064).	ASD. Participants with ASD also completed, 'The Autism Quotient – short version' (Hoekstra et al. 2011) to describe and compare ASD characteristics.	notable number of participants with ASD reported gender non-conforming feelings (more women than men).	
Dritschel, Wisely, Goddard, Robinson and Howlin (2010)	Quasi-experimental.	To examine whether adolescents with high functioning Autism (HFA) / Asperger Syndrome (AS) judge others as having as much knowledge about their inner mental	22 adolescents (19 males, 3 females) with a diagnosis of HFA / AS and 22 controls (matched for age, gender and IQ) participated in the study. The age of	The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (Dunn et al, 1997), the Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (Wechsler, 1999) and the Self-	In contrast to typically developing adolescents, those with HFA / AS judged the comparison person (an individual they named as being closest to them or who helps them most in their daily life) as having more	Full text

Study	Design / Methodology /Applied framework	Aim	Participants	Outcome measure(s) / Method of data collection	Findings	Availability
		states as they do (self-understanding).	participants ranged between 11-16 years of age.	Concept Questionnaire (Mitchell and O'Keefe, 2008).	knowledge about themselves than they did.	
Farley, López and Saunders (2010)	Mixed design, with group (ASD vs. typically developing) as the between-participants factor and self-through-other and self-understanding as the within-participants factor.	To extend Lee and Hobson's (1998) findings regarding self-conceptualisation in ASD (in terms of self-as-object, participants reported fewer self-conceptualisations framed within social and interpersonal contexts compared to psychological and physical contexts). The study also aimed	16 adolescent males with a diagnosis of ASD matched according to chronological age and verbal mental age to 16 typically developing adolescents. Age of participants ranged from 11-15 years.	A modified version of the self-as-subject section of Damon and Hart's (1988) self-understanding interview.	Self-conceptualisation ability was similar between groups across categories of distinctiveness and continuity, but reduced in the ASD group under the category of agency. Participants with ASD were found to be less able to conceptualise themselves from another's perspective.	Full text

Study	Design / Methodology /Applied framework	Aim	Participants	Outcome measure(s) / Method of data collection	Findings	Availability
		to investigate the ability of adolescents with ASD to conceptualise self through other.				
Jackson, Skirrow and Hare (2011)	Quasi-experimental	To test Hobson's (1993) hypothesis (that ASD cognitive and linguistic abilities result from abnormalities in inter-subjective engagement, in turn resulting in impaired reflective self-awareness) by examining self-understanding in individuals with Asperger Syndrome.	10 participants with a diagnosis of AS (age range of 19-63 years old) and 10 control participants (age range of 20-53 years old), who had no developmental disorder. Students made up 30% of both groups.	Self-understanding interview (Damon and Hart, 1988). Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence.	The AS group demonstrated impairment in the 'self-as-object' and 'self-as-subject' domains, supporting Hobson's concept of an impaired capacity for self-awareness and self-reflection in individuals with ASD.	Full text

Study	Design / Methodology /Applied framework	Aim	Participants	Outcome measure(s) / Method of data collection	Findings	Availability
MacLeod, Lewis and Robertson (2013)	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Social identity theory framework.	To explore how higher education students with Autism make meaning of their label.	6 higher education students with Autism / Asperger Syndrome	Flexible, in-depth individual interviews (four face-to-face interviews, one telephone interview and one via synchronous discussion).	Participants conveyed strong self-images regardless of how and whether they identified with their diagnosis. This is attributed to their experience of success and achievement in relation to their personal strengths (their relative privilege in achieving higher education).	Full text
Mogensen and Mason (2015)	Collaborative, participatory research approach. Informed by phenomenology and ethnography. For data analysis,	To learn about the lives of young people with ASD, from their own experiences and using methods to	5 participants (age range of 13-19 years), all diagnosed with ASD.	Participants chose communication options (face-to-face interviews, drawings, photos, communication	Individual participants integrated knowledge of their diagnosis with their sense of self, negotiating issues of identity and feelings of difference in different	Full text

Study	Design / Methodology /Applied framework	Aim	Participants	Outcome measure(s) / Method of data collection	Findings	Availability
	Thematic analysis is used alongside an interpretative framework (Richards, 2005).	facilitate their direct participation.		cards and e-mails). Communication strategies were flexible to meet needs of each individual participant.	ways. Whether the diagnosis was experienced as positive or negative depended upon the extent to which it facilitated knowledge and control.	
Mukaddes (2002)	Case Report	To explore gender identity problems, discussing the developmental pattern of cross-gender behaviour in children with ASD	2 boys (7 and 10 years of age) with high functioning Autism who show persistent gender identity problems	Data from Psychiatry practice casework over 5 and 4 years respectively.	Diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder (with a long follow-up) seems possible for individuals with ASD. High functioning verbally able individuals with ASD can express their gender preferences.	Full text

Study	Design / Methodology /Applied framework	Aim	Participants	Outcome measure(s) / Method of data collection	Findings	Availability
Robinson, Howlin and Russell (2017)	Quasi-experimental	To compare autobiographical memory (semantic and episodic) and knowledge of self (internal / external self-knowledge and introspection / mentalising abilities) in children with high functioning ASD.	48 participants (24 young people with a diagnosis of ASD and 24 typically developing controls) aged 11-18 years old. Participant inclusion criteria: an IQ of 70 or above and English as a first language.	Semantic Episodic Autobiographical Memory Task. Self-knowledge Interview Task. Reading the mind in the eyes task for children (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001).	The ASD group demonstrated autobiographical memory difficulties (a reduction in the retrieval of semantic personality traits, more prompts required to facilitate episodic memory retrieval and fewer episodic memories containing emotional and sensory information). Their knowledge of the self and others was found to be impaired, having reduced introspection and poorer mentalising abilities. There was also found to be an	Full text

Study	Design / Methodology /Applied framework	Aim	Participants	Outcome measure(s) / Method of data collection	Findings	Availability
					atypical relationship between autobiographical memory and self-knowledge for participants with ASD.	

Studies were assessed for their quality and relevance to the Systematic Review through the application of the 'Weight of Evidence Framework' (Gough, 2007), outlined in Figure 3.

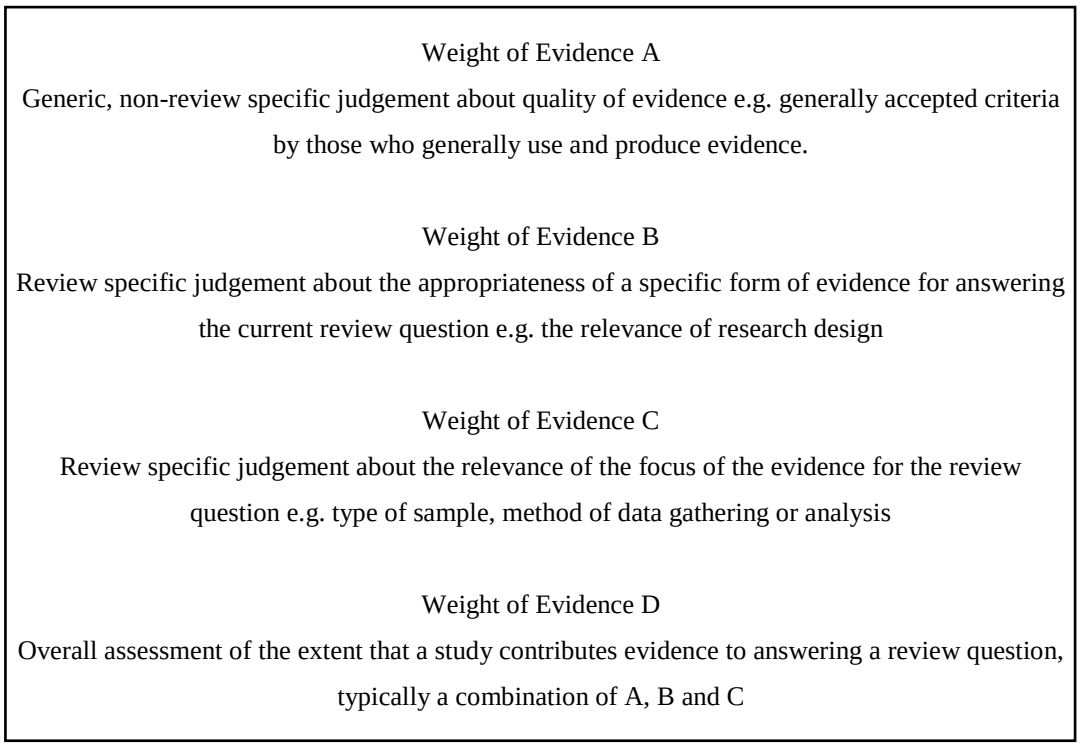


Figure 3. Weight of Evidence Framework assessment criteria for use in applied research (Gough, 2007, p.11)

Studies were rated Low, Medium or High in relation to each of the four Weight of Evidence criteria (see tables 3 and 4).

Table 3. A table to show the weight of evidence judgement criteria in relation to selected studies

Weight of Evidence Criteria (Gough, 2007)	Applicability to Quantitative (Q) / Qualitative (Ql) studies	**Criteria used for this review**	Baines (2012)	Cox et al. (2017)	Dewinter, De Graaf and Begeer (2017)	Dritschel, Wisely, Goddard, Robinson and Howlin (2010)	Farley, López and Saunders (2010)	Jackson, Skirrow and Hare (2011)	MacLeod, Lewis and Robertson (2013)	Mogensen and Mason (2015)	Mukaddes (2002)	Robinson, Howlin and Russell (2017)
A – Generic judgement about the quality of the research design	**Q**	Participants with ASD selected to take part in the study are representative of the population of young people with ASD				■	■					■
	Q	Confounding variables controlled / Equivalence of control and experimental groups on key baseline measures clearly checked (no significant differences) or controlled for differences between groups in statistical analysis			■	■	■	■				■
	Q	Standardised measures / Data collection tools valid and reliable				■						
	Q	Understandable and clear statistical analysis / outline of key outcomes			■	■	■	■				■
	Q	Researcher blind to grouping and / or participants unaware of research question						■				

	Q	Where relevant, any apparent withdrawals and drop-outs are explicitly reported										
	Ql	Explicit account of theoretical framework and /or inclusion of a literature review										
	Ql	Clear aims and objectives										
	Ql	Clear description of context and participants										
	Ql	Clear description of methodology and method including method of analysis										
	Ql	Attempt made to establish reliability and validity of data analysis										
	Ql	Inclusion of sufficient original data to support interpretations										
B- Specific judgement of the appropriateness of method to answer the review question	**Q**	Randomised Control Trial, Quasi-experimental, Case-Control or Cohort Study design										
	Q	For each research aim relevant to the review question, statistical analysis is used to examine potential differences between control and experimental groups in order to determine any effect										
	Ql	Methodology justified										

	QI	Theoretical framework(s) made explicit and justified										
C – Relevance of the study in answering the review question	**Q** **QI**	Participants / control and/or experimental group comprised solely of young people (0-25) with a confirmed diagnosis of ASD										
	Q **QI**	Outcome of study contributes to knowledge about the self-identity of young people with ASD										
	Q **QI**	No concerns about the propriety of how the research was undertaken, such as ethical concerns										

A: High (7-5), Medium (4-2) Low (1-0) B: High (2), Medium (1), Low (0) C: High (3), Medium (2), Low (1-0)

Table 4. A table to show the assessment of the extent to which each selected study contributes evidence to answering the review question

Study	**Weight of evidence A**	**Weight of evidence B**	**Weight of evidence C**	**Weight of evidence D (An overall judgement. The average score of A, B and C).**
Baines (2012)	High	High	High	High
Cox, Thompson, Anderson, Mintz, Locks, Morgan, Edelstein and Wolz (2017)	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Dewinter, De Graaf and Begeer (2017)	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Dritschel, Wisely, Goddard, Robinson and Howlin (2010)	High	High	High	High
Farley, López and Saunders (2010)	Medium	High	High	High
Jackson, Skirrow and Hare (2011)	Medium	High	Low	Medium
MacLeod, Lewis and Robertson (2013)	Medium	High	Low	Medium

Study	Weight of evidence A	Weight of evidence B	Weight of evidence C	Weight of evidence D (An overall judgement. The average score of A, B and C).
Mogensen and Mason (2015)	High	High	High	High
Mukaddes (2002)	Low	Low	Low	Low
Robinson, Howlin and Russell (2017)	Medium	High	High	High

9.2 Appendix B.

A systematic search of literature relevant to the research question

A systematic approach was applied, according to the guidance and first three stages of Systematic Review as outlined by Gough (2007) (Figure 1).

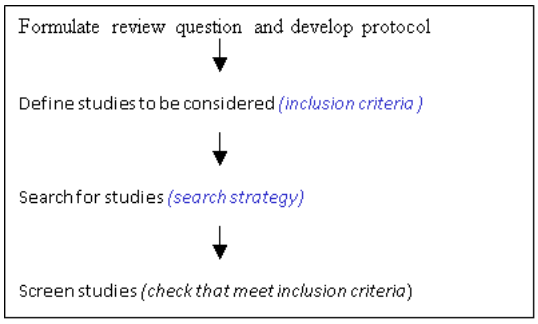


Figure 1. Systematic map of research activity

Search Question

What existing research can inform us about the nature of any relationship or association between school experience and identity for young people with ASD?

Search Strategy

Searches were conducted using five electronic databases (Web of Science, PsycINFO, ERIC, ProQuest and CORDIS) and an electronic archive of theses (www.eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/etheses/). A hand search of the British Journal of Educational Psychology using the Wiley online library (www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com) was also carried out, this journal being an established journal and a journal of the British Psychological Society, publishing psychological research that contributes to the theory and practice of education. A further hand search of the references and citations of studies identified as potentially relevant also took place. The Web of Science database was selected for its comprehensive size and nature, containing articles, proceedings papers, reviews, editorial material and book chapters and reviews. PsycINFO and ERIC (Educational Resource Information Centre) databases were selected for their more specialised nature, the former relating to the behavioural sciences and mental health, with literature of relevance to Psychologists and professionals in related fields, and the

latter to the field of education, containing the current index of journals in Education and the Education Resources index. The ProQuest database of dissertations and theses was selected to search gray literature and this was complemented by searching the University of Nottingham eTheses archive. The European Community's Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) provided a means of searching EU-funded research projects.

Study Selection Criteria

Studies were selected if participants were described as having ASD and if the study referred to both the experience of being in education and to identity or self-concept in, or across, the research question, the aim or the outcome of the study. This approach aimed to reveal the nature of any relationship or association within the literature between school experience and identity for young people with ASD.

Search Method for Identification of Studies

Boolean logic was used to produce more refined search results. The search criteria, 'school AND experience AND (identity OR self-concept) AND (autis* OR asperger* OR ASD OR ASC)' was used to identify relevant studies. Across databases, the term, 'school' also yielded results relating to other educational settings such as university and college and so it was felt that a broader term was not required. The only database search requiring filters to be applied, due to the high number of records raised by the search, was that carried out using the ProQuest database. In this case only peer reviewed studies published since the year 2000 were selected and a subject filter was applied to include the following subject terms: adolescent; autism; teenagers; self-concept; young adult; students. A classification filter was then applied to include relevant studies according to the following classification terms (excluding all others, being regarded as not relevant to the search criteria): United States; schools and education services, Western Europe and Canada. In searching the electronic archive of e-theses, where Boolean logic could not be used, the key word combinations of 'school experience identity' and 'school experience self-concept', were both combined with each one of the following terms: 'Autism', 'Autistic', 'Asperger,' 'ASD' and 'ASC' to methodically work through the range of relevant search terms. Once filtered, where required, records were screened according to the

study selection criteria before full-text articles of any studies selected through screening were assessed for eligibility (against the same study selection criteria).

Systematic Search Results

See Figure 2.

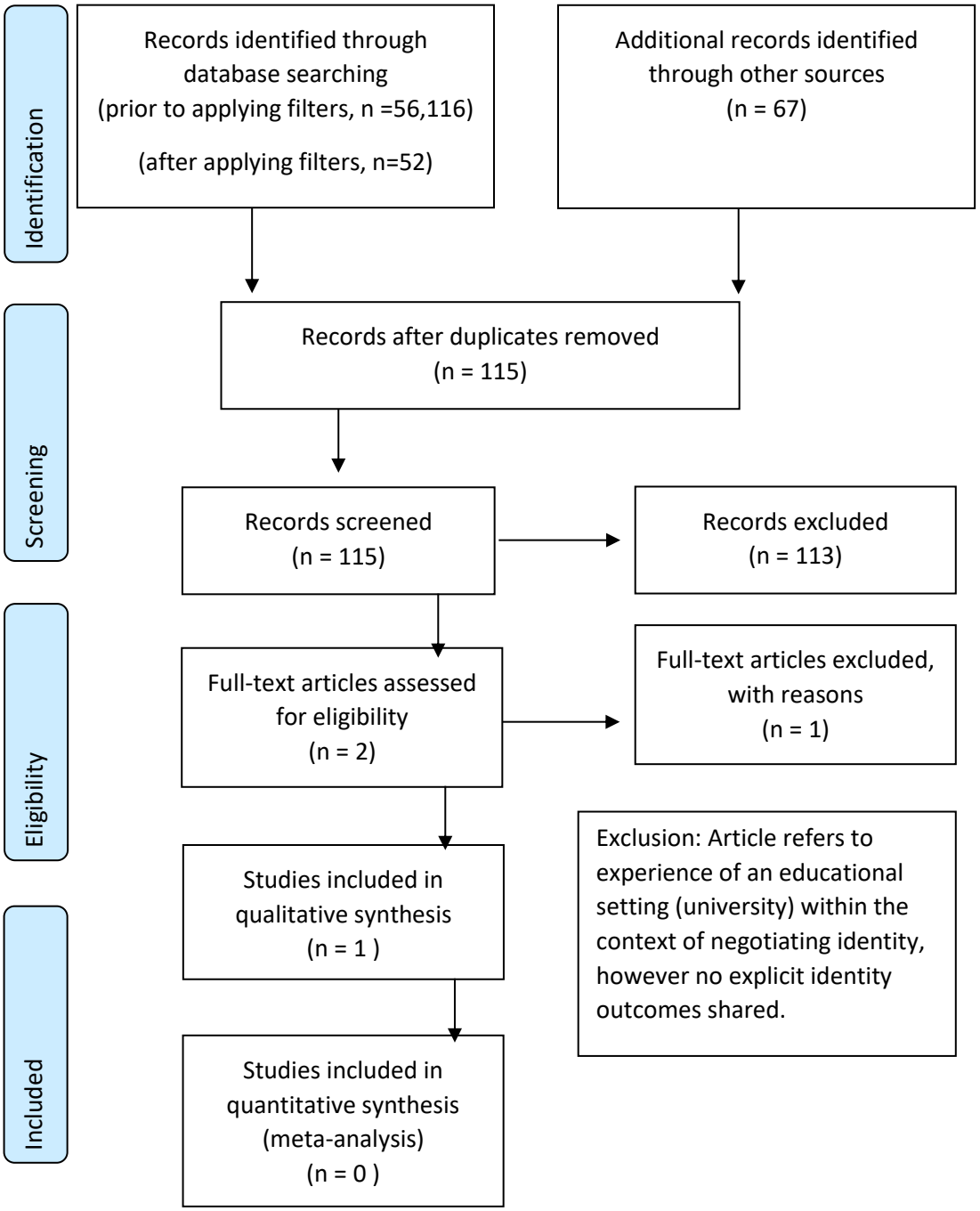


Figure 2. Outcome of systematic search of literature relevant to the research question.

9.3 Appendix C

The University of Nottingham
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School of Psychology

Information Sheet

Research study: An exploration of the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Ethics Approval Number: S970R

Researcher: Hannah Rowark E-mail: lpxhcr@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Neil Ryrie E-mail: lpanr@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Thank you for expressing an interest in finding out more about the above research study.

This study is being carried out by the University of Nottingham, working with Derbyshire Educational Psychology Service. It is hoped that this study will show the relationship between how young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder see themselves and how they are experiencing school. It is hoped that the findings from this research will inform schools in how to better support young people who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand what the research will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. If you choose to participate / allow your child to participate, participation will involve:

- A brief first meeting with the young person and parents / guardians at the young person's home. At this meeting, information will be given about the research study, what it hopes to achieve and what would be involved in taking part. Time will also be taken to answer any questions or concerns.
- One informal interview where the young person will be asked to share their story about their experience of secondary school. This interview will be carried out by the researcher in the young person's home. Although not involved in the interview, a parent / guardian (or designated person of their own choosing for participants over 18 years of age) will need to be at home during this time so that they are available to the young person if needed.

The interview approach can be adapted so that the young person is comfortable with it. This interview will be audio recorded so that an anonymised transcript may be produced for the researcher to analyse (audio texts will be securely kept in a locked cabinet throughout the study and confidentially destroyed following completion).

- A follow-up visit where key points from the young person's story will be checked with them and findings will be shared. This visit will also involve a de-briefing opportunity to ask any further questions or raise any concerns regarding the research.

The whole procedure will last approximately 3 hours (1 hour per visit).

Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study.

All data collected will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. Anonymised excerpts of interview transcripts may be used to illustrate findings. Anonymised interview data, including anonymised interview transcripts, may be used in the future publication of this research. All data collected will be stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act.

If you would like to take part in this research study, please complete a consent form for participation. **If you are providing consent for a young person under eighteen years of age to take part in the study, please note:**

- **Signed consent will need to be given by <u>all adults</u> with parental responsibility**
- **Prior to the interview, the aim of this research and details of what participation will involve will be explained to the young person in age appropriate language. Only if a willingness to participate is expressed will the researcher go ahead with the interview.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask now. We can also be contacted after your participation at the above address.

If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:

Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee)
<u>stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk</u>

9.4 Appendix D

The University of Nottingham
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School of Psychology

Consent Form

Title of Project : An exploration of the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Ethics Approval Number or Taught Project Archive Number: S970R
Researcher: Hannah Rowark E-mail: lpxhcr@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Neil Ryrie E-mail: lpanr@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

The participant / parents or guardians of the participant should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet? YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study? YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily? YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study? (at any time and without giving a reason) YES/NO
- I give permission for my interview data to be audio recorded YES/NO
- I give permission for my data from this study to be shared with other researchers provided that my anonymity is completely protected. YES/NO
- I give permission for my data from this study to be used in any future publication of this research provided that my anonymity is completely protected. YES/NO
- Do you agree to take part in the study? YES/NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Participant / Signatures of **all adults** with parental responsibility:

Date:
Name(s) (in block capitals):

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher: Date:

9.5 Appendix E

Narrative Interview Guide (NIG): Interview Procedure

- Interview carried out at interviewee's home
- Informal talk to help build positive working relationship
- Brief explanation for informed consent:

'This research study is trying to find out about whether there are any links between how young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder are experiencing school and how they think about themselves. I hope that the findings will help schools to better understand what the experience of school is like for young people with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

To do this work, I am asking young people, like you, to tell me their story about what it has been like for them at Secondary School. All the stories will be anonymised so that people who read this research study when it is finished, can read the stories, but will not know the names of the people who told the stories. If you agree to tell me your story, it will be sound – recorded and when you finish telling me your whole story, I may ask you to explain some parts of the story a bit more. If you tell me your story, I will visit again on another day to tell you what I learnt about you and your experience of school. You will have the chance to tell me if I have understood your story properly and if you agree with what I think your story is saying. You don't have to take part and if you agree to tell me your story, you can change your mind and stop at any point. I also need to tell you that if any part of your story leads me to worry about your current safety and wellbeing or that of another young person, I will need to tell other people, such as the person who is responsible for keeping students safe in school and the person in the Local Authority who is responsible for keeping children and young people safe.

Are you happy to tell me your story today?'

'I might write down some key words as you tell me your story. These are to remind me of things later. Is that alright?'

- Narrative Question

– 'Tell me your story about what it has been like to be at secondary school' (OR 'Tell me the story of your experience of secondary school')

- Active listening / non-verbal encouragement to continue narrative
- No interruption, only encouragement to continue if narrative stops for a significant period of time – 'What happened then?' / 'Tell me more'
- If a very brief response is given despite encouragement or the respondent needs support to respond, either:

Allow the respondent to draw their response, encouraging them to provide a vocal commentary.

- 'You can draw your story on this paper if you would prefer. As you draw your story, try to tell me about what you are drawing.'

Or provide a chronological framework by beginning to work through Year groups, as appropriate.

– ‘Tell me your story about what it was/is like to be in Year X?’ / make use of a visual year group timeline to help the respondent, if needed.

- Discretely note key words and areas for future clarification or further elicitation. Use the respondent’s terminology.
- Should the respondent be distracted from the interview task for an extended period of time, they may need to be re-directed back to their story.
  - ‘You were telling me your story about what it has been like to be at secondary school, will you continue the story?’ and if needed ‘You left your story telling me about X (try to use respondent’s terminology), will you continue?’
- When the narrative appears to have come to an end

– ‘Is there anything else that you want to say about your experience of Secondary School?’

- When the narrative has finished, there is the opportunity to further clarify or elicit interesting aspects of the narrative – using the terminology of Respondent.

- ‘Tell me more about X?’ / ‘When X, what happened?’ / ‘what happened before / after X?’ Questions will be open and posed regarding events, so as to stay true to the narrative approach and avoid meta-cognitive consideration (which may impact upon validity).

- Recorder turned off
- Note any reflections / comments given by the Participant post-interview
- Thank the Participant

- ‘Thank you for taking part’.

- Next steps shared
  - ‘ Now that we have finished the interview I will go away and listen to the audio recording and write up what was said to make a transcript. I will then analyse the transcript and I may use any notes that I have taken today to help me. Even though you have completed the interview with me, you can stop taking part in the study and stop your story being analysed at any time. You or your parent / guardian just has to let me or my supervisor know that you no longer wish to take part. Our contact details are on the information sheet. When I have finished analysing your interview transcript I will contact you / your parent/guardian to arrange another visit. In my next visit I will tell you what I have found out about your experience of school and I will ask you if you agree with how I have interpreted what you have said.’

9.6 Appendix F

Member Check Meeting Exemplar

Faith's Member Check Meeting 22/02/18, 4.30pm

Your story (about what it has been like to be at secondary school) made me think that…Is this right?	**Y/N**
1. You feel that it is important to receive understanding and empathy at school.	Y
2. You value and want to receive support from people who understand and empathise.	Y
3. Having understanding and support helped you to manage difficult circumstances.	Y
4. Having understanding and support helped you to avoid conflict and gave you strength to manage conflict.	Y
5. You felt resentful (bitterness at being treated unfairly) when there was a lack of understanding and empathy.	Y

Faith's additional comments:

1. This is the most important thing. Understanding and empathy is needed to work in partnership with school.

4. You want to work with teachers who have better understanding. They are able to calm you down faster and there is less conflict.

Faith did not feel that there were any additional important points made in her story that have been missed.

9.7 Appendix G

DEBRIEFING INFORMATION
School of Psychology
University of Nottingham

Name of Researcher: **Hannah Rowark**	**Email of Researcher:** **lpxhcr@nottingham.ac.uk**
Name of Supervisor: **Neil Ryrie**	**Email of Supervisor:** lpanr@nottingham.ac.uk
Chair of Ethics Committee: **Stephen Jackson**	**Email of Chair of the Ethics Committee:** stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

Title of Research study: An exploration of the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Background: It is hoped that this study will show the relationship between how young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder see themselves and how they are experiencing school. It is hoped that the findings from this research will inform schools in how to better support young people who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Design: A Narrative Orientated Inquiry methodology was used, with narrative, biographical interviews being conducted with participants to allow them to tell their story of their experience of secondary school.

Intended Analysis: The transcript text will be analysed in a number of different ways. The analysis will look at the content of the story and how the story has been told, for both the story as a whole and for the different themes / categories within the story. The last form of analysis will look at how the young person is making sense of their experience, as shown by the way that they have re-told what they experienced.

Further Support:
If recounting your experience of school, or any other aspect of participation in this research has caused you (as the young person being interviewed or as their parent / guardian) any distress, please do contact the researcher or research supervisor so that this can be discussed and contact details of appropriate further support may be shared.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding the study, please contact either the Researcher, Research Supervisor or Chair of the Ethics Committee (contact details provided above).

9.8 Appendix H

Feedback sheet exemplar (feedback sheet for parents)

The University of Nottingham
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School of Psychology

Study findings information

Research study: An exploration of the relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Ethics Approval Number: S970R
Researcher: Hannah Rowark E-mail: lpxhcr@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisor: Neil Ryrie E-mail: lpanr@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking part in the above research study being carried out by the University of Nottingham, working with Derbyshire Educational Psychology Service. It was hoped that this study would show the relationship between how young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder see themselves and how they are experiencing school. It was also hoped that the findings might inform schools in how to better support young people who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Study findings

The stories shared by the young people who have taken part in this study appear to suggest that being a young person with ASD at a mainstream secondary school may be a restrictive experience, where the young person is limited in what they can do and has little power and control, leaving these young people feeling vulnerable, feeling that they may not be able to keep themselves safe from any harm.

Findings from this study suggest that school experience may affect the development of self-identity for young people who have been diagnosed with ASD. The relationship between school experience and self-identity for young people with a diagnosis of ASD appears to be an adaptive one, where the young person adjusts himself / herself to their school experiences.

Findings appear to show that if schools are limiting and inflexible in the way they are arranged and the way that they work, they may make identity development harder for these young people. Findings suggest that where young people with ASD

can experience free choice and receive support, not least through the understanding of school staff, they may be helped in their development of self-identity.

Friendships with other children at school may also provide the opportunity for young people with a diagnosis of ASD to learn about themselves, although further research is required in this area.

Implications of the findings

Findings from this study appear to show that schools may help young people who have a diagnosis of ASD in the development of their self-identity through:

- Working to make it possible for these young people to have greater free choice in school
- Having school staff that are understanding and supportive

- Schools might also help the development of self-identity in young people with ASD through promoting and supporting their friendships in school, although further research is needed in this area.

Reflections

Reflection upon this study has led to the consideration that young people with ASD may be concerned about being labelled as being autistic, and it may be helpful for schools to be aware of this and to consider it as they work to support and include these young people.

Reflection upon this study has also led to the consideration that there may be a lack of coherence in the systems around the young person with ASD, so that they are not working together to support the young person, leaving parents feeling alone as they work to support their children. Better communication between school, parents and the young person may be helpful. It may therefore be that an important role for schools is in finding and setting up good channels of communication with both parents and young people with ASD.

9.9 Appendix I

Appendix I.

Analysed transcript exemplar, Gavin's narrative

i. Interviewer, *f.* Participant F

Segment 1

i. Here we go, we're recording now. So, tell me your story about what its been like to be at secondary school.

f. Well, firstly in year seven it probably was the worst part of my school experience, er, 'cause I was severely bullied.

i. Oh dear.

f. And it didn't really get sorted out like, we went to, I think it was Miss G, *(sic)* because it was at *(school)*, because my brother's there.

i. Right.

f. And they didn't really do anything, they just like, we just told them what happened but they didn't like, do anything about it, I wouldn't, *(sic)* sort it, *(sic)* and I just refused to, go into school and everything.

i. Right.

f. At first I didn't tell my mum, I just said I wasn't, like, I was just ill and stuff, but, I did tell her eventually because I had to. And, it was not very nice to be honest, because it was like, it was like three different things. They weren't all like, they were no friends or anything, these people, but they were doing different things.

Segment 2

i. Okay.

f. And I think one of them strangled me in lessons, just like, walked up to me, like, just went, strangled me, which was a bit utter stupid. The other one just was, just calling me names and stuff and then the other one was just bossing me about and telling me to do stuff, which I thought they were my friends but clearly not. And then after that I just never went to school or anything. I went to the doctors a few times and they just said, just send them to school, I was like, well me mum wasn't really happy, and then I think afterwards, I think I saw one doctor and they got me referred to X in *(town)*, so I started seeing this woman called N and she, I think I was seeing her quite a lot at first, like really, a lot just to talk about everything, and it was very hard.

Segment 3

i. I bet.

f. Yeah I got really upset, I didn't like want to do anything with anybody like, sometimes my friends from junior school would, like, come and round and knock on the door to see if I wanted to come and play but I didn't want to play or anything. I was just in my room doing with the curtains closed and just sat there doing nothing really, didn't even eat my meals with my mum or my brother.

i. Gosh.

Segment 4

f. Yeah I know, and then, I think, I moved schools, 'cause we were searching for a new school anyway and I think I wanted to go to one school but they couldn't get me in,

because there weren't enough spaces, so I had to go to the one in *(town)*, but when I went there apparently they wasn't, *(sic)* they wasn't *(sic)* really doing anything but I think I figured out why anyway because I think at the time there was problems with school telling me the Head or summat, *(sic)* got suspended, and apparently the OFSTED put a bad report and everything, so they had to like, had other main priorities but they still should have, done stuff. I think I went in this thing called a S at first like, only for like a couple of hours just to feel comfortable or something around the school, but I just didn't want to go to school or anything, but, I think I met this woman called Mrs C, she was very nice, she was like, just this tutor woman, because I needed to have some sort of education, and I think it was at, we met at this building called the X which is, like this building in *(town)* next, near the top of town, and it's like the main office for youth workers and stuff in the *(town)* area and I was doing sessions in there like, Monday, Wednesday, Fridays and stuff, like, a couple of hours. I think when it came to year eight they were gonna *(sic)* erm, put me in the S *(sic)* I think, in school but I just refused to go and just kicked off, because sometimes with my autism I could kick off sometimes. Well I didn't even know about my autism at this point anyway, I didn't know I had any of it, I certainly didn't find out till later on. They just thought I was just probably pushing buttons, just refusing to go on purpose but I wasn't refusing. I had my reasons and, and then I think after that, I met, I think I met the tutor, the next one, which was L, she worked in, like, *(county)*, I think, I can't remember where her base was I think it was *(town)* I can't really remember where it was. I've had her for quite a while like. We started in this little hut at the top of the old school and it was like, and I think I went in

Segment 5

Segment 6

Segment 7

there quite a lot before, and then there's N who was helping me with, like, when seeing me in the hut at school, so we decided to go in there and sometimes she would, like, say do you want to go in the school corridor or summat, at first I wasn't, was like really nervous about it, but, I didn't like it at first but I then eventually did, after about five minutes, 'cause she taught me these exercises to do, like, when your nervous I think it's called summat like fight or flight or summat.

i. Oh, Yeah.

f. I think, I think that's what it's called. And I was, yes, seeing her and L in the hut for quite a while I think that was like, nearly all year eight. I think that's virtually yeah, yeah it was the whole of year eight pretty much, because I thought I'd have Miss C but I just didn't want to go in the S so they put me in the hut thing instead, at the top of school and I've seen her for the rest of year eight and then I think we found part of the school was being, like, demolished 'cause of the new builds, so after that they moved, I think they said that I would be moving to this room in the new Learning Support, like, it's called the B but it's basically like Learning Support in other schools but we call it the B in my school for some random reason. It's where you go when you have like problems in lesson or you need extra support with your work and stuff but I went in this little room next to the office where the, my Safe Guard offices are in the school and I went in there with L, the tutor, and I think I had work to do from lessons, I think I did, well we tried to get work but it wasn't really going anywhere with the work stuff so we had, she had to bring her own things in…

Segment 8

112 *i.* Right.

113 *f.* … to work, because, I don't know, I think it was very hard
114 to get work off the actual teachers from lessons and stuff. For
115 things like just Maths, English and Science stuff, and, but
116 then eventually after a while I decided, I decided to, like, go
117 out of this room into the main bit where I met this one called
118 Mrs K. Well she's been there for ages but I didn't really notice
119 her but I eventually like met her and stuff and she is, like,
120 really nice, she understands virtually everyone who has their
121 problems, and, and also there's Miss W behind there too, she
122 helped a lot with my schooling and stuff. Don't, well when
123 the things weren't doing anything at school, at my, at the
124 school, me and my, my mum, were questioning like is this
125 school even going to work or anything cause nothing was
126 being done or anything like what they said they'd do and
127 nothing would actually be done properly and then eventually
128 I think they started doing stuff cause mum had these meetings
129 where there's my mum my dad the tutor and like some people
130 from school but my dad didn't, went for a little while but then
131 he's not been since but they don't have these meetings
132 anymore but we do, we did before, and, I think after a while
133 things were starting to progress we did get some work from
134 lessons and stuff.

Segment 9

Segment 10

135 *i.* That's good.

Segment 11

136 *f.* er, yeah, and then, er, I went out of the room in to the main
137 Learning Support there like my tutor we just like went in for
138 like 5 minutes like have a look and stuff but then my, N, like,
139 took me out there, when her sessions, like, just to test me

when we do the fight or flight things. And then I think after a bit I decided to go out there and do my work in there and stuff, that was for, I think that was my year nine…

i. Right.

f. …stuff. So I've not really been like since then year seven and then I started with my brother I've like not been in doing proper school for, like, three years or summat which is a very long time,

Segment 12

i. Yeah, must be hard.

f. Yeah, my, my mum was there for me and stuff, but. There was probably a few things, problems at home at that time, but, er, and then, I think, when I was at the end of the year 'cause I was like, doing things in the, in there, and then at the end of the year when the year elevens left, I met some, like, teachers and we did the, I had these one to one sessions with I think it was two teachers. There's a Maths teacher, a Miss H, who I think I'm having this year for Maths.

Segment 13

i. Ah.

f. Well I had her when I was in year nine the first time. The end of year nine, like, 'cause there was, it was like a free period and then I had this cooking session with Miss A *(sic)* who's like the Head of Year and stuff, I think we met her with L and my mum, once, but we've had, we have meetings with her as well 'cause there's like, we have two meetings, there's like, I went to the one with Miss A but I didn't go to the main meeting. I didn't like to go to that one and they did

Segment 14

like little sessions with those two for the rest of the year. And then we come to the start of last year. Where I'm, I think I went back I was in the B thing again. I have come a long way since the start when I started last year anyway.

i. Yeah, It sounds like you have.

f. and they said, like, we're gonna put me in this, like, group of people, for, a maths lesson or summat, so I went to have a look at it, and it was, all right there was barely any people, it was like, I mean there was about ten people, a small group of people and I thought it was my choice so, I chose to do that lesson, the maths lesson. I think there was, 'cause there's, quite a few I knew, there's M and E, and then there's a few, quite a few others, and, I think the first day I tried it out I was literally very nervous 'cause, like, I don't know these people, like who I was going to be sitting in the same room with, that was like my first ever classroom lesson for like ages, for nearly four years.

i. Gosh.

f. I know, four years since I'd last sat in a classroom and done, like, a normal lesson for an hour, which was very hard to get used to again, and, I think I tried some of those lessons, and then eventually tried, I found Miss A did this cookery lesson with M and E, like, just those two, so me and L joined them 'cause L would come in to the cooking lesson. She's never did, she's never done my Maths lesson, ever, 'cause that was like after the time when she goes, so I was like, I only normally only went in to like the school for about

two hours or summat but I stayed for an extra hour to do the maths lesson.

i. Oh that's good.

Segment 15

f. And I think one day, Miss K came and had a word with me about, like, dropping back a year and stuff, because I'd missed a lot of things, because, they, in my school you start your GCSE's, like, optional stuff in year nine instead of year ten so you get an extra year to do everything. So, I said, I said I'd do it, but, because I've missed so much and if I'd just joined year ten lesson then I would have been way behind compared to everybody else who had a extra year including the years before, when I wasn't even doing anything. So I chose to drop back a year, so I think now, my brother leaves this year and I'll leave the year after.

i. Right.

f. Instead, when we would have actually left together, at the same time, it's a bit confusing when you're twins but one's a year above you in the school and stuff but, I chose to make that decision myself, which I think now is the best decision I've probably made.

i. Oh, good.

f. 'Cause I, I heard, I've heard all the stories about the year tens and apparently they're very mad, so, and compared to the people in my lessons now, which are all lovely, people.

i. Good.

f. There, there's probably a few that are a bit mad but that, you'll, you will get some people like that everywhere you goes, (sic) so it doesn't really matter. Well, apparently if year ten's more crazy then I wouldn't have been able to cope with that if I'd have actually not done it. So since then I think I started doing English on a Friday, so I was like, doing Monday, Tuesday, not Tuesday, Monday, Wednesday and a Friday, and I think I was like, doing a lesson with them, I think, like, on a Wednesday I would have done a cooking lesson with L and then a Maths lesson with, I had two Maths teachers, 'cause there's a Maths lesson on a Monday, so then I'd go home after that and on a Friday I would do an English lesson, and then go home. But then they said, about extending my days at the next meeting, and I did, I think I still did, the Monday's the same where I'd do a lesson, tutor lesson and a Maths lesson. I think then, they eventually, got me doing a, I think it was a, I think it was on a Tuesday and a Thursday for some sort of lesson, like, on a Tuesday it would be cooking and a Maths lesson, 'cause they were above us on The Tuesday but L wouldn't come in on those days because she's not, I think, supposed to work with me on that day anyway because we only work Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Segment 16

Segment 17

i. Right.

f. And, I think then on a Thursday, I would do, a Maths and a double English lesson 'cause they got me in on an English on a Wednesday too so I was doing more English lessons, so they justify the English 'cause I think they did it Monday, Wednesday and a double on a Thursday and a Friday lesson,

but I was doing most of them apart from Monday. I think I was doing that for, until like, the new building was done, 'cause, I think, when they were first doing the building I was in that room and then when it's finished, I'm like, in a classroom with people. And, I think up to Christmas I was doing that, the same thing.

i. Right.

f. And I think I was doing it when we came back after Christmas as well, just doing the same thing for a, quite a while, we're all doing what I've just told you. I'm doing that for quite a while, and, I think, then, afterwards, when we moved into the new school, I think I was doing the same things then, actually, like, doing the same kind of hours in the new school, but then, I think start of this year, like, after Christmas, I started, like, blending in with my group and stuff, at first I didn't really feel comfortable with them, but then I like, made this friend in the lesson called O, well, and ever since then I've like, been blending in with everybody, and, 'cause, he is the *(one word inaudible)* apparently out of all the friends I've like ever had in my life he is probably the best one.

Segment 18

i. Oh, lovely.

f. I've had other friends but they were all a bit, silly, and stuff, and not really a true friend, but, O's a true friend, which I've not really had for, ever, basically. It was weird 'cause it, we made, we actually were first friends in er, Maths lesson after the holidays, which is very bizarre to make friends in er, a Maths lesson when you should be working, but I was

working though. And then ever since then I've been like, making more friends when I've been with O and stuff, and, it's been very nice, to have new friends than, old, my old friends. I do like my old friends but I prefer my new ones that are at this school. And I think, I think just before my birthday 'cause we were, 'cause I was doing really well in school and stuff, 'cause I think, just around my birthday and I were, they said would you like to do Science lessons as well, so I was doing Science lessons, and I think they put me in on a Monday, Wednesday and a Friday for Science, so I was, but on a Monday there was an English lesson after dinner, so I've, so I stayed for dinner on a Monday and on Wednesday there was a Science lesson after dinner so I was doing dinners on a Monday and a Wednesday which O felt very happy, is very happy.

Segment 19

i. I bet.

Segment 20

f. And, then, I think I was, just before Science I was doing ICT, I've just remembered that. I was doing an ICT lesson on a Friday morning before English with H and E. It was like, it's the same, I think it's like this intervention thing, 'cause others are doing like, their option lessons, and me and H and E we're are all in this lesson together, there's only three of us, it's like the cooking lesson but it's just an ICT lesson instead. And that's with Mr W, that was on the top floor, on the new school, and, yeah, I'm doing ICT and then I started doing the Science 'cause I had two teachers for Science 'cause there's like, I think there's a Chemistry and Physics one, they were not split into three, but they are this year though, but. I had Mr D who was, he's, the practically the funniest Science teacher I've ever

Segment 21

304 known, and then there's Mr F which nobody really likes very much.

305 *i.* Oh dear.

306 *f.* He's not very nice to us, yeah, but for me where I've been
307 from to go into his lesson which was, and it was kind of very
308 intimidating 'cause he shouts really. I didn't get upset or
309 anything, he didn't shout at me though, I was a good boy in
310 that lesson, but, because I didn't want to get shouted at
311 because I seen, I saw him shout at actually other people and
312 it was quite, very, not nice. And, I've been doing Science
313 lessons, I think I'll be doing that for the rest of this year, and Segment 22
314 since I was doing Science lessons and my English and stuff
315 we'd have started to get rid of L 'cause I was, like, just taking
316 the day off each time, because I was doing stuff in school now
317 I, on my own, just 'cause, cause eventually she'd have had to
318 have gone anyway 'cause she's not supposed to be there for a
319 long time, she's not like a school staff member or anything.
320 So we started like taking a day off each time and I think just
321 before the weekend of Whitsun, which is May in'it, erm, I
322 think that week that was the last week which was very sad to
323 be honest, I didn't, she cried, but I didn't cry though, I was
324 tough, I didn't want to cry, even though it was very sad to see
325 her go though, but, I, I think she'll be back. 'Ardus *(sic)* won't
326 have her though but I know she'll be back for sure, and I think Segment 23
327 also, I've been seeing N and all the time from, since the year
328 sevens to year nine, well, going into year ten now, but, I think
329 from where I was, to I was seeing her like, virtually twice a
330 week to like just seeing her like once a month.

331 *i.* Gosh.

f. And, 'cause I was like doing well in school and stuff, just, so I was seeing her once a month, and, I think, 'cause I was making all this progress in school that I decided, she decided to discharge me from the thing which is very happy because I don't need to see her any more even though she was very nice, but I don't, the thing is I don't need her or anything because, she's done her job, which was very nice. And, now I'm, I think, the end of this year, I was doing all of everything, from, every, I was in every day, not all day but virtually, I think, Monday and Wednesday and Friday I was nearly there most of, the majority of the day, but Tuesday was like, my shortest one, and Thursday was longer, longish, but I wasn't there like nearly all day. And at the end of the year, well, I was talking with Miss W, about, and Miss A before L left, I was talking about options, and stuff, for next year, 'cause I fancied doing one, and I think I was choosing between Geography and sport 'cause I like sport a lot 'cause it's just one of those high passions.

Segment 24

Segment 25

i. Oh, wonderful.

f. I just watch any sport to be honest on the TV. I don't, I just watch anything that's sport, or motor sports or anything like that, and, and there's Geography as well, which I really like Geography because it's like learning about climates, and, all that pollutions and stuff, which I enjoy doing because I think I'll be good at Geography, I just chose it based on what I'm good at, I didn't want to choose something that I wouldn't be good at, or I'd find difficult, 'cause, I was, 'cause I'm going in choosing them for this year you're not allowed to change them so I had, whatever I chose I had to live with, so it was very hard to decide what I was doing.

And then I think Miss K told me, 'cause I saw her in the B on Friday's when they're all in PE, all my friends and stuff, erm, she said if you do sport you'd have to do PE as well 'cause it's like, essential. Well, I don't know if it's essential or anything but you had to do PE if you do the sport lessons. So I think I would be in longer for sport and PE, like I think it's an extra few hours, 'cause I think you do options three times a week, and PE's twice so that's like five more lessons to what I already do, so what I was struggling to think of what I wanted to do but my mum said why not try both of them, because I like both, and I think a couple of weeks ago, Miss W came up to me to talk about it anyway, 'cause she said you need to decide which one you're doing anyway, so I said to her, could I do both, anyway, and she said I'm not sure if they're, like, in the same blocks, 'cause they're all blocks of different options. So she said she'd have a look at it and I think, er, was it the week before I broke up or the same week, I think it was the week we broke up, the day before I broke up on the Wednesday, erm, she came up to me with the timetable and she found that she could fit me in in both.

i. Oh, brilliant.

Segment 26

f. So I've got this, so I've been given my new timetable and this year I'll erm. Think that I'm near enough all day for most of the time as I think there's a few occasions, like where you're, I think you come in later for some of them, or go home earlier, like, by one lesson or two lessons or summat, 'cause it's week A, it's this week A and week B thing where there's like, you've got two timetables, which is very confusing on with *(sic)* 'cause if you don't know what week it is you might end up going to the wrong place but, er, I'm on week, I think we go week A when we go back anyway

but, I think I have my options but then we've been told we've got to do a PSHE lesson, every two weeks, which will be interesting, 'cause I don't do religious studies. I think it's PSHE and RE actually, yeah RE as well, I don't do any religious or, things like that, which is, will be very annoying 'cause I've never done religion and I've not met anybody, heard anybody who does religious stuff but they're making us learn about it, which I wouldn't understand. I don't know why they've done it but we've got to do it, so, I'll have to live with it. And, from where I was, where I didn't wanna go in or anything, to, well, this year, when I go back I'll be doing quite a lot.

i. Sounds like it.

f. Yeah, I think, there's got to be, I'll be in virtually all day for mostly everything when I go back, which is, very good achievement from where I've started, this year, to how I've ended this year, which is, very nice, to feel happy about. Segment 27 And, I didn't, it's very difficult for when you have autism as well when you go into school, but I didn't even know about my autism until last year.

i. Right, gosh.

f. We had to go, when we went *(sic)* to see loads of doctors, to get diagnosis or anything about it 'cause my mum was thinking I might have it anyway but, well, I have, I do have, obviously. I think, we went, we saw this man called Doctor F *(sic)* this Italian guy, he was nice stuff, but he was very hard to understand and he said I was on borderline but, then I went to X in *(city)*?

421 *i.* Right.

422 *f.* And they said I was borderline. And then I saw Doctor N
423 *(sic)* and he also said that I was borderline, so that was three
424 times, but he was going to give me medication 'cause at the Segment 28
425 time I wasn't, I think when I saw him I was still, like, hmm, I
426 was in school but not as much as I am now and they were
427 going to give me medication but I refused to have the
428 medication, I didn't want the medication, 'cause I just, I don't
429 know why they would offer it me when I didn't want it. I
430 don't, I didn't need the medication, but he said that he can give
431 me medicine for but I said I don't want it anyway. And then, Segment 29
432 I think they referred us to X Hospital?

433 *i.* Right.

434 *f.* At *(place)* on er, *(street)*, and, I think we went to see, I
435 think I saw someone called CM, *(sic)* that, I think, that, that's
436 her name, CM, and mum saw this doctor and we went in like
437 separate rooms and had to talk about, first I talked about my,
438 experience in school like I am now basically, so I have talked
439 about it quite a few times, and, now I'm, I think, I was like
440 doing some exercises and stuff, like just to test if I have it.
441 And then they told my mum I did actually have it anyway, I Segment 30
442 think it was, like my cousin, Asperger's, because my, the
443 signs was because my mum, my brother, has a friend called
444 Q and he has like the same type of autism to my brother, and
445 they got on like really well and everything, they were like,
446 bouncing off each other like crazy, 'cause they liked the same
447 stuff. And, and it was me and my cousin, we're exactly the
448 same, 'cause we both like football and everything, and we

449 virtually like the same teams, which is very bizarre, to be
450 honest, but, er, yeah, we like the same teams, we're just
451 exactly like my brother and Q, his friend. I think he's older
452 than *(brother)*, by like two years or summat, but when they
453 was in junior school, him and *(brother)*, er, always playing
454 together, I always saw them, and, me and my cousin, were
455 like exactly the same, we got on, like, it was like, we may as
456 well be brothers, because we were exactly the same.

457 *i.* Oh, wow.

458 *f.* And, I think, my, have sort of the same style, type of
459 autism to my cousin, which is understandable when the signs
460 were when Q and *(brother)* got on really well, and then, me
461 and my cousin, got on really well. He goes to my school too.
462 I think, if I didn't drop back a year would be in the same year
463 as each other.

464 *i.* Oh, right.

465 *f.* But we wouldn't have been in the same lessons because I
466 think he is more smarter than me, but, I think he's, in the
467 highest set for Maths and stuff, but, and English, and
468 Science, 'cause we all have, we all know, like, what set we're Segment 31
469 in 'cause we have like, nine, well this year it was like three,
470 so there was nine point one, nine point two and nine point
471 three and three was the bottom one and one was the highest.
472 And I think I was in three for everything but that's because I
473 was, I wasn't as confident in a bigger group so they put me
474 in that one, but I was told by Miss K apparently I'm, I
475 shouldn't, I wasn't, shouldn't be in that set anyway but 'cause
476 you feel more comfortable in that set with the smaller group

then we'll keep you in that one. But she said if you wanted you could move up a set, but I, I said I don't want to, I'm happy where I am, to be honest.

i. That's good.

f. There are, they are, there is a few, there are a few friends in the other lessons, in the second set, 'cause that's where they would have put me, but, I think that was for Maths though, I think I would have stayed the same for English, but Maths they would have moved me into the second one, if I had wanted to, but I didn't want to, because I felt better in the other one, my group I'm currently in, because, well, I'm just used, I'm used to that group and it would've, I don't really like change much which is understandable for kids like me anyway. And I'm not sure if I'd have enjoyed moving up a set anyway because it's harder work anyway, and I find the work I'm currently doing, it's not very easy, there's a few things I don't find easy, but, I think that group was right for me anyway.

i. Oh, that's good.

f. Yeah.

Segment 32

i. So, what would you say if you had to choose one highlight of your time at school, is there one thing that happened that you think that's a really, you know, that's the best thing for me?

f. Probably making my new friends this year.

502 *i.* Yeah.

503 *f.* Well, so far anyway, there might be more highlights in
504 the next few years, but.

505 *i.* I'm sure there will be.

506 *f.* This year and next year, but, probably, I was, at the start Segment 33
507 of this year I decided I wanted to, to do something about
508 it, instead of sitting there doing nothing. I didn't want to be
509 curled up in a ball and stuff in my room any more. I just
510 wanted to try. Start this year.

511 *i.* And is there anything that helped you, anything that
512 happened that helped you make that decision?

513 *f.* Well, no, I just chose to do it myself. My mum probably
514 helped me with stuff, like she said, "part of it's me and part
515 of it, most of it is you", but, probably when I was doing
516 the stuff in, when I was trying new things and the stuff N
517 told me to do was helping.

518 *i.* And you said those were, like, fight, fight or flight
519 exercises?

520 *f.* Yeah, it was like these, it was this, like, breathing
521 exercise,

522 *i.* Okay.

523 *f.* Like she gave me to do. It, well, I think it was like,
524 about flight, it's like, it's this line thing we'd draw, it's like

a line graph, and when it's really high, it, you're really nervous, but, after a time it goes down, and, or, it could go back up again but eventually it goes down, and once, and the more times you do it, it doesn't go as high as it would, it's like one to ten or summat, and ten's like the highest and zero's like, you're fine, calm, normal and stuff. When I first did things it was, it was a ten at first because it's all new and stuff, and in each time you do it, the, your start number would get lower and lower each time, the more you do it, so, that's what I thought.

i. That sounds really good, that sounds really helpful.

f. Yeah, she did. Basically she would just ask you, like, what number you are at, and then, you'd like, 'cause you'd just, you'd just calm down after a while, I think, I don't know how long it would take but, she says yeah you will eventually calm down, which was very helpful. After, I thought I'd be a bit nervous starting with doing longer days this year, but, I just think of the fight or flight.

i. Yeah, and you know it will get easier, yeah.

f. Yeah, that's what I learned from N when I saw her.

i. Gosh, that's brilliant, it, it sounds like you've made phenomenal progress just down to your determination and hard work, you know, I'm really, taken aback *(participant f)* it's, thank you so much for talking to me because I've learned so much, erm, and I'm, I'm so pleased that things are going so well for you now, erm, so, you know, well done. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about

Segment 34

552 school, what school's been like or your experience of
553 school, or any key things that have happened?

554 *f.* Well, there probably was when I first started, in the
555 school, at break times and stuff and dinner when I didn't go
556 out or anything, but, after a while, 'cause normally I'd be in
557 the B, or there's this room now in the school called the anti-
558 bullying room where kids go for, if they don't want to go
559 outside or anything, they go upstairs, there's like a Wii and
560 stuff, and Mario Kart in, in this room and I went in there for
561 a little while, but, that was at dinner though, but ever, well
562 since I'd like, made friends and stuff I felt confident to now
563 go outside and stuff at break time, play with, with my
564 friends and stuff.

565 *i.* Oh, brilliant.

566 *f.* Which is very surprising 'cause at first I would, if
567 somebody had of like told me what at the start of a couple
568 of years ago, when I was really bad and I want, if I was now
569 probably wouldn't be, believable, what I was, if they said,
570 like, you'd be in the school, back to school, near enough full
571 time, a few years ago I probably wouldn't have believed
572 them what they were saying anyway, 'cause I just didn't care
573 then, to be honest, but now I do care, which I'm really happy
574 about.

575 *i.* And you can do anything, if you can go from there to
576 here.

577 *f.* Yeah I know,

578 *i.* There's nothing you can't do.

Segment 35

579 *f.* I think I'm choosing my new form for this year, 'cause
580 I was going to go into forms as well this year. I think Miss
581 W said anyway there's a smaller form to the other one but
582 my friends begging me to go in his form. He, he's begging,
583 he says, come, please join mine.

584 *i.* That's nice.

585 *f.* And I think his is bigger than the other one but I'm more,
586 I'd be fine anyway 'cause he's in there.

587 *i.* Yeah.

588 *f.* And then there's, er, I think the Geography lessons,
589 they're gonna be bigger groups, but, my friend's in that one
590 anyway, which I'm, only when I'm with O I'm more
591 relaxed, 'cause, well I don't rely on him or anything but I'm
592 just relaxed when I'm with him and stuff, just us two.

593 *i.* That's nice, that's a good friend.

594 *f.* Yeah, we're, we're in the same lesson for everything this
595 year, like we've got, 'cause he's in the same sport lesson as
596 me, the same Geography and I think we're in the same PE
597 lesson, but we, we already knew we'd be in the same
598 Maths and English and Science 'cause we're virtually the
599 same. I think me and him may as well be brothers to be
600 honest, 'cause he asked, he wants to trade my brother, his
601 brother for mine, but I said I don't want your little brother
602 'cause he has to share a room with his little brother as well

Segment 36

like I share my room with my brother, but the thing is though mine's the same age as me, his is smaller than him and younger. He is, he is a little bit of a nightmare his little brother. Yeah.

Segment 37

i. Gosh. Are you happy for me to turn the recording off? Is there anything else you wanted to say?

f. No.

i. No?

f. I'm done.

i. Well, thank you ever so much *(participant f)*.

Re-transcribed section according to Gee (1991)

i. Interviewer , *f.* Participant F

Part 1 - The departure of L

Segments 22 and 23

Strophe 1 – Additional support of L starting to be withdrawn

1 and since I was doing SCIENCE
2 LESSONS / and my ENGLISH and stuff / we'd have
3 STARTED TO (0.2) get rid of L

Stanza 1 – started to 'get rid' of L

4 'cause I WAS, / LIKE, / just taking the DAY OFF each
5 TIME,

Stanza 2 – explanation why - days off as doing

6 because I was doing (0.2) stuff in SCHOOL NOW I,

Strophe 2 – L's leaving is determined

7 on MY OWN,
8 just 'cause, cause eventually she'd have HAD TO HAVE
9 gone anyway

Stanza 3 – Recognition would have to go eventually

10 'cause she's not supposed to be THERE FOR (0.2) a long
11 time, / she's not like a school STAFF MEMBER or anything.
12 So we STARTED / like TAKING a day OFF each time / and
13 I think just before the WEEKEND of WHITSUN,

Stanza 4 – Weekend of Whitsun was last week

14 which is MAY in'it,
15 erm, I think THAT WEEK
16 that was the LAST WEEK / which was very SAD to be
17 HONEST,

Strophe 3 – sadness at L's departure but knowledge she'll be back

18 I DIDN'T, / she CRIED, but I didn't cry though.
19 I was TOUGH.

Stanza 5 – Response - Didn't cry but sad to see her go

20 I didn't want TO CRY,
21 even though it was VERY SAD to see her go though, but,
22 I, I think SHE'LL BE BACK.
23 'Ardus *(sic)* won't HAVE HER though
24 but I KNOW she'll be BACK / FOR SURE,

Stanza 6 – States knowledge that she'll be back

25 and I think ALSO,
26 I've been SEEING N / and ALL the time FROM, / since the
27 year SEVENS to year NINE,

Stanza 7 – Reflection that been

Strophe 4 – Reduction in support from N since Year 7

Part 2 - Withdrawal of N's support

28 well, going into year TEN NOW,

but, I THINK from where I WAS, / to I was SEEING HER
like, / virtually TWICE A WEEK
to like just seeing her like ONCE A MONTH.

i. Gosh.

f. And, 'cause I WAS like / doing WELL IN SCHOOL and
stuff,
just, so I was SEEING HER once a month, / and, I THINK,
'cause I was making all this PROGRESS in SCHOOL / that I
DECIDED / she DECIDED to / discharge me from the thing
which is VERY / HAPPY / because (0.2) I don't need to SEE
HER any MORE
even though she was VERY NICE,
but I DON'T, / the thing is I don't NEED HER or anything /
because,
she's DONE HER JOB,
which was VERY NICE.

Stanza 8 – Now just seeing N once a month

Strophe 5 – Decision to discharge from N's additional support

Stanza 9 – explanation - seeing her less as doing well

Stanza 10 – Happy at decision to discharge

Strophe 6 – N's role completed, so no longer needed

Stanza 11 – Nice, but recognition that no-longer need her

Stanza 12 – Reflection that she's done her job

Analysis codes and notes in relation to Gavin's narrative

Summary of analysis

This is a story about personal progress (increasing independence, inclusion and empowerment). It highlights the positive role of the decisions made by the narrator and of the support that he receives from others. Although an area of growth and development, the narrator appears to lack feelings of security and self-confidence (role of O in helping cope with school; use of 'I think…'; hesitancy around the reduction in formal support) and a secure self-knowledge. (Security and acceptance seem to come through identification of the self with others – identification with O and with cousin; diagnosis accepted as the narrator identifies that his relationship with his cousin (who has ASD) has the same nature as the relationship that his brother has with his friend (who both have ASD)).

The Holistic-Content interpretive perspective (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998)

Initial Global impression

This appears to be a story about personal progress (from vulnerability and a lack of support to increasing self-confidence and feelings of security) illustrated through increasing inclusion in school and highlighting the role of the self, and of support from others.

'…in year seven it probably was the worst part of my school experience, er, 'cause I was severely bullied…And it didn't really get sorted out' (S1)

'…if somebody had of like told me what at the start of a couple of years ago, when I was really bad and I want, if I was now probably wouldn't be, believable, what I was, if they said, like, you'd be in the school, back to school, near enough full time, a few years ago I probably wouldn't have believed them what they were saying anyway, 'cause I just didn't care then, to be honest, but now I do care' (S34)

'I'll be in virtually all day for mostly everything when I go back, which is, very good achievement from where I've started, this year, to how I've ended this year…' (S26)

‘So I chose to drop back a year, so I think now, my brother leaves this year and I'll leave the year after… but, I chose to make that decision myself, which I think now is the best decision I've probably made.’ (S15)

‘…I thought I'd be a bit nervous starting with doing longer days this year, but, I just think of the fight or flight…that's what I learned from N when I saw her.’ (S33)

Relationships, with the support and security that they can provide, as well as undermine, appear to play a key role. This is particularly in relation to friendship and identification with others.

‘I think the Geography lessons, they're gonna be bigger groups, but, my friend's in that one anyway, which I'm, only when I'm with O I'm more relaxed, 'cause, well I don't rely on him or anything but I'm just relaxed when I'm with him’ (S35)

‘I think I'm choosing my new form for this year…And I think his is bigger than the other one but I'm more, I'd be fine anyway 'cause he's in there.’ (S35)

‘…I thought I'd be a bit nervous starting with doing longer days this year, but, I just think of the fight or flight…that's what I learned from N when I saw her.’ (S33)

‘I've been seeing N and all the time from, since the year sevens to year nine, well, going into year ten now, but, I think from where I was, to I was seeing her like, virtually twice a week to like just seeing her like once a month.’ (S23)

‘I thought they were my friends but clearly not’ (S2)

‘…O's a true friend, which I've not really had for, ever, basically… I've been like, making more friends when I've been with O and stuff, and, it's been very nice, to have new friends…’ (S18)

‘I think it was, like my cousin, Asperger's, because my, the signs was because my mum, my brother, has a friend called Q and he has like the same type of autism to my brother, and they got on like really well and everything, they were like, bouncing off

each other like crazy, 'cause they liked the same stuff. And, and it was me and my cousin, we're exactly the same…' (S30)

'I think we're in the same PE lesson, but we, we already knew we'd be in the same Maths and English and Science 'cause we're virtually the same.' (S35-36)

The story has a tone of matter-of-fact acceptance.

I don't know why they've done it but we've got to do it, so, I'll have to live with it. (S26)

'…I think I met this woman called Mrs C, she was very nice, she was like, just this tutor woman, because I needed to have some sort of education…' (S5)

The author appears more assertive and empowered towards the end of the narrative compared to the beginning.

'I was just in my room doing with the curtains closed and just sat there doing nothing really, didn't even eat my meals with my mum or my brother.' (S3)

'…I think I was seeing her quite a lot at first, like really, a lot just to talk about everything, and it was very hard.' (S3)

'I thought they were my friends but clearly not' (S2)

I think I wanted to go to one school but they couldn't get me in, because there weren't enough spaces, so I had to go to the one in *(town)* (S4)

'Well, no, I just chose to do it myself' (S33)

'…at the start of this year I decided I wanted to, to do something about it, instead of sitting there doing nothing. I didn't want to be curled up in a ball and stuff in my room any more…' (S33)

The author is reflective and speaks positively of the decisions he has made and his progress.

‘So I chose to drop back a year, so I think now, my brother leaves this year and I'll leave the year after… but, I chose to make that decision myself, which I think now is the best decision I've probably made.’ (S15)

‘I'll be in virtually all day for mostly everything when I go back, which is, very good achievement from where I've started, this year, to how I've ended this year…’ (S26)

‘I think’ is often used - indicates a lack of confidence and commitment in what is being said.

The regular use of ‘just’ reduces the impact of the information being shared.

‘…I think I met this woman called Mrs C, she was very nice, she was like, just this tutor woman, because I needed to have some sort of education…’ (S5)

In places, there are a number of false starts.

‘…but I was told by Miss K apparently I'm, I shouldn't, I wasn't, shouldn't be in that set anyway but 'cause you feel more comfortable in that set with the smaller group then we'll keep you in that one.’ (S31)

‘There are, they are, there is a few, there are a few friends in the other lessons, in the second set, 'cause that's where they would have put me, but, I think that was for Maths though…’ (S31)

There are often changes to the subject.

‘I think, 'cause I was making all this progress in school that I decided, she decided to discharge me from the thing which is very happy because I don't need to see her any more even though she was very nice…’ (S23)

Grammatical errors can make the transcript difficult to understand in places.

‘I was a good boy in that lesson, but, because I didn't want to get shouted at because I seen, I saw him shout at actually other people and it was quite, very, not nice.’ (S21)

She's never did, she's never done my Maths lesson, ever, 'cause that was like after the time when she goes… (S14)

Expressive language is limited by the frequent use of ‘like’ and ‘and stuff’.

Phrases often start with ‘and then’ or ‘and’.

The narrative is hard to follow in places.

‘if somebody had of like told me what at the start of a couple of years ago, when I was really bad and I want, if I was now probably wouldn't be, believable, what I was, if they said, like, you'd be in the school, back to school, near enough full time, a few years ago I probably wouldn't have believed them what they were saying anyway, 'cause I just didn't care then, to be honest, but now I do care’ (S34)

Sjuzet (red underline) *is used for contextual information, explanation and reflection.*

Key Theme appears to be: *Progress*

‘if somebody had of like told me what at the start of a couple of years ago, when I was really bad and I want, if I was now probably wouldn't be, believable, what I was, if they said, like, you'd be in the school, back to school, near enough full time, a few years ago I probably wouldn't have believed them what they were saying anyway, 'cause I just didn't care then, to be honest, but now I do care’ (S34)

Themes

1. Progress

Content - Going into the classroom; extending days and lessons / hours to almost Full-time; doing ‘stuff’ in school on his own (L316).

Theme does not occur until segment 10 but then runs through the remaining narrative. Theme overlaps with Nature of friends and friendship the most, but also with Receiving and not receiving support and Choices and decisions.

2. Receiving and not receiving support – 2nd key theme behind progress.

Content - Lack of support from school when bullied; support from N; following referral; lack of support from new school; Tutor support outside of school; Long term Tutor support in school; acclimatisation and flight or fight exercises to move into main school building; School not supplying work to tutor; help from support staff; meetings to get work from lessons and enhance school support; support from mum; personalised timetable; dropping back a year; small group lessons; withdrawal of tutor in school; less frequent support from N; parental guidance; medication offered; fight or flight graph and breathing exercises helpful.

Theme runs from start throughout (to segment 33 of 37). Theme co-occurs at points with Influence of family and home life. Most frequent theme. Initial lack of support turns to support as the narrative goes on (support is reduced as progress is made).

3. Choices and decisions

Content - Refusal to go to school; not telling mum of bullying; couldn't go to preferred school; refused to go into S; decision to go into main support area; decision not to go to meeting; chose to go into Maths group; decision to drop a year group; extending days; doing science; discharged from N; taking both options; decision not to take medication; decision to stay in set; decision to do something about the situation; choosing new form.

Not all decisions made by the narrator were actioned as desired, narrator given choices and options, states on a number of occasions that it was his choice although he says he was told he was going to be put in maths lesson (L171). Narrator states that he is pleased with decisions he has made e.g. staying down a year (L211).

This is a frequent theme. Only overlaps once with Nature of friends and friendship and once with progress. Theme runs throughout.

, 'cause I was like doing well in school and stuff, just, so I was seeing her once a month, and, I think, 'cause I was making all this progress in school that I decided, she decided to discharge me from the thing (S23).

4. Nature of friends and friendship

Content - Thought bullies were friends; making friends with O aided blending in; O a true friend; making friends when with O; having dinners with O; same interests and exactly the same as cousin / like brothers; more confident now have friends; feel fine in form as O there / feel more relaxed with him and will be able to manage bigger groups; like brothers.

Theme runs throughout. One overlap with progress and one with Influence of family and home life.

5. *Influence of family and home life* (theme selected due to brief, poignant reference to home life as opposed to high frequency of references throughout the narrative)

Content - same initial school as brother; Mum questioning if school will work; meetings with mum and dad attending; mum supporting; twin brother in year group above; suggestion from Mum; Mum visits doctors regarding suspected Autism; identifies with Autism as relationship with autistic cousin similar to autistic brother's relationship with autistic friend.

Theme runs from start throughout (to segment 33 of 37). Two instances of overlap with Receiving and not receiving support (support of mother) and once with Nature of friends and friendship.

Critical Narrative Analysis (Emerson and Frosh, 2004)

Re-transcribed section according to Gee (1991), segments 22 and 23, p.217 - 218 (see Table 3.2, p.66 for notation conventions).

Mainline content (black underline)

Since increase in lessons, started to get rid of L, taking a day off each time. Her last week was just before weekend of Whitsun; he didn't cry but she did.

How it works:

Reinforces idea of progress, as progress in the form of increase in lessons leads to the reduction of support. Didn't cry as not sad – progress seen as positive?

Off the mainline content

Further explanation and detail

Reasoning to self that would have had to have happened eventually anyway

Sharing feelings

Desired responses - 'I didn't want to cry'

'I think' to 'I know' she'll be back – re-assuring himself

Reflection on progress, doing well

The work the mainline content is being put to

Highlights central role of progress and how it is affecting him.

Mainline emphasises the progress while off the mainline provides his response to it (his feelings, reasoning and reflections).

Psychological Subjects

1st person used throughout.

Two uses of 'we' (not referring to L) – at the start (L 2 and L 12)

One instance of contradiction:

'…that I DECIDED / she DECIDED to / discharge me from the thing' (L36-37)

Suggests that the narrator feels increasingly empowered.

Themes and imagery

Indicates happiness at progress and increased independence, but hesitancy and sadness around changes to reduce support. There appears to be an increase in self-confidence towards the end, as the narrator asserts that the support is no longer needed. The contradiction in the narrative also suggests increasing empowerment.

Overall theme – Progress

Themes of 'progress', 'consistency vs. change' and 'increasing independence and self-management' all overlap.

Progress – theme prominent at start and end of section.

Consistency vs. change – theme runs throughout.

Increasing independence and self-management – A more frequent theme towards end of the section as narrator assets that he no longer needs support.

Statements of emotional response - (Sadness and Happiness) associated with reduction of support. This theme does not overlap with others.

Contradictions

Around ownership of decision to reduce support. (Key lines involving all themes).

'… I DECIDED / she DECIDED to / discharge me from the thing which is VERY / HAPPY / because (0.2) I don't need to SEE HER any MORE' (T2, L 36- 39)

Pauses

All around a reduction in L's support and her leaving.

'…we'd have STARTED TO (0.2) get rid of **L** …
because I was doing (0.2) stuff in SCHOOL NOW I,
on MY OWN' (T2, L 2- 7)

'…she's not supposed to be THERE FOR (0.2) a long time' (T2, L 10- 11)

'…because (0.2) I don't need to SEE HER any MORE' (T2, L38- 39)

Fragmented narrative

Around current reduction of support.

'I DIDN'T, / she CRIED, but I didn't cry though' (T2, L18)

'I've been SEEING **N** / and ALL the time FROM, / since the year SEVENS to year NINE' (T2, L26- 27)

Related situational and cultural discourse

The development of independence (the need for support to develop independence).

9.10 Appendix J

Research Diary exemplar

Member check with Liam - 23/02/18, 3pm

Liam confirmed that he feels an insecurity, that he feels that his experience of school is enhancing difficulties for him and that he found it hard to identify his strengths and qualities.
However, some member check findings appear to contradict findings from the analysis of Liam's narrative.

Liam disagreed with the finding that he would like to be different, stating that he is happy with who he is. He also disagreed with the finding that he considers the self to be determined, saying that he could change what he is like if he wanted to, although it would not be easy.

Differences between the findings from the member check and the findings from the analysis of the narrative may be due to:

- The impact of individual self-awareness, as Liam may not be consciously aware of these aspects of his self-identity. It is interesting to note that the two findings with which Liam disagrees are the two more reflective findings, relating to Liam's conception of his self-identity. The findings with which Liam agreed were related to his feelings and experiences, which may be easier for him to access.

- A desire to appear secure and confident, it may be difficult for Liam to acknowledge aspects that imply that things are not ideal, or that challenge his understanding of his self-identity. He may also want to keep up the appearance of confidence and control in front of others, particularly in front of the researcher as someone relatively unknown to him.

- The influence of Liam's Mother being present during the member check meeting (at his request). Liam may not have wanted to openly share such personal information in front of his mother. That he asked his mother to stay

also suggests that he may have not have felt at ease with me (researcher), having not seen him since the interview which was conducted many months ago.

- His mother informed me that she and Liam had just had an argument before my arrival to carry out the member check. Liam may therefore have been less able to self-reflect and openly share his thoughts in light of his emotional state.

- Liam may have found it difficult to speak openly about such personal content, when asked directly about it.

Decision point – should findings from the analysis of Liam's transcript still be considered valid and used to inform the findings of the study in light of contradictory elements in the member check findings?

The decision was made to continue to use the findings from the analysis of Liam's transcript to inform the findings of the study. Although, it was recognised that it would be important to openly report member check findings. This decision was made in light of the fact that the difference in findings at member check can be explained, as outlined above, and that the member check approach and procedure (where participants were asked if they agreed with the key points identified through the analysis of their transcript) can be seen to be far more limited in its ability to collect valid data relating to self-identity compared to the narrative methodology and the interview procedure used to elicit Liam's story (see 'Methodology' section for justification, chapter 3.2). Indeed, confidence in the ability of this methodology and procedure to produce valid data was further enhanced by the fact that Liam did not disagree with all of the findings from analysis during the member check.

That there is a discrepancy in findings relating to self-identity from the analysis compared to those from the member check, is itself of interest in learning more about self-identity. This would be an interesting area for future consideration, investigation

and research. In particular, it raises questions in relation to conscious awareness and the ability to self-reflect upon self-identity.

9.11 Appendix K

Further ethical considerations in relation to the role of the researcher

One ethical consideration related to potential implications for the researcher's professional role. A difficult situation may have arisen should a participant have begun to share concerning current information about a school that the researcher had a responsibility for in her professional role. It was decided that, should this occur, following the interview the researcher would discuss with the participant whether they would be happy for this information to be shared and potentially acted upon within the Educational Psychology Service / within the researcher's professional role. If consent was given, the researcher would act on the information in accordance with professional and service guidelines. If consent was not given, the researcher would not share this information or act on it unless it was a safeguarding issue (see appendix E for information shared with, and consent gained from, participants regarding the disclosure of safeguarding concerns), in which case action would be taken in accordance with university programme guidelines (which would direct the researcher to the HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics). A report of concern would also be made to the staff member responsible for safeguarding at the school and a call would be made to the Local Authority Children's Social Care department, in accordance with Local Authority safeguarding procedure.