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Narratives from the autistic spectrum

What does it *mean* for a young person to be the bearer of an autistic spectrum diagnosis at secondary school?

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Abstract

(The Blurb)

The aim of this research was to facilitate the voices being heard of two young people at secondary school bearing an autistic spectrum diagnosis using a narrative approach. By definition this diagnosis suggested impaired communication and social interaction skills that should have made the open questioning style recommended for narrative interviewing difficult to access. However, insightful descriptions generated by autistic 'insiders', my own professional encounters and my experience as a mother of a child with a diagnosis inclined me towards more optimistic constructions of the autistic spectrum. Adopting a psychosocial, constructionist approach, I hoped to use narratives to illustrate the complexity of social constructs like the autistic spectrum and to facilitate the potential for agency: emancipation from thin, 'problem saturated' discourses. I was keen to co-construct thicker narratives as a form of action research that might generate 'unique outcomes' for my subjects as co-researchers.

I used free-association narrative interviewing to facilitate the co-construction of narratives with the two young people. I hoped to explore meanings the experience of their diagnosis might generate for these young people against the context of a range of other narratives being told around them. I reflected upon and analysed each narrative to identify wider discourses, interpretative repertoires and identity scripts that might be interacting with the voices of the two young people. I realised that my own powerful voice as adult co-researcher also required interrogation.

The 'storying' of their experiences suggested to me there was potential for agency for these young people. Externalising autism as a functional repertoire could position it as a strength within their experience. However, I sensed competition between complex, powerful and inter-woven narratives. Some, like the discourse of normalcy, introduced ambiguous meanings. I concluded that meaning-making through language was interactive and inevitably subjective, but could also be unique, generative and optimistic.

Chapter One The opening scene

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters regarding the child..." (UN, 1989, Article 12).

Burden (1997) suggests that the argument for hearing the voice of the child has moved from whether to involve children in the decisions that affect them to how best this can be accomplished. A child or young person that is attributed a medical diagnosis like that of Autistic Spectrum Disorder, by definition, is rendered impaired in what is known as the 'triad': reciprocal social interaction, communication and verbal language, as well as inflexibility of thought and behaviour (Wing and Gould, 1979). If this definition is accepted uncritically, then the child or young person's capacity to communicate their perspective is questionable. However, research being completed in Australia suggests that while conversationally their communication style might be unusual, children described as 'neuro-atypical' *are* proficient at producing rich written and oral narratives (Stirling and Barrington, 2003). Little similar research is identifiable prior to this, although Volkmar and Cohen (1985) present a spontaneous narrative from twenty-two year old 'Tony W', who writes about "growing up autistic" (Volkmar and Cohen, 1985, p. 51).

Why choose narratives?

James (2004) writes that "...the ways in which adults construct children's voices can in themselves affect how these voices are heard and acted upon".

Hiles and Cermak (2007) suggest that events do not occur as stories, rather it is how events are experienced that become stories. Stories or narratives are argued to give coherence and meaning to experience, and in so doing they are performative. They constitute and give shape to lives, relationships and reality (Bruner, 1986b, White and Epston, 1990).

Narrative therapists White and Epston (1990) write that when there is no narrative, or if the narrative is permeated with problems, it is important to help people fill the gaps and 're-author' their lives through 'storying'. 'Thin' descriptions result in 'thin', restricted conclusions (Geertz, 1973), so facilitating the telling of narratives aims to 'thicken' stories and provide richer alternatives. It is an opportunity to facilitate 'voice', and many narrative practitioners write about using narratives to construct and create new identities (Pomerantz, 2007a, p.46).

A focus for me was to explore whether the narratives young people with an autistic spectrum diagnosis had constructed around themselves were inevitably saturated with the problems associated with their diagnosis or whether there *was* room for agency, or freedom, to construct new or different realities. In other words, did the narrative backdrop around these young people allow them voice outside more 'dominant' social narratives (White and Epston, 1990)?

The notion of using a narrative approach to reconstruct realities has social constructionist foundations. The structure offered by the narratives we tell about ourselves and others is perceived to interact with the willingness of others to support us in our version of events (Burr, 2003). Stories are not perceived to occur in isolation. Rather, they are constrained both in form and content by other accounts of the same story. Mary Gergen suggests that we hold private dialogues with absent or imagined others ('social ghosts') when reflecting upon our experience and constructing our narratives (Gergen, 2001).

Power is an important consideration within a narrative approach and in the context of this research it was important to reflect upon the power differential between adult and child, particularly as the young people participating were viewed to be disabled (Clarke and Venables, 2004). Truth itself is perceived to be a 'dominant', 'grand', 'master' or 'canonical' narrative (White and Epston, 1990, Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, Mishler, 1991, Emerson and Frosh, 2004) serving a constraining function

(Alvesson, 2002, MacNaughton, 2005). Rather than being static or neutral, truth is seen as active, produced through the struggle to work out meaning. From a Foucauldian perspective, narratives offered as true attempt to 'normalise' and therefore have the power to regulate, confine and subjugate (Foucault, 1979, 1980, 1984). A key issue was to question how far the narratives about the autistic spectrum were assumed to be true, therefore becoming dominant narratives that constrained other versions of experience for the child or young person with a diagnosis of autism.

Meaning

Brenkman (1999) drew upon psychoanalyst Tort when querying the meaning the 'medicalisation' of their experience might have for a child: "what does it mean, within his or her own psychic reality, to be in the eyes of others the bearer of a "symptom," "illness", or "deficiency"?" (Brenkman, 1999, p. xx). When working within a social constructionist or symbolic interactionist paradigm meaning within language is never neutral. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) suggest that meanings are organised around a theme within shared discourses that "cohere around a central proposition, which gives them value and significance" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p. 14).

My personal narrative includes being the mother of a child bearing an autistic spectrum diagnosis. I asked myself about the meaning dominant discourses had for him as a person. Was there available to him an identity not attributed by these discourses? In my professional role I wondered at the meaning it had for other diagnosed young people within the context of their experiences of school. How far were the voices of these young people constrained or subjugated by more powerful autism narratives around them and how far was it possible for 'thicker', alternative narratives to be constructed within which their lives could be experienced?

What autistic spectrum narratives are available?

The National Autistic Society campaign report *make school make sense* (Batten et al., 2006) cites that one in five children with an autistic spectrum diagnosis has experienced exclusion from mainstream schools, most more than once, and that there are more appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (England and Wales) for children with this diagnosis than for children with any other form of special educational need. Where is the child or young person's voice in these apparently competing narratives of schools, parents and the National Autistic Society? How does the child experience these events, and what narratives of autism are made available?

Diagnostic criteria and the professional narrative of deficit

Diagnostic classifications, such as the DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition) emphasise behavioural deficits in autism, for example:

> marked impairments in the use of multiple, non-verbal behaviour... failure to develop peer relationships... lack of social and emotional reciprocity...restricted, repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behaviour...delayed or abnormal functioning...
> (American Psychiatric Association, 1994)

As stated, the 'triad' of impairments in social interaction, communication and imagination put forward by Wing and Gould (1979) have become identifying characteristics of a person diagnosed with autism. The term 'autistic spectrum', according to Wing, describes the "range of manifestations of the same handicap" (Wing, 1988, p. 17). These medical definitions have arguably become dominant, authoritative narratives. As powerful discourses they seem to have provided a social identity of impairment, handicap, failure and abnormality that I felt might act as an inhibitor to young people looking to construct more positive meanings of their diagnosis and experience.

Cognitive narratives

Cognitive explanations of autism seem to mostly operate within a triad of impairment model, indicating that the triad has become an assumed truth.

Asperger's syndrome[1], for example, is described as a "true syndrome caused by a fundamental cognitive impairment which is manifest in the triad of impairments..." (Happé, 1994).

Three hypotheses have dominated cognitive explanations. The theory of mind hypothesis postulates that individuals with autism have problems using mental state concepts (Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith, 1985) which lead to difficulties being able to mentalise, or 'read' the thoughts and emotions of others. Hale and Tager-Flusberg's research (2005) indicates that theory of mind gives an explanation for needs individuals experience in the social interaction and communication aspects of the triad of impairment. Other theorists focus upon executive function difficulties (Ozonoff et al 1991, Russell 1997) or weak central coherence (Frith, 1989).

Emphasising underlying cognitive deficits offers a framework through which the behaviour associated with autism can be understood (Schopler, 1994), which in turn has led to the development of interventions such as social stories (Gray, 1998) and thought-bubbles (Wellman et al., 2003). These are directed at changing the cognitive functions of the child or young person to affect their behaviour and therefore help them to integrate more successfully into mainstream settings.

'Insider' narratives

Barrett (2006), however, advocates reading autobiographical accounts of people who describe themselves as autistic. He argues that such accounts can lead the reader to reconstructions of autism that "help to build relationships" (Barrett, 2006, p. 96) and can provoke practical teaching and learning responses.

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[1] In order to be consistent with my perception of the autistic spectrum as a construct I have avoided using capital letters to designate autistic diagnoses as real entities. As a result, apart from when it is at the start of a sentence, asperger's syndrome has been attributed with a lower case first letter although I acknowledge that grammatical convention would normally demand that asperger begin with a capital letter as a name.

Wendy Lawson is an autistic 'insider' whose personal narrative seems laden with cognitive interpretations. She argues that individuals with an autistic spectrum diagnosis process information differently to those individuals Lawson labels as 'neuro-typical', *not* on the autistic spectrum. She describes cognitive processes such as literality and monotropism (being comfortable with using one modality, at a time) that position her experience within autism (Lawson, 2001). Lawson also writes that she is rarely able to identify the emotional life of either herself or others.

In some ways it appears that Lawson's account mirrors the deficit constructions of the medical and cognitive discourses already outlined. However, Lawson insists that the autistic spectrum is a deficit belonging to the non-autistic world rather than the reverse: "I do not experience my being autistic as being 'disordered' or 'impaired' so much as I experience it as being 'dis-abled' in a world that doesn't understand autism!" (Lawson, 2001, p. 12). She questions some of the assumptions that are often associated with models like theory of mind *and* the implication that non-autistic people are able to 'read' the minds of others any more successfully than she can. Lawson suggests that individuals with a diagnosis of autism simply use different cues for their understanding. The reverse argument would be that if theory of mind processes were more sophisticated in non-autistic people, then they would be better at understanding people thought to be on the autistic spectrum. Lawson seems to be challenging the assumed truth that the autistic person is the one with the problem.

A narrative of emotion?

In contrast to Lawson's academic narrative about autism, I found the retrospective accounts of her childhood, and her poems, to be alive with rich descriptions of a more vivid emotional landscape:

> Though often torn and tormented my outer self struggled on.
> There were times the inner 'Wendy' felt completely dead and
> gone...
>
> The journey leading from darkness to dawn has taken me by
> the hand.
> (Lawson, 2001, p. 178)

Adopting the language-based perspective postulated by structural linguist Saussure (1974), if words are composed of signifiers (the sound patterns of the words) and signifieds (their word meanings), then Lawson *is* able to provide words that she recognises signify emotional connections for others. They have social meaning for me, as the reader. This seems at odds with Lawson's narrative that she does not have the capacity to share emotional meaning that moves beyond the signifiers, the words themselves.

Donna Williams is another 'insider' whose reflective descriptions of her search for self-understanding paint a picture, for me, that is filled with language of feeling. Her autobiographical accounts indicate that throughout her childhood and early adulthood Williams was torn between the fear and pain of experiencing emotions, which is why she avoided seeking a sense of 'self', preferring a more comforting withdrawal into an autistic world:

> I had learned to fear the complete loss of all attachment to my emotional self, which happened when I made the jump [between 'my world' and 'the world'], and to do this was the only way that made communication possible... Too many well-meaning people would have tried to drag me through the darkness unprepared and killed my emotional self in the process...
> (Williams, 1992, p.91).

Williams' metaphors, like those of Lawson, point to experiences that engage with the roots of emotion.

Williams later criticises what she terms conventional autistic stereotypes, particularly the notion of a triad of impairment (Williams, 2006). Instead she postulates that the autistic spectrum is much more like a 'fruit salad' or a 'jigsaw': a cluster of conditions. However, she suggests that while it might be helpful to a person with a diagnosis to learn to cope better in a world "dominated by developmentally typical people" (Williams, 2006, p. 15), trying to make that person play out the non-autistic person's version of normality should not be the intention of interventions. Like Lawson, Williams is indicating that autism as an impairment is a construction of a more powerful group, those who would not describe themselves as autistic. She goes on to say that sometimes the focus on autism can be so intense that the person bearing the diagnosis is forgotten (Williams, 2006, p.16).

I found it difficult to reconcile Williams' and Lawson's poetry with Hobson's description of autism as a "lack of emotional connectedness with others" (Hobson, 2002, p.5). Hobson situates autism within a view of human development that makes the emotional relationship a child shares with their caregiver the key to symbolic representation, shared meaning, communication and, ultimately, thought. He is careful to say that he feels that the source of difficulties in the small number of individuals diagnosed with autism is neurobiological, rather than emotional neglect, but he does suggest that emotional attachment is a necessary prerequisite for perception of self as separate from objects to develop. Subsequently, there can be recognition that others are separate beings who have different emotions. Through relationships shared meanings can be represented via symbol, which leads to communication and language. Taking an interactionist view, Hobson is therefore implying that for an autistic person it is shared meanings that might be slow to develop.

Williams' fear of the anihilation of her emotional self might be interpreted as an illustration of how autism might be experienced if caught in these early stages of development described by Hobson. If emotion is 'raw' unless developed through relationships, then Williams' assertion that she "got left behind in emotional development at about the age of three" (Williams, 1992, p.176) might be apt. However, the symbolic life of the words of Lawson and Williams seems to illustrate that for these individuals developmental progress *must* have eventually occured for them to be able to communicate their feelings so powerfully as adults.

There has been continued debate between Hobson and cognitive deficit theorists like Leslie and Frith (Leslie and Frith, 1990). Hobson maintains, however, that purely cognitive accounts fail to grasp "how people function as beings with subjective experiences" (Hobson, 2002, p.189). For Williams, the autistic person is not without feeling, but suffers because of the power of those emotions and difficulties knowing them (Williams, 1992). If narratives like Williams' poetry can provide words that signify meaning for others, then she *is* demonstrating her ability to share some of her emotional landscape. Limitations occur in the same way that the narrative of any individual is limited by the words they choose: "Life experience is richer than discourse" (Bruner, 1986a, p. 143). Perhaps Williams is presenting a narrative about the pain it might cause a person with an autistic spectrum diagnosis to make these emotional connections rather than a lack of capacity.

Psychoanalytical narratives

Jacques Lacan was a French psycholoanalyst who was influenced by the work of Saussure (1974). In developing Saussure's idea of signifiers and the signified he suggests that although they are limited by their finite nature, words are the bridges or connections between our limited conscious world and the possibilities of our unconscious. However, it is in the shared meaning of words, our words being active signifiers, that incites an emotional response from others that in turn allows us to be confirmed as subjective, feeling beings. (Lacan, 2002).

Lacanian psychoanalyst Mannoni worked with autistic children at the Bonneuil clinic. She writes that the crisis created by any separation for these children, *is* "experienced as annihilation" (Mannoni, 1999). Using similar metaphors to Williams, Mannoni suggests that a world devoid of emotion keeps a child safe from the threat of destruction. Taking a Kleinian view of object-relations (Klein, [1957] 1988). Mannoni perceives that for autistic children separateness from 'other' has not yet developed, so there is no self to symbolise, share or name suffering. There is no possibility of using signifiers to enable the child to know their subjectivity. Autistic rituals are viewed as containers for panic and distress, but it is through words that ideas can exist to replace the terror.

Alvarez describes her work with Bobbie: "only later I learned something about the terrors that separation and separateness held for him, and the feelings they produced in him of being cast adrift, and falling through limitless space" (Alvarez, 1992, p.39). Meltzer and colleagues have suggested that some individuals may experience 'autistic states' (or what Tustin (1972) termed an 'autistic shell') when they are so bombarded by the senses that they are not able to project them to another to contain (Meltzer et al., 1975). These intensely emotional responses to the sensation of objects and separation from 'other' seem to point to the need for emotional signifiers, that in themsleves might offer a degree of containment even if they only hint at the powerful emotions being described. What would be Bobbie's narratives?

Which narrative is dominant?

These accounts of autism seem to present quite different narratives and it could be argued that if one was accepted to the exclusion of others, then alternative possibilities for interpreting experiences might be omitted from thinking and discourse around a child or young person. Rutter (1999) argues for a broad understanding that invites both cognitive and psychoanalytic perpsectives. As a parent of a child with an autistic spectrum diagnosis I have been compelled at different stages by each of the perspectives, and I have used the language of all of them when reflecting about my son's experience.

However, it is arguably difficult to reconcile the authoritiative yet arid, pathological terminology of the medical deficit model with the rich, if excruciating, world of Donna Williams. The emotional meaning I derived from signifiers provided by the medical world signifies to me that those labelled autistic inhabit a social and communicative desert.

Cognitive explanations offer scope for developing interventions, but for whom? Some interventions might seem enticing for parents. Applied behavioural analysis (ABA), for example, claims to offer 'recovery' from autism (Newman, 2002), implying it is an illness from which to be recovered. The discourse of pathology is still prevalent even within models such as Hobson's, that continue to make autism an 'abnormality' (Hobson, 1993). However, Hobson also places autism within the emotional complexities of social relationships and their construction, situating it both within and without the child. A psychoanalytical model such as that of Mannoni (1999) describes an autism framework that positions the development of language, thinking and self within the shared constructions of emotions with caregivers. However, it is how to enable the child to share, develop communication and therefore have their emotions contained that provides the psychoanalytical challenge. Perhaps those narratives that construct autism within social relationships at least provide a narrative through which autism as a problem does not belong solely to the child, thence providing more scope for other possibilities as further socially constructed meanings emerge.

Some 'insider' narratives, like that of Wendy Lawson, also advocate that the pressure to change should not solely be directed at the autistic person but also the social context within which they operate. Pressure groups exist such as 'Aspies for Freedom', which is trying to transform the autism narrative from one of disablity to minority (Saner, 2007). However, I am unsure of the power of this narrative within more dominant autism discourses.

Dominant narratives

Billington (2000) asks why it is that certain differences, such as autism, seem to be selected for scrutiny. Autism is discussed at government policy level, for example, and an exemplar document has been developed as part of the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (DfES, 2004). An All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism (APPGA) exists, supported by the National Autistic Society (Yuille, 2007). Within the Local Authority in which I work there is a multi-agency Autism Strategy Group.

Billington asks whether the source of these narratives is economic as opposed to medical or psychological. He suggests that the common 'signified' meaning of a diagnosis of autism is not about science but about the power of governments and social and economic pathologisation (Billington, 2000, p.100). For example, Willis (2007) writes about the experiences of parents with children who have a diagnosis of autism. He suggests that psychology is seen to pathologise children by allocating them categories and labels as part of the process of the regulation of resources.

A comparison could be made with the narratives told about the categorisation, and hence subjugation, that occurs through the use of labels like 'gay' and 'lesbian'. Feminist philosopher Judith Butler (1993) illustrates how the dominant discourse of heterosexuality constructs narratives of 'gender' and 'sex' that become so repeated that children form identity categories around them outside of which they do not feel they can exist (Parker, 2005, p.85). Future narratives become 'identity scripts' to which people become 'obedient'. These identities become 'normative', or what seems average or normal. Parker calls these "secure prisons of self" (Parker, 2005, p.86).

Billington illustrates, however, that a narrative approach can be used in our professional encounters with autistic young people to help facilitate an alternative story. He describes his meeting with a child, Peter (Billington, 2000). Billington adopted a psychodynamic and interactionist approach to "see, unlooked for, something of beauty and intelligence" (Billington, 2000, p.103) rather than psychopathology. It is postulated by Billington that any deficit may be in *our* defended perception of a young person that does not seem to relate to *us*. Billington urges us to engage in a more self-analytical, reflective process when we speak about the autistic spectrum. He implies that autism becomes a challenge to the social narrative that non-autistic people perceive as a social truth, the assumption that people we encounter will interact with us in the way we expect, and that we find it difficult to cope when faced with an individual who does not. Billington draws upon Sinason (1988) to explain how the pathologisation of children as autistic may occur as a result of the counter-transference of the investments of the professional. In a Kleinian sense, these children become the 'bad-objects', (Klein, [1957] 1988) which might account for the negative and aggressive narratives being used to describe them.

How we perceive and speak of young people with a diagnosis of autism and how they perceive and speak of themselves in their personal narratives of their experiences in secondary school was therefore a fundamental issue for this research. How did any of the dominant narratives constrain the voices of these young people, and whose interests did they serve?

> - How do we speak of children
> - How do we speak with children?
> - How do we write of children?
> - How do we listen to children...
> - How do we listen to ourselves (when working with children)?
>
> (Billington, 2006, p.8)

How, and what, can we know?

This heading is adopted from Willig (2001). It has already been suggested that the communication needs defined by a diagnosis of autism may automatically create a barrier to facilitating the voices of those young people in school with that diagnosis. Language deficit is perceived as one of the key diagnostic indicators of autism, yet narrative is described by Stirling and Barrington (2003) as "an encapsulated form of discourse which requires sophisticated skills of planning and information encoding" (Stirling and Barrington, 2003, p.4.). Evidence has even been presented by Tager-Flusberg and Sullivan (1995) to support the view that children with autism are likely to have specific difficulties with narrative, for example they may not consider the listener or have any sense of cause and effect. Davis and colleagues (2004) suggest that some people with autism comment on the difficulty they have with the whole concept of meaning (Davis et al., 2004).

It might have been reasonable to assume, therefore, that individuals with an autistic spectrum diagnosis would automatically have difficulty producing narratives or considering meaning. However, recent studies focusing on what are termed to be 'high functioning' autistic children (Losh and Capps, 2003, Solomon 2004) identified few significant differences in narrative performance compared with 'typically' developing children. Solomon (2004) found that despite assumptions to the contrary, children with an autistic spectrum diagnosis *do* engage in spontaneous, interactive narrative activity.

That there are several versions of what we mean by autism also hints that what it is we think that we 'know' is a consideration. Willig argues that it is necessary to position ourselves epistemologically before beginning any research: "what kind of things is it possible for us to find out?" (Willig, 2001, p.2).

If I had thought that it was possible for the external world to determine "the one and only correct view that can be taken of it" (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p.14), then I would have adopted a positivist view of autism and assumed that to facilitate voice for a young person with communication difficulties would be extremely unlikely. However, several constructions of autism have already been described. I might have assumed that one of these was the true one, but in doing so I would have been excluding the possibilities presented by the other versions. If, on the other hand, I was to accept 'knowledges' of autism, rather than 'knowledge', then I would be favouring a constructionist perception of reality. Here, reality is not seen as static, but "continuous, multiple, simultaneous, complex, abundant and partly invisible" (Winterson, 1995, p151), illustrating that our perceptions and experiences are not mirrors of the external world, but particular interpretations constructed from the historical, social and linguistic conditions within which we live.

If this notion is adopted then the autistic spectrum might simply be perceived as one way of constructing a particular reality. Furthermore, the perception of what constitutes a narrative might also be put forward for consideration as a cultural act (Davis et al., 2004). That currently autism has generated dominant deficit constructions within social organisations has already raised questions within this study about the purposes behind the constructions, and the interests being served. According to Parker, "knowledge is different for the powerful than it is for the oppressed" (Parker, 2005, p.2). Key issues for this research related to what this knowledge felt like for a young person described as being on that spectrum and what kind of narratives was it therefore possible for them to facilitate.

So what *does* it mean for a young person to be the bearer of an autistic spectrum diagnosis?

I have shown that within academic, public and popular discourse there are many and differing narratives that have been constructed around autism, most of which contribute to a pathological model. However, what kind of narratives had young people with an autism diagnosis already constructed around their experiences? What did their voices already say?

Except for narrative accounts encouraged by organisations like the National Autistic Society I was able to find few narratives within psychological research. The National Autistic Society website offers a link to 'real life stories' featuring children, one of whom is called Kirsty (NAS, 2008). Kirsty talks about her strengths but also her poor communication skills and lack of eye contact, appearing to be fulfilling a deficit identity script already written.

Many psychological studies focus upon the narratives of parents about their children, a comment made by Volkmar and Cohen as early as 1985. Their presentation of 'Tony W."s narratives does not seem to have been replicated. However, this extract was discussed by these researchers with regard to whether Tony still met the criteria for his diagnosis of infantile autism rather than being a consideration of what he meant by, for example, his account of his experience of school:

> I set my will (to) be normal like everybody else. (I) look(ed) up to people in school and did what they did to be accepted and put (up) more of a show to hide the problems and be Normal. I forced(d) my self to Know all the top rock groups, smoke pot, and drink and (tried to) have a girl friend...I constantly got in trouble in school and did som(e) real crazy things to be cool. Like everybody else I thought I was all normal. Most of it was a failure.
> (Volkmar and Cohen, 1985, p.52)

The meaning behind Tony's vivid and raw description of the pressure to be 'normal' and his confusion because he felt normal, but seemed to fail, held more interest for me than trying to provide evidence that he fit diagnostic criteria.

Saner (2007) suggests that reading accounts of autism has become a fascination to non-autistic people. Sellman (2007) reviews a film narrative by Rory Hoy, a young person with autism (Hoy, 2007). He initially cites the film as a "remarkable achievement" (Sellman, 2007, p. 50), implying that this kind of narrative must be unusual from a young person with an autistic spectrum diagnosis. However, he also questions whether some of Hoy's metaphors perpetuate the stereotype of autistic individuals always being aloof and alone. Is Hoy's account also laden with narratives already written for him? Hoy does say that young people with autism need to be loved and accepted like everybody else, breaking *away* from the stereotype.

Jordan (2007) writes that "there is still a gap between the research and the researched" (Jordan, 2007, p.10). Connor (2008) acknowledges this absence of the voice of the young people, particularly in research around young people with a diagnosis of autism. She carried out a series of interviews exploring school experiences using a pre-prepared simple interview schedule. However, I have yet to find other research that provides less structured narratives. Billington (2006) uses a narrative approach that addresses the totality of a situation, deliberately choosing not to be limited by words in acknowledging his *own* response to the human interaction taking place. By providing space for the child or young person to tell their 'preferred story' he addresses the child-adult power-dichotomy. Each individual story, in whatever shape it takes, is respected. Unashamedly interpretive, this style of narrative invokes consideration of the powerful role of the researcher in the co-construction of any narrative.

I have been unable to find any other research attempting to present the narrative voice of young people described as autistic. Is this absence perpetrating the constraint of the dominant narratives or does it simply confirm that dominant narratives are engaging the young people in life scripts that, like Kirsty's, seem already prepared?

It is through the process of storying, of encouraging narratives about their school experiences, that I hoped to generate accounts that would introduce the voices of young people diagnosed with autism to the research world against the context of dominant descriptions of autism and the powerful narratives of government, Local Authority strategy groups, professionals, teachers, parents and myself as the researcher:

> Even when individual children are pathologised; when opportunities do arise for such children to relate to adults and explore biographically a sense of self ...the possibilities of alternative subjectivities [do] begin to emerge.
> (Pomerantz, 2007b, p. 32)

The research questions that therefore shaped the plot within my narrative research are:

- What meanings are derived through the personal narratives of two young people in mainstream secondary school described as being on the autistic spectrum?
- How are the voices of these young people constrained by the backdrop of narratives being told around them?
- How are their voices constrained by my co-construction of their narrative?

- What opportunities do the narratives generate for resistance and agency?

Chapter Two The possibilities of a narrative approach

Turning away from objectivity to bring voice

I was seeing the world from a social constructionist world-view so I felt that it was important in my methodological approach to be critical of the pursuit of objective truths, like a definitive explanation of autism, that might only close options and possibilities for the young people involved in the research:

> ...judged condemned, classified, determined in our undertaking, and destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power.
> (Foucault, 1980, p.94)

White and Epston (1990) describe claims to truth as 'units of power'. For these young people it was the diagnosis they were bearing that I felt was dominated by the prevailing medical narratives of truth.

Hollway (1989) questions the desire within psychology to reduce human phenomena to that which can be measured. Hollway's perspective suggests that the legitimacy of qualitative research findings will be reduced within what is still a discipline rooted in traditional scientific method (Oakley, 1981). Nevertheless, Bhaskar argued that "the criteria for the rational confirmation and rejection of theories in social science cannot be predictive and so must be exclusively explanatory" (Bhaskar, 1978, p.21). In other words, the knowledge that psychology produces is necessarily value-laden and purposeful, and has a role in shaping and governing lives (Billington, 1996). Billington questions traditional understandings of the word 'science', preferring the notion of science as a skill or craft to assist knowing (Shorter Oxford University Press, 2002), enabling him to encourage researchers and practitioners to build their practice upon what he calls "narrative science" (Billington, 2006).

Working in this way therefore calls into question the aspiration stated within much psychological research to be objective. Objectivity becomes invalid if primary constructs being explored, like autism, are viewed as constrained and controlled by their cultural context. Parker (2005) writes that if we accept that the notion of objectivity is in itself deeply subjective then instead, through reflexivity, we can arrive closer to experience, as we show "how we have come to be located in the research at this point in history in this particular institution" (Parker, 2005, p.28).

Choosing to work qualitatively

It would have therefore been problematic for me to select a quantitative research methodology for this study. Any attempt to use statistical techniques to objectify and essentialise the narratives would have betrayed the complexity of the contextual discourses that were already evident around autism. Parker (2005) argues that the notion of a normal distribution makes assumptions about the allocation of qualities across populations that appear fixed. To apply this to the diagnosis of autism would have been to accept one interpretation of the experience of being autistic at the expense of others. Given the authority of the pathological interpretations, these might inevitably have featured at the top of the distribution curve, thereby perpetuating their dominance. In order to avoid the narratives being "limited and limiting" (Burden, 1997, p.136) in this way I felt that it was important to look for methodology that would allow me to remain "faithful to the voices of those [I am] researching" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p.3). To privilege, or advantage, the voice of the young people in their own narratives (Emerson and Frosh, 2004) was my research aim rather than to seek objective truth: "narrative research does not discover what the empirical truth is, but rather how someone makes sense of an event...so that it becomes true to them" (Parker, 2005, p.82).

Research subjects

I have therefore used the term 'subjects' to describe the young people involved in this research despite British Psychological Society guidance urging a move away from the term 'subject' because it conveys impersonality rather than the consideration and respect participants deserve (BPS, 2004, p.6). However, a key issue for me was to discuss the subjective narrative experience of my two participants in relation to the wider discourses surrounding them. Within a psychosocial perspective (Frosh, 1987, Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, Emerson and Frosh, 2004), subjective experiences are perceived as the condition of there being dynamic and multiple 'subjects', positioned in relation to discourses (Henriques et al., 1984). I viewed my participants to be subjects as opposed to 'objects' of study. 'Subject' was deliberately adopted as a term to reinforce the Foucauldian notion that individuals are products of discourses despite language creating the illusion that there can be an integrated self that is like an object participating in experiences in a unitary way (Hollway, 1989).

My two subjects were two young people at mainstream secondary school that have a diagnosis that places them upon the autistic spectrum. Their subjective experiences were represented through the narratives they co-constructed with myself as researcher against the context of my interpretation of a range of other narratives. This collection of narratives could therefore be termed inter-subjective (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

If subjectivity is not static it cannot be accessed directly via content analysis of text. In order to engage with the meaning a diagnosis of autism has for young people in the school context I felt it necessary to draw upon a range of discourses around them in my interpretation. Attention was paid to individual interpretive meanings and the unique investments presented by the young people through their narratives as well as the way these were embedded in social and cultural discourses about autism (Frosh and Saville Young, 2007). I was interested in how the young people were situating themselves in relation to these other, seemingly more dominant, discourses being told of them.

The small-scale nature of this research reflected the way each encounter with a subject was a unique shared experience and each narrative became a co-construction as a result of that encounter. Issues about reliability and replication become tenuous because the meanings were unique as well as shared. If thicker narratives are complex and ambiguous I wanted to resist creating generalisable categories that might be inevitable with larger scale studies. Rather, I hoped to "open up imaginative possibilities" (Clandenin and Connelly, 2000, p.89). As a result, the generalisability of the meanings being constructed had less relevance.

Similarly, I felt it important not to restrict my definition of narrative. I adopted a broad understanding of what constituted narratives to include any relational, socially situated interaction being performed that was available for interpretation (Clandenin and Connelly, 2000). If I was intending to make my own constructions of the narratives also available for analysis, then I considered that imposing boundaries to what constituted a narrative would be smothering their potential for meaning.

As a result I preferred to use the term 'field texts' to describe the range of narrative material that was being performed, rather than data:

> Data tend to carry with them the idea of objective representation of research experience, it is important to note how imbued field texts are with interpretation.
> (Clandenin and Connelly, 2000, p. 93)

Ethics and Co-construction

I was acutely conscious of my powerful position as researcher within the narratives constructed. I realised that it would be unethical to assume that I was sharing the same discourses as my research subjects (Hollway, 1989) and I was keen not to impose limits to the narratives by binding them to my own categories. Parker et al. (1995) ask that we challenge assumptions within psychology that variation means psychopathology. Why should we assume that others are like us (Parker, 2005, p15)? That I have chosen to research the subjective experiences of two young people with a particular diagnosis might imply that their difference is in some way problematic. Why is it that I have chosen discourses around autism to scrutinise? Am I complicit in accepting the power dynamics of these discourses by facilitating the research, or is it that I wish to defend my own stake as a mother by identifying an alternative narrative for my son?

Parker (2005) also urges psychologists to adopt a broader understanding of ethical principles such as to "promote integrity in all facets of their scientific and professional endeavours" (British Psychological Society, 2006, p20). He argues that in order that research is to avoid being the tool of any dominant institution, such as the Local Authority, it must be as open as possible. Fidelity to the subject, therefore, requires constant self-questioning on the part of the researcher in order to avoid reducing responses, which Parker classes as betrayal. Research is therefore not perceived by Parker to be a 'discovery', but rather a co-construction with the researcher and subject as co-researchers. Parker refers to the work of Badiou (2001) to postulate that 'evil' is when either of the co-researchers is denied a voice. As a result, I made a deliberate attempt to be honest with my co-researchers about my own stake in the research: my assumptions and purposes as a parent and a professional.

In order to maintain the integrity of my intention to introduce openness and redress the power imbalance present in the research process I offered my subjects the opportunity to retain their anonymity, after the ethical principles and advantages of confidentiality had been carefully explained. I wanted to privilege voice rather than deny it by automatically concealing their identities. Parker (2005) suggests that anonymity portrays research subjects as "fragile beings needing to be protected by others" (Parker, 2005, p.17) rather than individuals with the potential for resilience and agency. My subjects were given time to reflect upon these considerations and they were encouraged to discuss their thinking with their parents. They each decided that they wanted their first names to be used within the research.

Critical reflexivity

"Critical reflexivity" (Hiles and Cermak, 2007, p.152) was a crucial aspect in maintaining integrity in response to my own subjective experience and my relationship to my co-researchers and their narratives. My changing position with regard to autism, my own school experiences and the discourses generated, my experiences as a professional and as a parent of a child with a diagnosis I considered elemental to the subjective meanings I brought to my subjects' narratives. I welcomed the opportunity to 'position' myself: "what we find and the sense we make of it are always a function of what we thought we might find and the position we try to make sense of it from" (Parker, 2005, p27).

I realised that I needed to beware of imposing my assumption that the young people would be automatically experiencing oppression as a result of narratives told around them, so I aimed to keep their interpretation of their experiences at the fore of my study, and to be as honest and transparent as possible about my own interpretations, interrogating the research process itself.

Power, narrative and disability

As already stated, it was necessary to confront the power imbalances between myself as an adult and a professional and young people who, some would argue, bear a disability. Striving for open, reflective and reflexive dialogue with my co-researchers allowed positions to be acknowledged and discussed. It also enabled me to address the potential difficulties for qualitative research implied by the diagnosis of autism. If it was the case that these young people with autism *did* have specific difficulties with communicating narratives then I concluded that these difficulties could be subsumed by the principle that there are simply different kinds of narrative (Davis et. al, 2004). It would have been inconsistent to assume that my narrative style was better and therefore more valid.

Pilot

Nevertheless, to address this issue, pilot interviews were carried out with three young people at a mainstream secondary school with a diagnosis that placed them on the autistic spectrum. My intention was to make myself familiar to the students and to give them the opportunity to ask me questions about the research and my role as a strategy to reduce the power differentials between myself and the young people. I also wanted to encourage the young people to suggest questions or key areas they thought it would be important to include. In addition, I wanted to try out using open questions if generating stories favoured the use of open, non-directive 'how' questions rather than closed 'what' questions (Willig, 2001). Advice offered to practitioners interviewing and working with individuals who have autism is to use concrete and literal language, avoiding open questions (Hunt, 1989, Lawson, 2001), but my pilot study made it evident that using open questions followed up by specific questions about the narrative being presented *was* accessible for the young people concerned.

As Billington suggests, it may be necessary to make a critical change to the way any disability is approached in order to consider the way our own disabilities and imperfections prevent us from making "that imaginative leap" into the world of those subjects termed disabled (Billington, 2006, p. 135).

Many narratives

An important consideration highlighted to me by the pilot study lay in the complexities, differences and contradictions I experienced within the narratives generated, raising for me the issue of how to manage my interpretation when there may be multifarious ways of communicating subjectivity, and how to identify which, if any, of the narratives were competing for dominance.

Parker (2005) suggests that rather than considering the pathologies described by psychoanalysis as lying inside us, they are more appropriately located in the processes that divide us. He provides a Foucauldian perception of knowledge whereby discourses are perpetuated that attempt to sustain the most powerful narrative. As a result, in my research I wanted to pay attention to contradictions and anomalies both within and between narratives, including my own reflexive narrative. Did one discourse convey a more powerful meaning than another for the young person bearing an autistic spectrum diagnosis when talking about their experience? If so, what was this discourse doing to that young person and *was* there any possibility of an alternative construction? How was it being constructed, and as researcher, how aware was I of my own complicity in perpetuating the dominant narratives?

Narrative and discourse

Discursive methods focus upon the ways people negotiate meanings in conversation with one another. The language is analysed, and its role in the construction of phenomena (people, events, processes and topics). Subjects' language is perceived as active in that it is involved in formulating accounts that construct versions to address dilemmas of interest. One way of describing the discursive strategies of defended subjects is to refer to the term dilemma of stake. When speakers have a stake with regard to social goods or status the speech is perceived to be constructed to protect that interest. Attributions that are made perform an action to inoculate the stake. Edwards and Potter called this a Discursive Action Model (DAM) (Edwards and Potter, 1993).I felt that the application of critical discursive techniques to the narratives of the young people in schools considered to be on the autistic spectrum would help my analysis of the way the experiences were being constructed and meanings were being attributed. An interpretive approach was chosen which would help with the exploration of the narratives against the context of the powerful narratives being told around the young people.

Gee (1999) introduced the idea of Big 'D' and little 'd' discourses. Broader than language, Big 'D' discourses embrace means of enacting "socially recognisable" identities (Gee, 1999, p. 21) compared with 'little d' discourses which refer to our 'language-in-use'. Big 'D' discourses compare with Parker's 'identity scripts' (Parker, 2005). They are socially shared activities that enable us to project power laden identities connected to different statuses and social goods. Edley (2001) also discusses 'interpretative repertoires', a concept first used by sociologists Gilbert and Mulkay (1984), later developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987). He writes that that these are distinctive ways of speaking about objects and events in the world that warrant particular ideologies. He feels that discourses relate to wider institutional ideologies whereas interpretative repertoires describe "smaller...more fragmented...rhetorical opportunities" (Edley, 2001, p.202), which can be used to support the discourses like steps making up a dance. I felt that it would be useful to consider the acting out of Big 'D' discourses, identity scripts and interpretative repertoires in the narratives constructed with the subjects of this research. I adopted Gee's approach to analysis: to look for 'who' (which identities) the narratives were helping to constitute and 'what' was being presented for others to assume was occurring (Gee, 1999)[2].

Validity

Reissman (1993) argues that narrative analysis requires an examination of how talk is constructed and how discursive devices are being used to explore how individuals situate themselves. If, as suggested, hidden agendas shape what is included and excluded in narratives, it is important to consider the different and alternative interpretations (Reissman, 1993, p. 65 and 66). Reissman argues that the validity of the analysis of these interpretations is more about trustworthiness than truth because, as has already been indicated, truth can be presented in different ways and is linked to the power interests of the narrator. For me, trustworthiness could be achieved through an honest, open and critically reflexive approach. My position taken as researcher was necessarily incorporated into my analysis.

I also employed a systematic strategy for analysing the field texts using micro-analytic and macro-analytical techniques (Emerson and Frosh, 2004). However, like Gee, I felt that the validity of the analysis did not lie so much in the detail of the micro-analysis of the transcript but rather in the way it worked together with other elements to create an analysis that aspired to integrity (Gee, 1999, p.107).

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[2] See Appendix I for a more detailed adaptation of Gee's questions

By using these strategies I am hopeful that my methodology was robust, in that it could be applied to other narrative interviews and field texts. Similarly to Hollway and Jefferson, I would like my interpretations to be 'recognised' within the subjective experience of those with whom it is shared (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p.80).

However, I was concerned how I, as the researcher, could privilege the voices of the young people within these narratives as well as be sensitive to my own. Reissman (1993) discusses how methodological choices impact on the interpretation of narratives, to determine whether or how culture "speaks itself" through them (Reissman, 1993, p.5). How was it possible to facilitate the generation of narratives that offered this kind of possibility?

Open interviewing

Hollway and Jefferson considered these questions carefully in the narrative research they constructed with subjects around fear of crime (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). They worked from the premise that all research subjects are meaning-making, that they are invested in particular positions to protect vulnerable aspects of self. They argued that the motivation of subjects to disguise the meaning of at least some of their feelings and actions is unconscious. As a result I adopted the approach taken by Hollway and Jefferson to elicit stories using a 'free association' narrative approach, based upon the notion that spontaneous associations follow emotional rather than cognitively derived logic. The position of the researcher, again, is perceived to be integral to the analysis:

> We intend to argue for the need to posit research subjects whose inner worlds cannot be understood without knowledge of their experiences in the world, and whose experiences of the world cannot be understood without knowledge of the way in which their inner worlds allow them to experience the outer world. The research subject cannot be known except through another subject; in this case, the researcher.
> (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p.4)

Following the principles set out by Hollway and Jefferson (2000) I used unstructured interviews and tried to stay close to the meaning the subjects were giving to their experiences by using follow-up questions that matched their ordering and phrasing. In this way I hoped to transform my self from "the highly visible asker of questions to the almost invisible, facilitating catalyst to their stories" (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p. 36). I attempted a flexible and informal conversational style to further reduce the power imbalance created by a formal researcher and researched relationship, trying to empower the subjects with choices about issues like anonymity[3] and time and place to meet (Emerson and Frosh, 2004).

I attempted to create a physical and metaphorical space in which the young people were asked to tell their 'own' story. I encouraged 'storying' by asking the subjects to think of their experience like a story, with a beginning, middle and an end and for them to talk about the events and relationships *they* felt were important. Like Hollway and Jefferson (2000) I also planned two interviews with each subject in order to allow them to reflect in between and for me to follow up what I perceived to be the subjects' significant constructions of meaning.

Taking the narratives back

I considered that another way to achieving a trustworthy, open and honest approach to co-construction was by taking my interpretation of the narratives back to the young people as co-researchers. I attempted to share the *Gestalt* narrative that arose from my interpretation, to which I asked the subjects to respond. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) adopt the idea of *Gestalt* from the biographical-interpretive method first used in German sociologists' accounts of holocaust survivors (Rosenthal and Bar-On, 1992, Schutze, 1992 and Rosenthal, 1993). It is an attempt to preserve the holistic 'meaning-frame' informing the life of the subject (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p. 34). Structured summaries and pen portraits were created to avoid fragmenting the rich nature of the qualitative data in the

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[3] See above (p.24-25)

interests of systematic coding. These techniques were also able to help with the analysis of contradictory material instead of seeking coherence, which might be the aim of a more thematic approach. I therefore wrote out summaries of the limited narratives as I had constructed them from my analysis of the responses of the subjects as stories "in which..." (Parker, 2005, p. 76), and shared my constructions with the young people, encouraging them to comment (see Appendices V and VI[4]).

Offering possibilities for transformation

The effect of the research upon the young people was also a key consideration. I felt that it was important to be sensitive to the possibility that the research process might challenge their identity constructions. The power of some narratives over others suggested that there could be different versions of the same experience; different versions of the world. Willis (2007) asks the 'listening professional' to be mindful that certain stories and versions might represent long-held identities and worlds from which individuals act.

However, this relativist world-view also allows for the possibility of transformation. If the act of storying or telling narratives *is* active and constitutive then it cannot be a neutral process (White and Epston, 1990, p. 27). Parker argues that using narrative inevitably opens up the possibility of doing a form of 'action research'. I am hoping that the subjects featuring in my research have had the opportunity to create for themselves alternative, unique versions of their experiences that helped them "break from the past and make the future" (Parker, 2005, p.86)., Unique outcomes (Goffman, 1961, Billington, 2006) could offer agency and hope against the context of dominant autism narratives.

Externalisation

I was moved to read Narrative Therapist David Epston describing his therapeutic work as a co-researcher in which it was possible to create

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[4] Appendix V: *Gestalt* narratives
Appendix VI: Transcripts of the feedback

alternative knowledge (Epston, 1999), affirming to me the potential of narrative research to be transforming. Epston described his work with several children for whom painful medical interpretations of their experiences had been made. He explained how Ronny's life-threatening brittle asthma attack was suddenly halted when a nurse, pressured by several children in distress at the same time, shouted to Ronny's asthma to "STOP IT" and his attack immediately abated. This episode convinced Epston that it was possible for there to be 'alternative knowledges' in the metaphorical space created through an externalising conversation (Epston, 1999, p. 138-9). White and Epston (1990) describe how encouraging an individual to 'externalise' a dominant 'problem-saturated' story can help in the identification of unique outcomes for that person. Ronny was able to exert some control over the suffering caused by his brittle asthma by having it externalised.

In order to avoid ascribing or constraining the possibilities for these young people with a diagnosis of autism I followed the question framing of Emerson and Frosh (2004) when they interviewed adolescent boys who had sexually abused other children. By externalising the sexual abuse as one way the boys' behaviour could be described, and then asking them how they might describe their own behaviour, the researchers attempted to privilege the boys' own meaning-making in relation to the research focus (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p.25-26). In the same way, I attempted to externalise the notion of an autistic spectrum diagnosis and began to seek alternatives by suggesting to the subjects of my research that some people might describe them as having an autistic spectrum diagnosis, but how might they describe themselves?

Critique?

The tension between traditional approaches and those advocated here are predictable, particularly if, as Oakley and others imply, this is turning away from scientific method (Oakley, 1981). The financial investment in a pathological view of autism is evidenced by the government interest perpetuated. Bernstein (1974) questions the verifiability of interpretative accounts which, he argues, over-emphasise the way meanings are negotiated. He proposes that assumptions are still being made and that there *are* relationships between situations. He points out that subjective reports are often incomplete and therefore misleading. However, for me narrative research celebrates the partial nature of the experience being presented because it is in the space made available that alternative possibilities can be created.

It *is* possible to question, however, the premise that the outcome will be more trustworthy by adopting interpretative approaches. The medium of analysis tends to be words, yet, as already stated, words in themselves may be limited and removed from the "experience of the experience" (Dale, 1992, p. 186). This might be particularly so if autism is the condition of raw emotion suggested by Hobson (2002), unmediated and uncontained by language.

Beyond words?

It has been made clear there is overlap between the principles of narrative research and narrative therapy. The potential for narrative research to be action research and transformative stems from psychoanalytic notions like externalisation and the quest for alternative versions, and I was willing to move beyond words and "consider all tissues of meaning as texts" (Parker, 1992, p.7). Willig (2001), however, questions whether simply analysing discourse can address questions about subjectivity. If discourses are in the public domain, how is it possible to explore internalised thoughts and emotions: "private manifestations of discourse" (Willig, 2001, p.101)? Dale (1992) and Billington (2006) suggest that verbal communication is over-emphasised, and that it is important to remind ourselves of the "subtle, complex nature of subliminal lives (below the threshold of conscious awareness) which shape and mould our responses to other people" (Dale, 1992, p. 191). It is postulated that psychodynamic concepts such as projection and counter-transference compel us to consider what we are made to feel as researchers in relation to a child or young person, as this may be telling us something about the internal state of the child.

Parker (2005) recognises the possibility within psychoanalytic research for subjectivity and considering transference and counter-transference between the researcher and subject to be part of the interpretive process. However, he warns that psychodynamic analysis like that of Hollway and Jefferson (2000) might limit opportunities for placing accounts sufficiently in their interactional context for the researcher's views to also be analysed. The tendency to 'psychologise' might well reduce the possibilities provided by alternative explanations. Psychoanalysis seems to be "pre-occupied with putting everything neatly in place and shutting out anything unpleasant that does not seem to fit" (Parker, 2005, p.6). Parker feels that psychodynamic constructs of self are problematic if considered 'real' in themselves. 'Self', for example, is a construction that is culturally specific and changes and adapts moment to moment. However, reflexive activity does enable us to locate self within the contradictory social relations within which research takes place. Provided that psychoanalytic concepts are not treated as 'real' entities, Parker suggests that subjectivity can allow the researcher's own investments to be made more public:

> The psychoanalytic narrative thus constitutes an intersubjective construction mediated by the shifting conscious and unconscious 'mental representations', transferences and counter-transferences of both analyst and analysand
> (Hunt, 1989, p. 29).

Billig (1999) illustrates how psychoanalytic concepts can be viewed as a culturally laden aspect of language involving the investments we imagine we make in response to our perceived audience, as well as to our investments in the self we have constructed. It was interesting to consider how far a young person described as having a condition that impairs their ability to know the intentions of others was able to make such investments in their narratives.

I perceived that it was important to move beyond what might appear to be a largely intuitive process (Redwood, 1999). I was therefore careful to explore my own constructions in order to avoid any assumptions that might perpetuate inequalities for these young people whose narratives, it could be argued, were already marginalised as a result of their age and diagnosis. The influence of psychoanalytic thinking *is* prevalent within this methodology, but I was acutely aware that I needed to avoid thinking of psychoanalytic principles as further master narratives to command my obedience even if I felt that they might offer agency to my subjects (Parker, 2005, p.108).

Chapter Three Setting the scene, characters and plot...

Preparation and location

The two young people who chose to participate as subjects in this research attend a secondary school in which I work as an Educational Psychologist in Doctoral Training. This is a school in the North of England with a pupil population of about one thousand five hundred, including a large sixth form. The school has a good reputation locally and in the last Ofsted inspection it was described as "outstanding", with pupils making "outstanding progress" (Ofsted, 2006).

All twelve of the young people at the school known to have a diagnosis that places them on the autistic spectrum were offered the opportunity to participate in the research. Letters explaining the intentions of the research were distributed via a social group run at the school for young people with an autistic spectrum diagnosis (see Appendix III). The group is facilitated by a teacher who has designated oversight of the well-being of the young people with a diagnosis in addition to his responsibilities as a classroom teacher. The diagnosis is discussed both in group sessions and during individual work with the teacher if it is requested by the young people. As a result I was aware that these would be young people who were already accessing a degree of specialist support in respect of their diagnosis and that being on the autistic spectrum was likely to be an interpretative repertoire (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984, Edley, 2001) with which they were familiar.

The teacher was my main point of contact at the school and I asked that he distribute the letters and be available to explain the content, context, aims and structures of the research verbally if necessary to those young people who expressed an interest. I did not want any of the potential subjects to feel pressured to participate by my direct involvement in this process, nor did I want them to be excluded or denied access to participation because of the complex language permeating the letter. I also felt it important to ask that the teacher did not target any young person because he identified that they would make a good subject. I therefore attempted to maximise opportunities for choice-making and reduce the restrictions introduced by being a member of what could be viewed as a marginalised group.

Four young people agreed to participate in the pilot study, three of whom came to the interviews. Although all three of the young people seemed keen to participate as subjects in the research, wordage constraints made it necessary for me to focus for detailed analysis on the field texts provided by two young people within the same year group. The field text of the other young person's narrative was used together with that of a primary aged pupil to add to the backcloth of narratives, to the fore of which the two subjects' voices would hopefully be heard. I felt that interrogating the narratives of two young people in the same year group might highlight differences and contradictions within their experiences and perceptions, despite them sharing the same diagnosis, gender and some experiences. Rather than reducing the narratives to the story of what it is like to experience an imposed perspective of the autistic spectrum in a mainstream secondary school, taking this approach allowed the performance of complex individual stories (Parker, 2005).

Principal Characters

The subjects were Joe and Edward: two young men aged thirteen and in Year Nine at the school when I first began the research. They were aged fourteen and in Year Ten when it was completed. I had previously met Joe in my role as Educational Psychologist for the school. He is an only child and one of a few young people who travelled to the school from a small village outside the catchment area. He had transferred to the school in Year Eight after allegations suggested that he was the victim of serious bullying incidents at his previous secondary school. I had already been working therapeutically with Joe earlier in the year, involvement prompted by anxieties he had expressed about coming to school. During our work Joe had told me that he was troubled by some interpretations of his diagnosis, particularly the idea of autism as a disorder.

In one sense I felt that I needed to make the boundaries of the research process clear so that Joe did not confuse my role as Educational Psychologist with my role as researcher. In another sense, however, I considered that it was more ethical to move beyond the researcher role by helping Joe begin to think about alternative versions of his story, especially as I was continuing to use similar narrative techniques to the ones I had used with him previously. In the pilot interview Joe described school as a 'nightmare', and I was sensitive to the distress narrating his experience of school might cause. I offered Joe the opportunity to cease participating at any time, in addition to advising school staff and his parents to be available for him both during and after the process. Joe was adamant, nevertheless, that he wanted to narrate his nightmare and I responded by providing him with the opportunity to make his voice heard.

I had not met Edward prior to the pilot interview, but during the course of the research process I learned that Edward had brothers and sisters, including a younger brother at the same school with additional needs affecting his behaviour and an elder sister who attended specialist educational provision as a result of physical and learning needs.

Edward and Joe chose to be interviewed jointly initially. This joint interview was followed up with individual interviews.

A backcloth of narratives

In order to situate the narratives of Joe and Edward against the context of the narratives being woven around them I chose to illustrate some of the meanings available to the young people through my interpretation of a selection of other field texts. The narratives within these field texts were told by individuals and groups that influenced my experience of the autistic spectrum as an Educational Psychologist and a parent. I admit that the field texts were a partial representation of the narratives available, in the sense that any narrative is a limited performance of an aspect of experience: "a personal narrative is not meant to be read as an exact record of what happened nor is it a mirror of a world "out there""

(Reissman, 1993, p. 64). However, for me these were narratives that provided *some* of the background scenery to the stories the young people themselves were currently telling. The field texts represented narratives that were arguably positioned within dominant or 'Big D' discourses, told in a way constrained by the interpretative repertoires and life-scripts of the individuals and groups concerned.

The field texts were acquired from recordings of interviews and meetings. These included interviews with two children younger than the subjects of the research. One child was in Year Seven at the school and his narrative had arisen as a result of the pilot interviews. Another interview was carried out with a child who was in Year Six at a local school and occurred at the request of his parent who told me that her son was keen to participate. I felt that these narratives offered a glimpse into the kinds of stories available to children when they first begin thinking about their diagnosis, a time when they also started to consider and experience mainstream secondary school.

Letters were also sent to all the schools in the locality in which I was working to distribute to parents and carers who had children diagnosed to be on the autistic spectrum (see Appendix III). The parents were invited to a focus group meeting to talk about their experiences as parents and carers, particularly with regard to their children and school. Four mothers and a grandparent attended the meeting. The children of these parents were of varying ages although they all attended the same secondary school as Joe and Edward. I also facilitated an individual interview with a parent (Mb) at her request.

A similar focus group meeting was held to which staff at Joe and Edward's school were invited, co-ordinated by the teacher who was my main point of contact. He attended the meeting together with three other teachers and two teaching assistants. The transcripts of each of these meetings provided further field texts from which to draw narratives.

The other two field texts were naturalistic recordings of meetings I gained permission to attend: a section of one of the regular informal meetings held in the Local Authority (LA) by professionals with an expressed interest in autism (Educational Psychologists and a Behaviour Support Teacher) and a formal meeting of the LA Autism Strategy Group.

I did not want to pretend that within this kind of research the field texts provided narratives that *could* be objective or consistent, as I accepted that they were inevitably "laced with social discourses and power relations" (Reissman, 1993, p. 65). Instead I preferred to think of the field texts as providing 'episodes' of available narrative (Parker, 2005).

I reflected upon these snippets of discourse, which I experienced like a dull weight. Pathology saturated discourses seemed to squeeze the narratives, introducing 'technologized' medical terms around autism that adopted the veil of assumed truths. Edley (2001) suggests that this occurs when language is being used to shape institutional objectives. I considered that the LA Strategy Group Meeting and the professionals' discussions might hint at the social and economic institutionalised stakes being defended or inoculated.

However, in using these field texts to paint a picture of some of the narratives surrounding my subjects I also constructed and experienced strong emotional responses from the children, parents and school staff. I felt implored to realise that in addition to dominant pathological narratives there were many other layers of psychological and social complexities being interwoven into both the professional and personal narratives of autism being experienced by my two principal subjects. These imposed further constraints but also offered the hope of a spectrum of alternative possibilities: "from bits and pieces of experience, linking past happenings with present ones and casting both into a dream of possibilities" (Kearney, 2002, p.5).

The Plot: the twist in the tale

As already stated, a dilemma was how to privilege the voice of my two subjects while acknowledging that their voices might be shaped and constrained by the narratives around them. I was worried that leaving the voices of my subjects until last in the presentation of this research might further marginilise them within the research process. I concluded that it was necessary to summarise the setting and the sub-plots being performed through the backcloth of narratives *before* giving Joe and Edward centre stage. However, word constraints have meant that the narratives themselves, together with more detailed analyses of extracts of transcript, have necessarily been placed within the appendices of this research (Appendix II). Nevertheless I used these narratives to help determine any alternative meanings I felt were being co-constructed in the narratives of Joe and Edward, as well as to identify those discourses and interpretative repertoires that could be restricting their voices.[5]

The exploration of these field texts surrounding Joe and Edward is inevitably based upon *my* experience of the narratives rather than a highly detailed systematic analysis. However, full transcripts of all the narratives are included (see Appendix IV) and all the transcripts were interpreted using the same system of analysis as the transcripts of my two subjects. As already stated I paid attention to 'who' (which identities) the narratives were helping to constitute and 'what' was being presented for others to assume was occurring (Gee, 1999). I also considered the interpretative repertoires and life-scripts being performed through the narratives and how these were being constructed, particularly with regard to positions being established and investments made.

Hearing the stories (Transcript analysis)

I adapted some of the techniques used by Emerson and Frosh (2004) in my analysis of these narrative texts based upon Gee's 'poetic line breaks' (Gee, 1991) as a means to privileging the teller's own meaning and

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[5] I would therefore urge that to gain a richer experience of my subjects' narratives the analysis of the surrounding narratives in Appendix II be considered first.

assumptions (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p. 38). This entailed demonstrating changes of pitch, tone and emphasis as cues within the transcripts in order that interpretive meanings could be drawn. Gee (1991, 1999) organises talk into 'idea units' separated by paying close attention to 'pitch glide': the *way* the sentence is said. He uses rising and falling intonations and pauses to provide cues or signals for the way in which the speaker wishes the listener to understand new units of information (Gee, 1991, p.2, Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p. 55). Gee further structures the discourse into larger patterns: stanzas (lines with a unitary perspective or common theme), strophes (paired stanzas) and parts (larger units or episodes).

For the purposes of analysing these narratives I chose to focus upon pitch glide to determine my interpretation of idea units. I went on to loosely organise the narratives by attributing titles and comments to stanzas and parts, according to 'who' and 'what' I felt was being presented to be heard. I have also considered other rhetorical devices such as 'disruptions' to the talk like false starts and repairs to indicate that speakers were engaged in conscious deliberation to introduce a new idea unit or to cue coherence in the narrative (Gee, 1992, Emerson and Frosh, 2004). In addition, I have paid attention to the grammatical subject of the main clause to ascertain who is being presented as the 'psychosocial' subject of an idea unit (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p. 70) and I have attempted to interrogate any contradictions and inconsistencies being presented (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). I have also noted any intertextuality, which is where the narrator speaks through the voice of others dialogically, suggestive of living relationships and their influence upon the speaker (Bhaktin, 1981, Kristeva, 1986).

I was aware that this was an interpretative process, in itself subject to my positionality. However, I hoped that by being open to my own reflective discourse as I was listening to the texture of the form of the narratives *and* the content the analysis would be "tempered...[with] reflexive awareness" (Emerson and Frosh, 2004, p. 62) and move closer to the meanings of the speaker(s). Nevertheless, I was happier to call this an interpretive co-construction than any objective or mechanical process (Mischler, 1997).

The following abbreviations were used within the transcripts to determine micro-analytic pitch glides and my subsequent macro-analysis of the narrative structure:

Micro-analysis

Italics : Emphasis placed on the word
(.) (1 sec) : Pauses
[:Speakers talking simultaneously
[ ] : Non-verbal action or event external to the narrative
/ : Change of tone to signify new idea unit
??? : When I could not determine the words spoken
(sic) : This is what was said

Macro-analysis

Red : Parts
Green : Stanzas
Blue : Idea units

I have, therefore, attempted a 'trustworthy', replicable and inclusive analysis of the narratives I drew from the field texts. However, I was also keen to pursue the emergent *Gestalt* approach of Hollway and Jefferson (2000) and tried to perceive the narratives as holistic episodes rather than fragmenting them too much into their ingredient parts (Murphy and Kovach, 1972) or binding them with an intensely detailed micro-analysis, thereby arguably suppressing the possibilities. I preferred a looser analysis; an openly interpretive and inter-subjective co-construction that allowed for significances beyond the teller in the sense that I, too, experienced the narratives as co-researcher with my subjects (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). I felt that meaning was being created jointly, but that *I* had the responsibility for "making the relevance of the telling clear" (Chase, 1995, p.2).

Chapter Four The Sub-plots and subsidiary characters

(As stated, see Appendix II for these narratives around my subjects and a detailed analysis of the extracts).

In order that the narratives of the tellers were privileged, for the purposes of the analysis, I transcribed mainly their words and analysed my own performed narrative in a separate section.

I have listed below composites of the Big 'D' discourses, interpretative repertoires and identity scripts that I interpreted to exist within the narratives of the subsidiary characters (which I have called sub-plots). I arrived at these through a reflective macro-anaytical process, described in the previous section[6] which helped me to determine idea units, stanzas and parts (see Appendix IV for the raw transcripts that include the macro-analysis). I hope that I have therefore been able to explore the narratives of my co-researcher subjects against what I identified to be these seemingly competing and complex sub-plot narratives, analysing their power to either constrain or facilitate agency, and the ability of my subjects to introduce alternative repertoires and identities.

Interpretative summary of the sub-plots I identified within the narratives around my subjects

Autism and me as a young person

Autism is to blame for problems I cannot help, it is unwelcome and limits me as a person. It means I am lacking and stupid. It makes me a victim and stops me being on the 'right side'. If other people and systems changed it would help because they can be incomprehensible and unjust when the autism leaks out of me.

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[6] See page 40-42

Parents

My parents want to protect me but autism challenges who they are as parents, making them feel impotent and that they have lost control. My parents feel better when professionals give them practical tips and they can share their experiences.

Secondary Schools

Secondary schools are like lions' dens. They challenge me and make little sense. There are some aspects of secondary school that help. Some adults in school limit the possibility of alternatives but others want to protect me and they do not want me to be lonely. I want to be like everybody else in school but I also want to feel safe. Staff in school do not like to think they are experts in autism because it is like a mysterious diagnosis.

Professionals

Some professionals resist medical and pathological narratives like the triad but then accept them because they bring resources. For some professionals autism is a messier, complex picture with different versions and it can be normalised but there is pressure to create a coherent and unitary medical, pathological version. This version of autism can be seen to reduce me and my parents to objects. Professionals need to defend their own statuses and dominant autism discourses do come from powerful institutions. My voice is absent from some dominant discourses.

Chapter Five The narratives told by the principal characters

Joe's Story

A *Gestalt* version of Joe's story was generated from the narratives created jointly with myself as researcher (see Appendix V).

'Mmm, in w-what *way* should I *describe* myself?'

Here was a story in which I felt that Joe wanted to give away his identity to other people to formulate, such as his family and his teachers. Joe seemed to resist my request for him to construct a version of himself other than that which others provided.

Joe Line 56 (4 secs) Mmm, in w-what *way* should I *describe* myself?

Joe seemed hesitant about this activity. The long pause then repair, together with the emphasis on the word *describe* suggested to me that he was surprised by the question and required time to think. Joe went on to defend his perception that he could only be positioned in relation to identity scripts created by or for others:

Joe Line 58

> But I *can't really* describe it (.) I've got to describe it as if I've *met* somebody? If I've just *met* somebody, is it *that* sort of thing?

Lines 257-258 (Joint narrative)

Claire Where do *you* fit in? [*quiet*]

Joe *Mmm* (.) I *don't* feel that's for *me* to judge. (2 secs)

This extract is in response to a discussion about the autistic spectrum. Although Joe had talked eloquently and metaphorically about his understanding of the spectrum, he was clear through the emphasis in his words that to say why he was perceived to be on the autistic spectrum was not available to him.

'...they don't want a perfect world but they want a perfect world that fits around *them*'

The descriptions Joe *did* provide of himself seemed to lay buried beneath the layers of what others were thinking, and tended to focus on the burden he perceived himself to be to others. Joe used logic to defend the stake of those he was describing and I was moved by the insight he was demonstrating. To me, this extract is filled with theory of mind.

Joe Lines 114-115

> It could be the fact that they want a *perfect world/* or th-they want a perfect world around *them/* and when they've found out that there's one little *difference* like *me* that *makes it/* (.) well what they would see as *imperfect/* (.) it *gives them* that sort of opinion./
>
> ... if *I* was like *them*, [clears throat] I'd qu-even feel quite, not *threatened*, but (2 secs) but quite sort of *upset* that their perfect world's gone

Joe described himself as the imperfection in the worlds of others who would like their worlds to be perfect. His response to this situation was to feel hurt.

Joe Line 184

> Like I said if they turn a bli-ind eye on it or just don't *bother* to even *say* that *they have/* it's erm, it's quite (.) it *hur-* it quite *hurts you* actually (2 secs)

Joe frequently seemed to use humour to inoculate *his* emotional stake in close family relationships, despite feeling that he had somehow let his family down. His initial interactions with me about perfection prompted a response of mock vanity:

Claire Line 101

(.) I don't *know* any *Joe,* I've never met anyone who is
perfect in *most* ways/ *oh* apart [from you.

Joe Line 102 [Apart from *me*

Joe's use of metaphor, however, signified to me the rejection he experienced when people refused to acknowledge the autism that, to him, offered an explanation or container for the difficulties he was experiencing:

Joe Line 108

it's like *me* here, there's a *door,* here, sort of thing, or a-a
wall/ or a *window.*

Joe painted a picture of separation, being blockaded from those whom he had hoped would want to show greater understanding. Similar metaphors throughout the narrative seemed to help Joe express his hopes for the future:

Claire Line 119

What would *you* say to them if *you* could (.) if-if *they* opened
the *door?*...

Joe Line 122-3

[Or knocked *the wall* down
or *opened* a window?

'It's *like* (.) an *array* of colours'

Joe indicated the desire to understand autism better, as he seemed to be saying it was autism that created his emotional needs. However, his versions of the autistic spectrum were varying and contradictory. He sometimes used positive metaphors to indicate that he positioned autism within a spectrum of difference, whereas at other times his narratives around autism were more heavily laden with pathology. The metaphors he created generated positive alternatives to a problem saturated discourse, but it was the pathological interpretations that Joe appeared to feel were helping others have greater understanding, which is what he seemed to be seeking for himself.

Joe Line 253 (Joint narrative)

> It's *like* (.) an *array* of colours, sort of thing (2 secs) if you know what I *mean*, it's like an array of-*like the/* like the *electro-magnetic* spectrum (.) or something *else* like that (2 secs)

Joe Line 481-882

> It's *strange/* I-i-it could I-I *know* of a *few* on the autistic spectrum./
> Autism's a condition in it*self* though in't it?/ Do *they* class autism as-as a condition on-in *itself*?

That Joe was searching for resolution and coherence seemed evident here. His attribution of the word 'strange' to his knowledge that some of his peers had a diagnosis belied the association he made with autism and being odd. His weirdness was identified by others, according to Joe, before they were aware of his diagnosis, suggesting that this was a perception of autism he directly linked to his identity script.

Joe Line 222 (Joint narrative)

> Well, *yeah* (4 secs) t-erm (.) I were-I were telling the *truth* here/ my *friends* thought I was weird before I they even *knew* I had asperger's (3 secs) they thought I was weird *before* (.) they *found out*.

However, that he made a statement about autism and then asked a hesitant question to provoke reassurance suggested that Joe was *not* secure in his own understanding of the concept, therefore not secure either in his own identity. This confusion about what autism means and as a result 'what am I?' provided clues as to why felt he needed others to provide his description.

Joe Line 266

> *Mmm* (2 secs) I-I *would* like to be able to explain it more *myself*.

Joe also needed to know that I did not equate the diagnosis with stupidity.

Joe Line 156

> [D-do you really think 'God it's stupid' though?' [quietly]

I felt as though Joe was searching for acceptance and understanding that necessarily included his diagnosis. However, he was also able to be generous in his attitude towards those who did not understand. Narrating his nan's non-acceptance, then immediately describing her as funny and anchoring this view to an account of a humorous episode seemed to show sensitivity towards her, providing a kind portrayal of somebody who is prone to making mistakes, including the judgements she has made about Joe:

Joe Line 114-116 (Joint narrative)

> 'cos my *nan*-my nan *doesn't* really (1 sec) she *accepts* me but she *doesn't* accept that I've got a *diagnosis*. [*calmer*]... she w-finds it *hard* to *accept* it, and she's *very funny.*/

I sensed that Joe wanted to temper for himself the hurt he experienced at the hands of others. He seemed to attribute blame to himself and to his diagnosis for the emotional impact he felt it had upon family members:

Joe Line 93-95

> when I'm going off on one they know just to let me calm down [sniff]/ and sometimes when I'm going off like when my mum and dad sometimes have a bit of a go and it winds me up even more (.)...
>
> [But that's because they're wound up.

When I tried to offer an alternative way for Joe to think about himself, removing the need for the label asperger's syndrome, the deliberations and eventual abandonment of his answer reflected Joe's difficulty in separating himself from his diagnosis.

Joe Line 74-76

> Erm (1 sec) t (.) c-could I have a *think* about that, for a minute 'cos (2 secs) t-/
> *well* we could refer (2 secs) this to the people that *don't care*, sort of thing/ [sniff] w-we could *say* that (2 secs) *they* made us *think*/
> (2 secs) I've lost –so, I'm *lost* now.

Nevertheless, Joe's world view also included a version of the autistic spectrum that was broad enough to include most people and which meant the world had to include difference to be perfect.

Joe Line 128-129

> [Laughs] I'd frighten them and say everybody's a little bit on the autistic spectrum [laughing]/ that'd scare the life out of them [quiet laughing]/
> Everyb-is it true that everybody's just a tiny bit on the autistic [spectrum?

I was saddened by Joe's last comment. I experienced it as loneliness, a yearning for connectivity with others. I felt it necessary to interject with my own perception of the spectrum, which gave Joe permission to speak about those aspects he had noticed in his own family rather than being scared of the consequences of introducing this to them as a narrative. However, he was worried that this would terrify people, and he continued to seek reassurance that this might be a permissible perspective.

Joe Line 137-139

> My granddad gets, like me, gets worked up very easily (.)/ he, sort of (1 sec) he has to do things, some (.) sort of/ not necessarily habits like me/ but things like in the world of work/ has to be done in a certain way and that's showing tendencies [of autism...
>
> I'm sure my-my other granddad does, shows them as well.

'It shows that they just treat you with everybody else'

Joe's apparent confusion with regard to the meaning he seemed to be seeking through his identity script was perpetuated within this narrative about being treated in the same way as his peers at school:

Joe Line 33

> (.) and I've noticed with erm (.) m-most of the practicals we're do in (.) science that I get tret the same as everybody else/ and (.) the teacher doesn't quite realise/ that i-i-it's sort of not my fault that we're struggling to get like (.) say practicals done. (.)

Joe Line 48-52

> Mmm (.) yeah (.) 'cos like (2 secs) normally people that are seen the same as everybody else like I said, earlier, get tret the [same...
>
> [as everybody else/ ...
>
> I dwell on things and s-some of, some of my teachers don't realise this/ (.) Some do and some don't.

Joe seemed torn by his desire to be understood as different, which meant his teachers and peers understanding the implications of his diagnosis as a pathology, thereby making adjustments to accommodate his needs, and being perceived as the same as his peers. That he was combining his diagnosis with his sense of self-hood made trying to help others understand his versions of autism extremely risky for Joe, particularly as he did not seem to have been able to integrate the different versions he had identified.

Joe Line 186-189

> It's the fact that they (.) can't be bothered, they don't want to, they can't accept it./ It shows that they just treat you with everybody else and/ when something happens like (.) I get into a fight ...
>
> t – I've lost myself again [very quiet]...
>
> Yeah (.) yeah and there are some people that (.) don't understand that people with asperger's will react like that./

Joe seemed to experience failure to be understood as a personal and hurtful affront, his voice lowering as he attempted to make sense of the incident. However, Joe tended to balance the hurt by referring to other staff members at school who *did* show some understanding. I wondered if he was seeking an attuned response, like that described by Hobson (2002), which was more about being sensitive to individual emotional needs than having cognitive understanding of a particular group. Joe bravely used the word 'maturity' to describe staff members who did respond in this way. His anxiety at using this term was evident from his audible intake of breath:

Joe Line 53 (3 secs) [sigh] Could be, because I find that the teachers that know about it and understand it treat me sort of (2 secs) with a bit more sort of [sniff] understanding and (.) y-you could even say maturity [intake of breath]/

I felt Joe considered that although school staff having knowledge of his diagnosis was important for him, the appropriate response was more complex than simply understanding asperger's, because everybody with a diagnosis is different and also similar, just as he would like to be treated the same but also differently:

Joe Line 66-69

> Some people may have training in it or have worked with people with me before and have learned how to deal with people with me (.) so if they (.) and they know (.) yeah (.) and if they know that I've/ got asperger's they might (.) sort of treat me the s-same/
> 'cos (.) I know, I know that that might sound a little bit (.) bit silly because (.) everybody with asperger's is different but then again they're similar. Everybody with asperger's is similar. They're not not the same I mean I'm different to C, C is different to E, E's different to 'B' or B whatever (???) he's called, you know what I mean?...

'We just don't *know*, we're just going *mad*'

My impression was that Joe was most comfortable when he was speaking of those adults with whom he felt he had made a connection, who did demonstrate attunement. He talked with humour and affection about Mr S, the teacher with responsibility for young people with an autistic spectrum diagnosis at the school, and the staff within the Learning Support base. That he enjoyed joking about the staff within the base being mad hinted that he thought they were more available to understand his own imperfections, that he equated with madness:

Joe Line 194 (Joint narrative)

> We just don't *know*, we're just going *mad*

Joe Line 378-380 (Joint narrative)

> ... *look* at the ones in Learning Support, *they* (.) they *do* a good job...
> I mean they *are* barmy, but/ and they *admit* it to *me*, they say 'we're all *barmy* down here'./ I say 'come off it I'm *going* that way I spend too much *time* down there'/ *erm* (2 secs) [intakes breath] t-*but* erm (2 secs)

This narrative allowed Joe to consider alternative realities by making the social environment more accepting of difference, although Joe was finding this difficult to articulate, as though it was beyond his reach. Joe's final statement suggests that being in the base allowed him to feel safe enough to position some of his perceived difficulties outside his responsibility.

The kind of attunement Joe appreciated seemed to mean heightened sensitivity towards his need to feel that he was being treated like his peers, yet that he sometimes required unobtrusive extra support:

Joe Line 253

> W-well *yeah*/ *L-like* erm like I said in class discussion she treats me the *same* (.)/ *but sometimes* she comes and helps me individually, n-*not always* first, [but *generally* when I've got my *hand up* she comes to me.

'...it's *like* (.) after a big star *dies* (.) the *core* gets *crushed*'

I interpreted Joe's need to attain his academic potential to offer the promise of an alternative, positive identity script. However, I was dismayed to hear of his anxiety and despair when what he explained as processing difficulties associated with autism confounded his ability to achieve his aspirations, particularly in exams. Joe's sense of difference to his peers here was felt keenly, and the self-image he painted was dark. When I tried to offer alternative versions by introducing his anxiety as a normal brain reaction to stress in exams Joe quickly dampened my efforts:

Claire Line 288

> Do you *know* that (.) *happens* to (.) *everybody* to *an extent* that you know when you're very *anxious*?/ A different part of your *brain* starts being *used* and it's not your thinking *brain*?

Joe Line 289

> No it's your *useless* brain

Joe's anxieties seemed trapped within his fear of letting staff members down and the pressure he subsequently felt, perhaps spurred by an interpretative repertoire that involved being a successful student at a successful school, like many of his peers:

Joe Line 299-300

> They just go '*poom*', kick straight through it and they're *there.*/ They know what they're *writing,* and they're *off* within ten, *fifteen* minutes, *most* people *are.*/
> (2 secs) *Dear me* I was *sat there* for thirty-five minutes [laughing] (.)/ I was *scared* that *teachers* might, you know/ if they *don't see* me write anything but I'm just sat there *thinking* (.)/ I'm *scared* that even though I (.) do *tests* in the (.) *drama* studio that they might come and (.) *say* (.) '*you godda* write something (.) *soon*'/
> but I *don't like* that because that puts *pressure* on me, that makes me *panic*/ and *even* though it *hasn't* ha-/it never *happened*, (.) I'm scared it *might happen*/ it makes me *panic* and it (.) it (.) slows the (.) *processing* down *even more*...

Joe described his frustration at not being able to fulfil this interpretative repertoire. This metaphor transferred to me Joe's grief for hope vanquished. It was as though any promise of Joe's potential identity to shine was being snuffed, crushed, in a night sky twinkling with stars:

Joe Line 321

> ...it's *like* (.) after a big star *dies* (.) the *core* gets *crushed* [don't it

'...it sometimes gets me *quite down* actually'

I felt that Joe's ambivalence towards the discourse of sameness, particularly with regard to his peers, had impacted significantly upon his experience at school. Joe bleakly suggested that differences generated by his autism made him stand out but this was not an aspiration because it had caused him to be bullied. He could acknowledge the uniqueness of all human beings but he continued to emphasise his differences:

Joe (Joint narrative)

Line 64 *Sometimes* the way I talk and the way I act, *sometimes* makes me (1 sec) *stand out* a little bit.

Line 75 There are *some* that are more *unique* than *others*, though. [clears throat]

Line 83-85 [*Erm* (2 secs) well a *few* have (.) picked me out as *being* (3 secs) a *little* bit (2 secs) *different*...
Well, a lot of people just tell me I'm *weird.*/ *They* (.) sort of (2 secs) well they make *threats*, don't they?

Yet despite the threats Joe has suffered at the hands of his peers his emotional responses at school have been overpowered by the adolescent interpretative repertoire to be part of a group of peers and to have a girlfriend:

Joe Line 433
...*He hangs round* in *here*, sort of thing, Learning Support, *in this room*/ and *I don't like* doing that really *I like* (2 secs) sort of to be *outside* where all the (.) [laughing]
Claire Line 434
I *know* what you're going to [say [laughing]
[*nice girls* are are
[Laughing]
Joe Line 435
You know erm (.)/ it sometimes gets me *quite down* actually.

Joe's laughter might have been inoculating his embarrassment, but his serious tone despite my amusement weighed down the end of the narrative with his depression at feeling unable to fulfil the repertoire that dominated his age group. His rejection of a safer alternative repertoire indicated the power of this adolescent narrative that Joe hesitantly and reluctantly felt he was powerless to achieve yet continued to pursue.

Joe's query did indicate, however, that there *could* be an alternative way of considering the difficulty of knowing what your friends are thinking:

Joe Line 445

> I *don't know*-well- *I don't know* real-you see I *can't* [*quiet*] (.) *tell* what *they're* thinking/ whether they *are* friends with me *or not.*

Claire Line 446

> Does it *help* to *know* that they might *also* have these *thoughts*?

Joe Line 447

> Possibly. (2 secs)./ *Could* they?

'I mean there's stuff I find *funny* but I just can't get *laughter* out'

Joe was persistent in his attempts to fulfil the adolescent repertoire of making fun of others, which ironically, he readily accepted. For example, during the joint narrative with Edward, Joe told several amusing stories. Although Joe laughed at his stories he admitted that he found it hard to laugh genuinely. His laughter in this extract was experienced by me as a conscious effort to adapt to the repertoire:

Joe Line 102

> I mean there's stuff I find *funny* but I just can't get *laughter* out [still laughing a little]./ I mean I look at my *past* and it makes me *laugh* [laughing more]

In Joe I could see a young person overflowing with the dream of potential repertoires yet constrained by discourses around autism and academic and social achievement that were being used to formulate his identity. Joe seemed to resist consideration of his own self-image because of the negative connotations it appeared to hold. Autism was perceived by Joe to offer an explanation of his difficulties yet prevent his aspiration to succeed like his peers. Nevertheless, there were alternative versions of his identity and the world that Joe used and which he hinted did exist around him which I felt he considered but could not embrace, perhaps because of the dominance of other, more powerful discourses.

Joe was most comfortable with those adults who offered attunement and sensitivity to his competing and sometimes contradictory emotional needs, and who were prepared to admit their own weaknesses. He linked this understanding with their understanding of autism. He demonstrated insight, theory of mind, towards those who found this difficult, particularly close members of his own family. However, the interpretative repertoires of secondary school peers that Joe so wanted to acquire included the desire to laugh at others who are different. Little wonder that Joe expressed contradictory views about being the same as his peer group.

My efforts to sway Joe's narrative to a more optimistic channel raised questions from him, but these were often pulled back by the current of pathology through which Joe situated his identity:

Claire Line 366

> But (.) she *wrote down* that *she's* (.) gonna, (.) so that you start to (1 sec) think (.) more positive (.) *different* thoughts (3 secs) in [different situations. [*quiet*]

Joe Lines 367-368

> [Mmm.but my O-my *OCDs* generally get worse and I get more frustrated when I don't *do* them when I'm *stressed* (1 sec)/ and that builds up the stress and I start kicking and *screaming*/ [sniff] ...

I did not want to crush Joe's painful secondary school experience by ignoring it, nor did I want to build a further wall by closing down the alternatives to the dominant institutional and social discourses that seemed to be diminishing his voice. I was hopeful that Joe's powerful metaphors would reveal the emotional connections he had been able to make with me as his co-researcher, his sensitive and forgiving insight into the motivations of others and the disappointment he perceived his diagnosis inspired in them. The alternative versions of the autistic spectrum and the social world that he had already been active in constructing provided a glimmer of the hope I had aspired to increase through our joint narrative conversation.

Postscript

I was more optimistic after discussing with Joe his responses to the *Gestalt* narrative and the transcripts of his interviews. Our interaction was generative, in that I felt it provided an opportunity for us to construct versions of events as we conversed (see Appendix VI for the transcript of this conversation). Although Joe agreed with my suggestion that he found it difficult to perceive of his own identity, which he described to be "...like walking through *treacle*..." (Joe, Feedback, Line 15), I found that he was beginning to resist my assertion that he was situating himself predominantly within pathological autism narratives:

(Feedback narrative)

Claire Line 34

> *Yeah*/ erm (2 secs) and I *think* (.) in a *way* it's seen as a *pathology*, it's *seen* as though there's something *wrong* with you if you've *got* it [intakes breath]

Joe Line 35

> Well *really* there *isn't* necessarily anything *wrong* with me it's like (.) a *variation* of normal/ I'm *normal* transferred into a *new* normal.

Claire Line 36

> If there *is* such a thing as normal.

Joe Line 37

> *Everything's* normal./ Even *weird* things are *normal.*

Claire Line 38

So, what *I'd* sort of said about *you* is (.) that in *some* ways you're (.) *looking* at th-this version of *asperger's* which is it's, it's a *disability*, there's something *wrong* with you but on the *other* hand

Joe line 39

It's *normal*

As we discussed the ambiguous and sometimes tense relationship between being the same and different, I sensed that Joe was more confident in using narratives of difference as a vehicle or container for his experiences than previously. I detected agency in this tentative attempt to construct a more unified version of the many and contradictory interpretative repertoires competing for his engagement. Joe's creative attempt at coherence produced a juxtaposition that, for me, signified Joe was exerting some control over those narratives that had previously seemed to diminish and constrain him:

Joe Line 151 (Feedback)

Be-*being* different makes us all the *same.*

Edward's Story

As with Joe's story, a *Gestalt* version was generated from the narratives created jointly with myself as researcher (see Appendix V).

"I'm actually quite popular"

I perceived Edward's story to be one in which his identity as a liked and confident young person was strongly and firmly defended. In some ways, as with the two younger boys I interviewed, he seemed to want to disassociate from his diagnosis. For Edward the diagnosis seemed to signify the opposite of the interpretative repertoire in which he felt he was operating, that of being popular:

Edward Line 61

> [Erm, (2 secs) *no*, I mean I *know* people with autism tend not to *have* a lot of friends/ but *I've* been told by quite a few people that *I'm actually* quite popular *so*, I don't think it's affected me in that scenario that much.

Edward inoculated his stake in this narrative by saying that it is others who have pointed out that he is "*actually*" a popular student, implying in the emphasis that this is not the repertoire of most young people with a diagnosis of autism.

Edward Line 181 (Joint narrative)

> Erm (3 secs) I'm not *sure* really, erm (2 secs) 'cos I wouldn't say it (.) *affects* me that *much*, 'cos I *mean/* you can *ask* Mr S about this but I *always* go onto this point that (.) / er people with *autism* tend *not* to have many friends and (.) be able to get *girlfriends* and things but *em/* I'm, I am being big headed *but/* I *am* quite popular and stuff *so* (2 secs) er (1 sec) I mean I wouldn't say it affects me *so* much, but there *are* (.) bits of it that *do* affect me.

Edward was defending his action to distance himself from the discourse of autism by admitting he was boasting, perhaps acknowledging the impact his narrative might have upon Joe, who was also contributing to this interview. Edward seemed keen to avoid being thought interested in understanding his diagnosis of asperger's syndrome, as though saying this would make him vulnerable to the kind of discourse that was available:

Edward Line 233-235

> (4 secs) Mm erm (2 secs) I *know* there is a lot about it on the *Internet* and stuff and so people *have* (.) *gone* in depth, *really hard* to try and (.) understand and *explain* (.) what they *find* (.)/ erm (.) and I know *people* will *always* be finding new things about (.) *everything*, so I don't think *anybody's* every going to (.) be able to (.) *fully* understand *anything* really...
> I'm not bothered *really.*

I interpreted this to mean that Edward would not like the discourse that he might experience through this kind of investigation, and that there was more about autism, and by implication, more about *him* to be understood. He situated his argument within a sweeping framework of "*everything*", in order to further justify his action in rejecting the opportunity to research his diagnosis.

"...if *everybody* was the *same* then the world would be *grey*"

By saying that "*some people*" (not him) suffer from the effect of being identified with a pathological narrative surrounding autism, Edward appeared also to want to create a version of autism that positioned *him* positively as unique and individual. He anchored this narrative within a flexible discourse of normality and individuality.

Edward Line 171

> Yes, but I *think* some people *really don't like having* (2 secs) the *diagnosis* of what they've *got* because it really does put them in a *group/* and *think* (.) *I'm different* (.) *nobody's* going

> to, (.) like, (.) *see* that I'm different and they're *going to judge* me for it without actually getting to *know* me, so

He used intertextuality in the extract below to question the social discourse that might be heard around normality and the emotional effect of hearing that you are part of a different discourse, that of abnormality, which was experienced by a young person he knew with a diagnosis of asperger's syndrome:

Edward Line 180

> I *think* it's more *like* [???*hesitation*] like '*why* aren't you doing this?' It's not *normal* to be doing this', sort of stuff./
> Just like (.) by *saying* stuff like *that* and (.) *it* just (.) *triggers* something. And *he, he does* get really *upset* about it.

On the other hand Edward himself used the word "normal" to position both himself and Joe within a less pathological autism discourse, but he was still ready to differentiate between himself and Joe, situating himself further away than Joe from this discourse and what, to him, it seemed to imply:

Edward Line 189-191 (Joint narrative)

> (3 secs) Not *really*, erm (7 secs) I don't know 'cos I *mean*/ I know me and *Joe* don't really have like really *severe* autism (.) 'cos *we're* in a *normal* school instead of a *special* school so (.) it doesn't affect us that *much*, so... (4 secs)
> I think it affects *me* less than it affects *Joe.*

For Edward, however, I also sensed the seemingly contradictory view that the individuality created by his diagnosis was also appealing. Edward's metaphor here painted a world without individual differences like autism as drab, colourless and less inviting:

Edward Line 185

> No (.) I l-like being *unique*, [laughter] because if *everybody* was the *same* then the world would be *grey* and we would just think *grey thoughts* (.) *working* and *working* until we get old and *I*, I (.) don't *like* that (.) idea.

Edward seemed to gain confidence and power from the added individuality and permission to be different he gained from his diagnosis:

Edward Line 433 (Joint narrative)

> I think it *might* have like *started* with the asperger's, so/ that I'm *different* and I'm (.) kind of singled *out*, so if somebody doesn't like what I'm saying it's tough on them/ I can't get *singled out* for it 'cos I'm *already* singled out for something else/ (.) *great*.

"I don't like the idea that *my* life is being *controlled*"

It could be argued that Edward is using his agency to mould autism into a preferred interpretative repertoire to be different and to challenge the norm, which has often been associated with adolescence. Arnett (1999) completed a review to suggest that the 'storm and stress' experience of teenage-hood often described in the media was "a real part of life for many adolescents and their parents" (Arnett, 1999, p. 324). I saw Edward's polite disrespect of authority and rejection of the idea that his life should be written for him by those with more power as indicating his potential for choice and his ability to challenge more authoritative versions of autism discourse.

Edward Line 190

> I *honestly* don't like (.) believe in *fate* because I *don't* want, I don't like the idea that *my* life is being *controlled*, every *step*

> that I make is *being controlled* and *put down* on paper before I've *made* it

Edward questioned dominant and controlling discourses throughout both interviews. Like Joe, he was keen in the joint narrative to demonstrate the humour that complied with the adolescent repertoire to laugh at the actions of others:

Edward Line 136 (Joint narrative)

> [Oh, *yeah*./ I was watching one with my *auntie* the other night/ and this *person* was like (.) *so scared* that they ended falling down these *stairs* and [laughs] and they got back up and they fell down *again*

Joe Line 137

> [Laughs] Probably nearly ended up *joining* 'em.

Edward Line 138

> Yeah./ It-it's really *stupid* some of the things they *do* on there.

He also criticised school discourses performed by adults, making the assertion that schools lie. His conviction in the argument he presented is emphasised by the word "*completely*":

Edward Line 343 (Joint narrative)

> Oh (.) well if I start at the *beginning*, I think the first *lie* of High School was Miss D, my Head of Year saying that (.) she had a (.) bubbly *personality* (.)/ *completely* not, she's sh-*always* shouting at people (1 sec) so/

However, Edward also raised alternative possibilities by suggesting that the narratives around adolescence that provide repertoires such as peer pressure and bullying were also an exaggeration in his experience:

Edward Line 419 (Joint narrative)

> (3 secs) A *bit* yeah, but it's *not* (.) *like* (.) *all* the PSHE *peer* pressure *videos, that's* (.) *extremely exaggerated*, but (.) it *is* different for other people.

I gained the impression that for Edward questioning authoritative discourses included questioning those versions and aspects of autism that he felt would be constraining. Edward's confidence and desire to take control of his own life was illustrated to me when he resisted my attempt to make him complicit in a version of autism that I was currently favouring: as a difference that need not mean a lifelong diagnosis. He softened the blow for me by emphasising that my point was "*not, quite*" logical. His response to my hesitant suggestion indicates that Edward was sufficiently confident about the framework within which he situated autism as integral to self for it to be rejected.

Edward Line 72

> Erm (.) I don't know, I *think* if I *have* the *label* then (.) it *will* account for *why* I am, *like* I am, with the (???) so *I'd* be *happy* to put labels on groups, (???) so..

Claire Line 73-74

> Because I *was* erm (.) er there was a *psychiatrist* c-er/ I'm doing part of the research at *university/* and a psychiatrist came in to talk about *diagnosis* ...
>
> and she would say that they didn't *need* to have, that you could *have* it and *then* not *need it* any more, (2 secs) thats...

Edward Line 75

> I don't think *that's*, *quite* logical/ but I *don't* (.) think you can *really*, like, *grow out* of autism, I think it's still going to be *a part* of you, *so...*

Edward happily joined with a friend who also had a diagnosis in laughing at the language of those, like his mother and his sister, who did not:

Edward Line 44

> ... we were *talking* in church and my mum was talking to *him* about doing some jobs for us *and* (.) she said something about, er, 'it would not ring *true*', *and* we both went *uh*(???), *both* of us, (???)
> it was *so* funny we had (???) but it was *just* kind of (.) *yeah*...no.

I was struck by Edward's willingness to persist with the repertoire of challenge even if it meant questioning some of the narratives being performed by his peers in which he was sometimes a participant. In this next extract Edward has rejected his peers' behaviour and humour, demonstrating sensitive empathy towards the victim of the story he is telling:

Edward Line 421 (Joint narrative)

> Erm (5 secs) [makes noise with mouth] not *really*, erm (5 secs) I don't think so [*quiet*]/ I mean a couple of *people* [*louder*] were like, *er* (.) being *idiots* and sticking (.) *condoms* on their heads and like, putting them over their nose and blowing them *up*, [I don't know *why*...

Edward Line 425

> ...and one of my *mates* (.) *didn't* want to do it 'cos he, was *like* (.) he didn't like (.) *bags* or *anything*/ 'cos he was, *he* was panicked he was going to *suffocate* and/ but they were trying to *force* him to do that so I was just said '*leave* him (.) *alone*', with a couple of *swear* words *in* there/ *and* [laughing] they *left him* alone.

"Actually it's *moulded* into me"

It seemed to me that Edward wanted to position himself away from what he perceived to be negative narratives associated with diagnosis and yet at the same time was ready to accept versions of autism that were positive and permanent aspects of his identity. Autism helped him to be distinct from the crowd. I did not sense tension between the narratives but rather I perceived Edward to be an individual exercising choice as to which would bring greater control within his world. Edward seemed to select those autism and adolescent narratives that suited him from which to construct his sense of self. For example, he said that he found it hard to be organised, which he situated within his preference for routines. However, he inoculated the narrative by saying that this was one small aspect of self amongst others that were no different to any other young person his age:

Edward Lines 268-271

> Erm, (.) *don't think* it is/ it, I *mainly* get in *trouble for* er (.) *like* (.) *having* my *phone* on in lessons or something/ (.) *erm* [laughs]/ but *some* things I think are *slightly* reli-related to *autism* (.) *like* being *late* and (.) *disorganised* so...
> ...*so* I mean *woolly*. [laughs]

I attempted to introduce some agency for Edward within this narrative by indicating that he might be able to effect change and become better organised. Edward was persistent in maintaining the narrative, which he linked to autism, suggesting to me that he felt it was functional to his current identity script. I hypothesised that he preferred to live the repertoire of being an individual unwilling to be seen to be totally compliant. That Edward stated disorganisation was "moulded into" him, reinforced his acceptance of this identity script.

Claire Line 284

> (.) If somebody came *along* and, and sat *down* with you and sorted a (.) *plan* of how to be more *organised*, though, how would *you* feel about it?

Edward Line 285

> Erm (.) I don't *know* I *think* (.) that it would (.) *sort of* (.) work but (.) it *wouldn't*, in the end/ because (.) it would be changing my *routine* which I've now got *into, and,* so...

Edward Line 287

[Actually it's *moulded* into me.

"...we hate* being put into *groups"

As with Joe, I interpreted ambivalence and contradiction in Edward's desire to be seen as different to other young people but also the same. It seemed to me that Edward was shaping his narrative to maintain that aspect of his identity he situated as autistic because it helped him to conform to the interpretative repertoire of the group of young people with whom he most liked to identify. He told me that he aligned himself with a teenage group known as *moshers*, but he was then quick to argue that "*we hate*" to be part of any group. In their joint interview, both Edward and Joe were scathing about groups that created stereotypical teenage repertoires and identity scripts:

Edward Line 109

Erm, well (1 sec) *bullying* because (.)/ you *know*, I'm like a (.) *'mosher'*, type of thing./ *I like* rock music *and* (.) I *dress* in dark clothing and *stuff*, *erm* (.)

Claire Line 159

Do you *think* people *want to* put other people *in* categories?

Edward Line 160

Yeah, (.) I think they *do*, *I think* pretty much *everyone else* in school erm *have* a *set group/* which are like all *goths* and *emos* and everything and *then* the (.) what's called *chavs* with all like *chavs* with all like gold *chains* and [(???)...

Edward Line 163

and (.) they just *don't like* each other/ *but I* get *along* with pretty much *everybody* like/ (.) some of the *chavs* I'm *friends with*, some of the *goths* and *moshers* I'm sort of *friends with,/* so I'm just an *individual* person

Claire Line 164

> Are there *some people* who *don't*, don't *want to* belong to (.) *any* of them?

Edward Line 165

> Oh *loads*, *we hate* being put into *groups* but (.) *because* one side doesn't want to (.) *converse* with the other and says if (1 sec) you don't *like* it

For me, Edward's narratives here are pointing to the fluid and complex interpretative repertoires and discourses available to young people, some of which constrain and categorise while others reject group restrictions and encourage agency and individuality. Conflict is evident when Edward reported that he and his friends reject a shared identity even though he had chosen a collective subject for the sentence.

This interplay of available repertoires from which identities can be constructed by young people is described by Duits (2008), who discusses the limitations imposed by one repertoire upon another. In her ethnographic account of 'multi-girl' culture she postulates that it was the interpretative repertoire of normalcy that was most difficult to define for the adolescent girls who were her subjects. She argues that the performance within narratives of what is normal is necessarily a collective construction (Duits, 2008, p. 220). Lasser and Corley (2008) also discuss the ambiguities of normalcy for parents of children with an autistic spectrum diagnosis.

While Edward and his friends appear to separate themselves from wider discourses of normality they still seem to create their own interpretative repertoires of normal in a collaborative narrative of difference and individuality, choosing repertoires they consider anchor this as an identity script. Edward quickly disassociated himself from the *moshers* in a similar vein to the way he had removed himself from being too closely aligned to the autistic spectrum, but he achieved this by situating himself within another group repertoire, that of christianity[7]:

Edward Lines 115-117

> [Dark clothes *but*, *I'm* still really (.) *up* beat about everything and (.) you know, yeah/ and *I'm, I'm* a *Christian* as *well* so I just love *life/*
> *but* people that don't *know* me (.) just (.) class me as (.) some sort of person that wants to sit in a (.) *dark corner/* and so *they*, they like *'Ah mosher, Ah'/*
> *that's*(.) like messes my head up really *because/* (.) if *that's all* they can come up with *really*, and, you know there's *no point.*

Edward defended *his* position here by belittling the subjects of last assertion.

***"...although* the parts are *different* they *still work* practically the *same*"**

In addition to being unwilling to relinquish his association with particular aspects of asperger's syndrome, Edward also attributed himself the label computer 'geek'. This may be perceived as a derogatory term that could diminish an individual's power potential, but I considered that Edward identified with the term because it offered status and solidarity with some of his peers, although his "*so* what" suggests that he was used to being defensive about this aspect of his identity script. In terms of his understanding of the autistic spectrum, I feel that Edward's attempts to stretch normality to include autism enabled him to operate within a dominant conventional discourse yet maintain his wish for an original identity script. Like me, Edward was positioning autism within a narrative of difference, and difference within a discourse of normality. Rather than

---

[7] It would be inconsistent to provide a capital letter for christianity when I have purposely avoided capital letters for other groups to emphasise their social construction. This is not intended to cause offence.

Edward being constrained by my perceived need to perpetuate this as a narrative, I sensed that Edward was choosing to perform this alternative narrative within his own interpretative repertoire.

“...people *with* asperger's are like ‘Apple *Macs*’”

Edward’s computer metaphors powerfully conveyed the coherence that he had formulated around this story of autism, difference and acceptance:

Edward Line 85

> Yeah, I *think it’s*, like what I said earlier, about *people’s* different minds needing different *types* of computers, *every* computer has a *brand*, so...

Edward Line 90-91

> [Yeah (.) I-I *don’t* think it’s (.) *quite* that cos *just as* we have different personalities, depending on *what’s in* us, so do *computers./*
>
> *I’m a* (.) *computer* geek *so what./*
>
> *Erm,* yes ‘cos *I’ve* (.) built my *computer, and* (.) there *are* some (???) [laughing] does it really matter that much?/ *It does,* if you want a decent computer you’re going to *have* to have the *decent parts...*

Edward Line 93, 95

> *But* (.) *in my* (.) computer at the moment I’ve got a er (.) *cheap* motherboard, but it’s a *really* good one *still...*
>
> *Like* a (.) *budget* motherboard, I *mean* I haven’t got enough money *but* it is *still really good/ although* the parts are *different* they *still work* practically the *same.*

Claire Line 96

> And is *that* sort of an analogy to *people* and, and *autism*?

Edward Line 97

> Yeah

In this joint narrative with me, Edward used computer metaphors to effectively extend the repertoires outside and within autism to include a range of versions. This, once more, signified for me the possibilities for differences within autistic and non-autistic discourses *and* the notion that fundamentally there is a sameness. Edward removed the apparent contradictions by fitting these poles coherently together:

Edward Line 270-274 (Joint narrative)

> Erm (4 secs) I think of it *like* (.) computers, 'cos sort of like (.) *everybody* that's *not* got autism is like *'Windows'*, loads of different *ones* (2 secs)/ (.) and people *with* asperger's are like 'Apple *Macs'*, *so/* (.) there's a (.) *few* different ones. [erm...
>
> (1 sec) Well *yeah*, I mean they're not *exactly* the *same* erm, they've got, they're *different*, but they still work (.) the *same...* if you *know* what I mean.

Claire Line 275

> 'cos they're *all* computers.

Edward Line 276

> Yeah

Claire Line 277

> Do you *prefer* to be an 'Apple Mac' or a 'Windows'?

Edward Line 278

> Oh 'Windows' is *crap* it's going down the drain, so, [(???)

This disparaging comment confirmed to me that Edward positioned his preferred identity script within what he considered to be a powerful discourse of normality that *did* include him as a young person diagnosed to be on the autistic spectrum, but that his interpretative repertoire was in many respects different and *better* than that of the majority. It felt refreshing that Edward was endowing himself with status through the narrative he was performing, which also hinted at there being a host of possible versions (metaphorically, computer operating systems) and repertoires within the autistic spectrum. It was interesting that Edward used a metaphor linked to a company associated with economic world-dominance to signify the discourse of those without a diagnosis of autism. However, Edward made his personality responsible for his ability to overcome the constraints of dominant narratives, thereby putting himself in control of his identity construction.

Edward Line 417

> I don't know, I mean it's just like my (.) *personality* to *be* (.) *ok* with everything

"so I got *really* upset about that"

However, that Edward did feel that his diagnosis attributed some vulnerability was evident from this narrative describing his father's reaction. The intertextuality within the extract below, and emphasis by his father upon on "*stupid*", illustrates to me that Edward was experiencing the emotions as he narrated.

Edward Line 209-210

> *And*, he's like *erm* (.) ' Look at *this*, this is what your mum's trying to *do* she's trying to *get* money by saying you're *stupid'*/ and *all* this, and I'm like (.) '*that's* not true at *all'*/ and so I got *really* upset about that *and*/
> it turned *out* that *he* actually might *have* autism (.) *himself* according *to* (.) *people*, so (.) yeah.

Edward offered autism as an explanation for his father's reaction, suggesting that he might be defending his father from bearing all the blame within the interaction. However, this did not make Edward any more forgiving towards his father, indicating that he did not see autism as a reason for reducing his father's capacity to make less hurtful choices:

Edward Line 216

> Well, I *don't really* want to see him if he doesn't want to see *us*/ and if-if he's not *even* going to *try* making *contact*, then, (.) you know.

“I *know* what you *mean*”

As with Joe, I was impressed with Edward’s insight into the motivations of others. Edward’s capacity for theory of mind was confirmed to me when he made a connection between my difficulty explaining my version of autism to my youngest son and comments made to him by his younger brother:

Claire Line 225

> [laughs] It’s *hard* isn’t it when there (2 secs) it, it a *younger* person to, to *explain,* ‘it’s not as, no that’s not, it’s not *like that* it’s like *this*’ and

Edward Line 226-227

> Yeah (.) er I *know* what you *mean*, because my *bother* (.) *he’s, like/* I can’t remember *anything* he says now/ but erm (.) *if* we’re having an *argument* or something then (.) *he’ll* just *s-start* o-*on* at me saying ‘*ah* go back to school and *see* Mr S’ and stuff, *you* know./
>
> I don’t think he *fully* understands so, (.) *he’s* not (2 secs) I don’t know (.) *yeah.*

Similarly, Edward demonstrated empathy in this narrative about a child who was hurt by his brother:

Edward Line 247

> [but erm (.) I felt really *sorry* for him because people *were (.)* just going *up* to him and (.) *like*, trying to carry it *on*, after my brother had been *excluded* (.)*/ and* I *just* don’t think it’s right (.) there’s (.) *everyone’s* got a lot on [their plate (???)

I felt that Edward was able to perceive the complex actions of his brother with mature objectivity, yet his sense of compassion towards him was illustrated by this next long narrative. Here, Edward experienced being torn between the tension of being brother and boyfriend:

Edward Lines 256-258

> ... a couple of *months* back erm (1 sec) he went on a *real* outburst *and* he went-and-went and he *got his* bag and he tried to walk out of *school/ and* I (.) *had* to make a decision *between* (1 sec) er *patching* things up (.) with my *girlfriend* at that time *and* going and helping *him* and *stopping* him from going out of school/ because he would (.) get into a lot of trouble *for it* (.)/ *and* I ended *up* (.) making that *split* decision and (.) going and *stopping him* from (.) *going* out of school *and/...*

I was intrigued, however, that Edward positioned his brother's behaviour within labels and categories despite his own apparently ambivalent views towards his autistic spectrum diagnosis. However, it is possible that Edward used the categories to inoculate himself from the emotional impact he perceived the behaviour sometimes caused to others and to himself:

Edward Line 119

> *But, like,* my brother gets bullied quite *a lot* because/ (.) they don't know *what* he's *got*, its like a concoction of *lots of* different *bits* of everything, *dyslexia*, *autism*, *ADHD* and *all that.*

I interpreted that Edward was being constrained by the medical discourse that makes the language of pathology available through which to understand some kinds of behaviour. One formulation Edward made in favour of his diagnosis, and being put on the SEN register, was that it helped his teachers to understand his needs:

Edward Line 311

> Yeah er so, I *think* (.) they'll *then* know and (.) like try and *help* me to be more *organised, like/* if I *had* (.) er *Food Technology* (.) they *would make* sure that I *have* it *written*

> down in my planner that I need to *bring* in food and stuff (.)/ *and* (.) *they'll*, *like*, make a *point* of mm(.) like making *sure* that (.) the *day* before that I'd *remembered*, so.

He also saw the school's asperger's group as a supportive means to self-understanding and problem-solving:

Edward Line 304-5 (Joint narrative)

> (.) The *people* that are *there*, you know, they all have some form of (.) *autism* and so you can talk *openly* about *that* because it could (.) help *them*,/ erm the problems you've faced and *conquered*, you can help *them* conquer/ whereas if there were people that *didn't*, they'd (.) probably wouldn't *understand* as *much*, so.

Edward's language was of battle and solidarity against the problems autism might introduce. Here, again, is an example of the conflict between different repertoires for Edward. He sought alliance with others in sharing his diagnosis but he wanted to defeat the problems. He felt that those without a diagnosis would not understand the issues faced by young people with a diagnosis but then he also positioned autism within a discourse of difference shared by everybody:

Edward Line 209 (Joint narrative)

> but I mean I think *everybody has* (.) a bit of *autism*, there's *no way* to completely, *not* have it/ but s-erm it affects *some* more than others, so there's (3 secs) yeah.

He has stated that understanding autism helps his teachers to understand him but he seemed happy that his friends treat him no differently because they *do* understand him, suggesting that his identity is bigger than autism:

Edward Line 212 (Joint narrative)

> (7 secs) I don't think it *does* (.) affect me *that* much [*quiet*] (4 secs) I don't know/ I *mean* [*louder*] [3 secs] there *are* a few people that know I have asperger's and *they* (.) treat me exactly the *same*, as when they didn't *know*, so

Edward's long pauses here provide an indication of the complex relationship between the competing available repertoires from which Edward was choosing to construct his identity. He was apparently ready to use the diagnosis to access help or to feel a sense of shared challenge. He also used it to create a self-image that perpetuated a repertoire of being different, challenging authoritative narratives, belying the vulnerability the diagnosis also introduced to him because of the historical incapacitating discourse with which, for him, it was associated:

Edward Line 239

> Yeah, 'cos I *mean* (.) er when people didn't used to *understand* about *autism* and *stuff*, they erm/ (.) they *used* to just *jeer* and stuff and/...

I perceived, however, that Edward's potential for agency within his narratives was greater than for Joe. I wondered how far this might have been influenced by the narratives that might have been available to Edward at home given the complex and different needs of his siblings. Edward exercised control and power in some of the stories he told to construct his identity script, even though he sometimes seemed to be unconsciously choosing constraining repertoires and discourses that he also disparaged and rejected. I felt that this was an inevitable consequence of socially constructed narratives, which could never be totally novel because they were necessarily performed through social interaction and shared understanding. Despite the dominant and powerful narratives around Edward he managed to show confident resistance in his attempt to rationalise a creative yet unitary and coherent identity script.

Postscript

I was only able to discuss the *Gestalt* version of his story and the transcripts briefly with Edward. I was struck, however, by the way that he seemed to perceive the story as an affirmation of the control he already felt that he was able to exert over his own life-script, which he confirmed to me was a benefit of a family experience consisting of characters with a diverse range of needs and personalities:

Edward Line 24 (Feedback)

> I made a *decision* that if you learn to have power over your *own* life you'll grow up to be a successful person and my family background has helped a *lot*

Chapter Six <u>Towards resolution?</u>

The stories being told around my subjects

In some of the narratives that were being constructed around Joe and Edward I had identified Big 'D' discourses and interpretative repertoires through which it was possible to experience life or identity scripts (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984, Edley, 2001, Parker, 2005) (see Appendix II). Identities were viewed to have become scripted through the interpretative repertoires acted out within narratives to help defend or inoculate the interests of dominant stakeholders (Edwards and Potter, 2003). I applied elements of critical discourse analysis to explore how far I felt the interpretative repertoires and life-scripts of my subjects were being constrained by or involved in defending Big 'D' discourses or more dominant narratives. Through their *Gestalt* narratives and my subsequent analysis of the field texts gathered from and around them I considered the way I felt Joe and Edward were positioning themselves with regard to some of these discourses. I interpreted that Joe's and Edward's stories' were not the same, but neither were they contradictory.

The interaction: How Joe and Edward's stories were constrained by or were able to resist the discourses and repertoires I identified in surrounding narratives[8]

➢ Autism and me as a young person[9]

Joe's narratives at first reflected the repertoire around autism I sensed also to exist in the narratives of the two younger boys I had interviewed, that autism was limiting and to blame for all the problems in his life.

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[8] See previous section for how I constructed these sub-plots: Chapter Four **<u>The Sub-plots and subsidiary characters</u>** (p. 43-44)

[9] Autism is to blame for problems I cannot help, it is unwelcome and limits me as a person. It means I am lacking and stupid. It makes me a victim and stops me being on the 'right side'. If other people and systems changed it would help because they can be incomprehensible and unjust when the autism leaks out of me.

He *did* also hint at and defend alternative, more optimistic versions of his autistic self, which, like Edward's, was positioned within a version of the autism spectrum that had the potential to offer 'normalcy': "*everybody's* a *little bit* on the autistic spectrum [laughing]/" (Joe, Line 128). I interpreted this as a mirror of *my* attempts to normalise autism within our interactions. Edward already seemed to be performing this repertoire, which may have contributed to his ability to resist those discourses that were limiting. Joe was also able to constitute a normalising repertoire but it felt less powerful within his experience. I sensed Joe to be frequently overpowered by more powerful discourses despite his desire to be positioned within one where he was not excluded or pathologised (Billington, 2000). It was affirming to hear his increasing control in the feedback interview.

I was impressed that both Joe and Edward were able to demonstrate insight into the reasons why others might choose to defend their interests by *not* accepting alternative discourses around autism. I felt that my subjects' accounts were rich in theory of mind and highlighted the limitations of theory of mind in those non-autistic individuals (Lawson, 2000) who were protecting a non-autistic world from being considered autistic. I wondered whether, rather than being an impairment, 'mind-reading' was often too painful for Joe because he did not consider that he always had the capacity to meet the expectations of others. Even in his feedback interview Joe recognised his skill at understanding the thoughts of others as also being a constraint:

Joe Line 161 (Feedback)

> And that like, *like* you put in *this* there *is* that fear that I might have *upset* somebody over *something*, that they might not be *friends* any more (.) or they might be a bit *funny* one day./...

Edward, on the other hand, was able to view the thoughts and feelings of others more dispassionately yet with equal intensity and consideration. I concluded that those of us without a diagnosis of autism needed to examine our own supposed theory of mind ability, particularly with regard to those for whom theory of mind is meant to be impaired.

I identified in Edward's narratives the repertoire that autism could be perceived as external rather than integral to identity, which also featured in the narratives of the two younger children. I wondered whether Edward had moved a stage further to agency by expecting those around him to adapt to his needs rather than the other way round. For Joe the world seemed all too comprehensible as well as frequently unjust and hurtful. His wish was for others to understand him, but he was only too ready to defend their reasons for this not being achievable. In his narratives he seemed to accept the discourse that made him the problem and autism as the reason he was the problem (Joe, Lines 82-95). Again, I detected that Joe experienced these rejections less tolerantly when we reflected on his story, suggesting that he was no longer as overpowered by them even though they still hurt.

Joe Line 123 (Feedback)

> Yeah I can *tell* when somebody might *get* (.) a bit frustrated with me, and they *generally do./* I still don't *like* it even though I can predict it, *using* the force [laughs]

➢ Parents' repertoires[10]

I did not really detect the discourses and repertoires featuring within the parents' narratives in those of Edward. He seemed to demonstrate affectionate disrespect for his mother, but his description of his mother's need for control through her morning routines suggested to me his appreciation of the way his mother overcame the challenges she faced

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[10] My parents want to protect me but autism challenges who they are as parents, making them feel impotent and that they have lost control. My parents feel better when professionals give them practical tips and they can share their experiences.

each day to maintain her role as parent of several children with additional needs, rather than an indication of impotency:

Edward, Line 300-304

> Erm (3 secs) [sigh] I don't *know* (.) *erm/*
> well, if any one *dared* walk into our house in a morning and said that *she'd* (.) *like* (2 secs) erm I don't know, *have* to go to *work* an hour *earlier* or something/ (.) *then* that would cause *absolute chaos* (.) *because* (.) erm my sister that's in the *wheelchair* ...
> *She has* to be put on (.) the *bus* at nine o *clock* (.)/ so *she has* to *get* (.) to *work* an hour *earlier* then *she'd* have to go at nine o'clock as *well*, as well as getting all *her business* stuff ready (.) for *straight after* work *and*, so (.)...
> I *wouldn't* (.) mess with her in a *morning*, so [laughs]

When I met with Edward to discuss my interpretation of his narratives he agreed that his experience had been influenced by the acceptance of difference nurtured in him by his family background. The repertoire being made available by Edward's mother could have helped him take control of *his* experiences rather than allowing them to dominate. His account of his father's reaction to his diagnosis *did* seem to suggest a parent who might be struggling to see autism as anything other than a disability that questioned his parent role, and this was the only point in Edward's narrative that he admitted an emotionally difficult time. However, Edward situated his description within the context of his mother and father separating, and his later rejection of his father, indicating to me that he had been able to create an alternative view despite the hurt caused by his father's comments:

Edward Line 216

> Well, I *don't really* want to see him if he doesn't want to see *us/* and if-if he's not *even* going to *try* making *contact*, then, (.) you know.

For Joe, however, his description of the imperfect world he had created for his family projected the pain and sadness that I interpreted Joe to be feeling at the time. I thought that he *was* hinting at the expectations his parents might have had for themselves as parents. As already stated, Joe seemed to experience despair that he could not change himself for them because he was the one that was faulty, preventing them from fulfilling their expectations. He defended their responses by acknowledging their emotional needs: "*But that's* because *they're* wound up" (Joe, Line 95). I sensed that Joe *was* experiencing the devastation of this repertoire within his narrative. Nevertheless his resilience despite his experience of the emotional response of some of his family members towards his diagnosis suggested that he had *not* been defeated.

Although he did not mention practical tips for his parents, Joe's narratives did seem to yearn for greater understanding, which Joe tended to situate within a discourse of autism that he lacked confidence in sharing because, for him, it *was* so central to his sense of self. His parents' frustration at being told that support might be limited for Joe because of financial pressures within school had been integrated into his own version of how professional support might create disappointment. Joe's narrative here seemed not to expect too much from professionals, although the bitterness conveyed by his emphasis on "*apparently*" might well reflect his parents' feelings.

Joe Line 389 (Joint narrative)

> you *know* th-they said to mum and *dad* we-we just can't afford to get *one* in, sort of thing [referring to teaching assistant support]

Claire Line 390

> How did that make *you* feel?

Joe Line 391

> *Erm*, *well* obviously if they can't afford it, they can't *afford* it/ but it-it *is* a in *some* cases a bit of a *let down* (1 sec) in *other* ways they obviously can't help being *skint*/ [clears throat] ...

Claire Line 392

> *How* did your mum and dad react to *that*?

Joe Line 393

> Erm (.) well (2 secs) what *can* you do really?/ I mean there's not much you can really change by *saying* something (2 secs) that, sort of thing./ *Actions* speak louder than words *apparently*. (2 secs) So I *guess* (3 secs) they *can't*.

Joe *did* seem to feel that when his parents shared their experiences with other parents it helped them to feel better, which in turn helped them to have greater understanding of his needs. It also helped him emotionally to find others who might share similar experiences:

Claire Line 513

> So is it *good* to find (.) things in *common* with people, like that?

Joe Line 514

> *Well yeah* because you can l- *talk* to them about it, or talk to his-their *parents* about it/ because *they* talk to each other sometimes about it./

The need to find others with whom experiences can be shared perhaps illustrated the tension for some parents, and for Joe, between seeking to achieve a repertoire of perfection or perceived normalcy and wanting to find coherence and support within the imperfect repertoire that seemed to be available.

➢ Secondary Schools[11]

The discourses and repertoires from the secondary school staff did seem to resonate within my subjects' narratives, reflecting the competing nature of repertoires within experiences (Duits, 2008). I sensed that both Joe and Edward were used to weaving their way through what sometimes felt to be the contradictory life scripts of the adults and peers they encountered at school. The pull of being the same and being different, wanting support but also wanting to be treated the same, for Joe, appeared to be experienced as confusion:

Joe Lines 42-43

> T- (2 secs) [*Sigh*] *It* depends I'm, I'm I've got mixed *very* mixed views on it./
> But it's *sort of* split in two sort of thing the (.) the concept of being tret the same as everybody else. (.)

There were adults with whom Joe felt safe and others who provoked anxiety. Joe seemed to worry about the reactions of some adults at school so much that it sabotaged his ability to be in their presence:

Joe Line 51

> *like* (.) *when* (.) something *happens* (.) y-know- *say* if *I got* (.) *shouted at* for something/ I *might not* want to go in *that lesson* for (.) a couple o-of days until (.) the teacher might have *forgot* about it/

Edward also mentioned teachers shouting but he was less constrained by the repertoire. He labelled it as just *one* of the contradictory messages

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[11] Secondary schools are like lions' dens. They challenge me and make little sense. There are some aspects of secondary school that help. Some adults in school limit the possibility of alternatives but others want to protect me and they do not want me to be lonely. I want to be like everybody else in school but I also want to feel safe. Staff in school do not like to think they are experts in autism because it is a like a mysterious diagnosis.

being delivered by schools, which he described with cynicism. For Edward schools did not make sense but he was not cowed by this experience. Rather, he used it to criticise elements of school.

Joe's feeling description of his hurt in the face of teachers who did not seem to understand him "..the-there are obviously there's- will be some reall- th-that can't, there *are* some people that can't be bothered..." (Joe, Line 61) might indicate that he was suffering because staff *were* unwilling to become 'experts'. However, as already stated, Joe seemed to be suggesting that it was sensitivity and attunement to his individual emotional needs that he found helpful rather than an application of a particular autism discourse, although *he* understood it as understanding of autism. Joe's perception seemed to mirror the messier versions of autism the school staff I interviewed described. They had shown resistance towards advocating one discourse, preferring to understand the needs of the individuals whom they wanted to support. Edward seemed to appreciate those staff able to understand his needs, which he also situated within an autism discourse. My subjects each wanted school staff to understand their autism yet the staff with whom I talked did *not* want to position their understanding within a medicalised autism discourse because this threatened their professional identity scripts. I sensed this to be a tension experienced more by Joe than Edward, illustrated by this extract where Joe implored his teachers to take notice but was scared of making them upset:

Joe Line 172

> Well the ones that say I'll *leave* it and let it go *away?/* I'll say *don't, learn* about (.) th-*research* about (.) the condition (.) and learn about the different *things* and (.) *parts* of it, the *tendencies/* (.) and think 'how could I deal with *that* properly?...

The secondary school environment described as being like a "lions' den" by parents did not seem so horrifying within my subjects' accounts, although for Joe the cumulative effect of anxiety and disappointment at feeling he was unable to achieve the academic repertoire he felt he should, and more particularly experiencing exclusion from the adolescent friendship repertoires for which he yearned, *did* seem to have a disabling effect upon him when he sometimes found that he could not leave the car to enter school premises:

Joe Line 413

> *Yeah,* but it just makes *me* really anxious and (.) I feel that they're *not* friends with me sometimes/ and th-that's why I sometimes *don't* want to get out the *car.*

Joe's ambiguous desire to be the same as his peers alongside his anxiety and need to feel safe is illustrated by this extract, where Joe explained how he did not want to go to the sanctuary of Learning Support at lunchtime because he wanted to have friends and be in the yard like everybody else:

Joe Line 433

> [Mmm (1 sec)/ we-I don't *hang round* with him at *dinner./ He hangs round* in *here*, sort of thing, Learning Support, *in this room/* and *I don't like* doing that really *I like* (2 secs) sort of to be *outside* where all the (.) [laughing]

Edward's narratives were also bursting with contradictory and complementary scripts of sameness and difference, which Edward appeared to embrace readily as aspects of life's social complexity when I discussed this interpretation with him later. He was able to select those repertoires which enabled him to justify a coherent unitary identity that he liked. Joe seemed weighted down by the competing narratives and repertoires within his secondary school environment to the extent that he became incapacitated. To me, his worry about the effect of his actions upon the repertoires and narratives of others showed such an intense sensitivity towards their emotions that it stultified agency. I was moved by Edward's insight when he remarked to me that "...the *thing* about Joe is (.)

he worries too *much* about what other people are thinking" (Edward, Feedback, Line 27).

➢ LA Professionals and institutional narratives[12]

The ambivalence of some professional narratives towards a medical version of autism seemed to be represented by the resistance Edward demonstrated towards his diagnosis. He wanted me to know that autism did not really affect him, as to accept it might reduce him in it's pathology. He was keen to say "I'm not bothered *really*" (Edward, Line 235). However, conversely, Edward was reluctant to relinquish the support he gained as a result of the diagnosis and his desire for his teachers to be more understanding. Rather than being uneasy about the hypocrisy of pursuing a dominant narrative in order to secure the resources that could be gained like some of the professionals, Edward appeared less concerned. He was exercising agency in this respect because he was choosing autism because of its functionality, but only to the extent that it allowed him to maintain control of his experiences and identity.

Joe's interest in the medical narratives (Joe, Lines 455-507) illustrated his tendency to accept these versions. In his initial narratives he seemed to be living a pathology that crushed him even though it did promise a more coherent discourse. He felt that the only way to make his experience better at school was for professionals to understand this pathology.

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[12] Some professionals resist medical and pathological narratives like the triad but then accept them because they bring resources. For some professionals autism is a messier, complex picture with different versions and it can be normalised but there is pressure to create a coherent and unitary medical, pathological version. This version of autism can be seen to reduce me and my parents to objects. Professionals need to defend their own statuses and dominant autism discourses do come from powerful institutions. My voice is absent from some dominant discourses.

Joe Line 278

> Yeah th- they *can see./* (.) M-Mrs *H* in the *tests* could see I was quite *anxious* I was my p-*my hands* were sweaty

However, Joe's preoccupation with understanding the pathology suggested to me that he found this version of autism was not actually experienced as a coherent narrative, and it was in competition with other autistic spectrum narratives that offered Joe more agency because they could offer the possibility of being a "*variation* of *normal*" (Joe, Feedback, Line 35), for example the rich and emotionally enriching metaphor of the autistic spectrum as an "array of colours" (Joe, Line 253). For Joe though, this more optimistic narrative seemed easily beaten when he refused to allow me to dissuade him from saturating himself with some of his pathological identity scripts. Nevertheless, Joe's feedback interview indicated that he was gaining agency from being able to situate himself more coherently within a more positive and inviting, if complex, discourse around autism.

This dilemma for Joe seemed to reflect the narratives told by some professionals. Although Edward refused to allow autism to objectify him, arguing that he was a "very, *very* individual person" (Edward, Feedback, Line 4), it could be perceived that Joe's inability to describe himself had reduced him to the extent that he could *not* construct himself as a person. Joe was only allowing himself the smallest voice amongst these dominant narratives, yet Edward's voice was more strident. Perhaps this was because, despite the power of the discourses in which he was situating his experience, he bluntly rebuffed any attempt to allow these discourses or repertoires to become his definition. He kept control of his identity but he was happy to refer to the discourses if they were of use. He had already externalised his diagnosis before the research process began, although I would like to think that in the storying his potential for agency had increased. I felt that Edward's insightful ability to situate the narratives of some professional staff within the repertoire of protecting their own interests inclined him to stand outside of his diagnosis (Edward, Line 34). Joe seemed more enmeshed within the narratives they were telling of him and the power wielded by these people as part of their professional roles, but when I listened to Joe's feedback narrative I sensed a stronger voice emerging from behind the professional stories.

And my own repertoires?

In terms of their responses to my *own* repertoire, I felt that Joe and Edward each resisted my attempt to remove the mantle of autism from their shoulders, preferring to make it integral to their life-scripts. Joe and Edward's repertoires around autism were constructed within what seemed to be a complex world of adolescent repertoires that made jokes of differences yet celebrated being different, encouraging and at the same time rejecting sameness or normalcy.

I felt that Edward was able to inhabit these competing narratives and repertoires, happy to abide within them or move on to others that maintained his interests. Joe's stories illustrated the sadness and frustration he experienced at his own perceived impotency born by pathological discourses he initially refused to let me extract from an identity he could not bear to describe.

I had wanted to examine how far interpretative repertoires like these being performed around Joe and Edward by some individuals and groups, including myself as co-researcher, were impacting on their narratives. How far *was* it possible to facilitate voice or agency by encouraging Joe and Edward to story their experiences and cast them into the transformational "dream of possibilities" hoped for by Kearney (2002, p.5) when these discourses and repertoires were waiting in the wings to take over the lead? I had gained a sense that Joe's story in particular was dynamic, moving towards an acceptance of many and varying interpretations of his experience, allowing him to feel more comfortable being situated within a discourse of different as an aspect of normalcy.

A question of meaning

I had therefore been asked what it *meant* to be a young person bearing an autistic spectrum diagnosis. The narratives constructed by my two subjects, Joe and Edward, reached me with new meanings each time I experienced them. That their stories stirred in me a plethora of emotional responses suggested to me that their words were, indeed, signifiers (Sauussure, 1974, Lacan, 2002), interactive and shared. I had not anticipated that the possibilities I thought that storying might offer these young people (White and Epston, 1990, Pomerantz, 2007a, Pomerantz, 2007b) would be projected equally to me as the listener and reader. I was conscious of transference, making emotional connections with the juxtaposed frustration and hope emanating from the stories.

I was keen to avoid describing these psychoanalytical processes as mysterious truths but preferred to see them as metaphorical signifiers for the interactive constructions that were taking place (Parker, 2005). I did not want autism to become further associated with powerful truth-claims that could only be unlocked by experts, thereby discouraging those who could help create alternatives, like school staff, from daring to admit to their skills. Rather, I perceived these narratives to be shared experiences and, as such, they pointed out to me that what it meant to be a young person bearing an autistic spectrum diagnosis was an issue not only for the young person but also for anybody sharing their story.

For those, like me, who have shared Joe and Edward's narratives their words will have generated meanings that might signify slightly different connections or "unique performances" to provide multiple perspectives (White and Epston, 1990, p.81). The meaning others construct from Joe describing himself as the "one little *difference* like *me* that *makes* [others' worlds]...*imperfect*" (Joe, Line 114) might differ to my own meaning, which situated Joe as insightful in his analysis of people being preoccupied in their quest for an impossible perfection that had been destroyed by his diagnosis. Joe seemed to be imploring me to notice that his difference to everybody else was only slight, yet he was carrying the weight of the disappointment of others. Perhaps he was also showing me that it is the imperfection of others in seeking perfection that has created this devastation within his experience. I could not ignore the sadness I felt when I heard these words of Joe's. I have come to realise, however, that for others his words will carry different meanings and signify other emotions. They conveyed powerful meanings to me in my position as mother of a child with the same diagnosis and a human being who has also been described in a way that signifies difference.

Whether Joe himself intended his words to trigger my particular response is another issue. However, that I could share some sense of the meaning he was providing through his narratives suggested to me that Joe was not only able to use words to convey his own meaning but that he was aware of many of the meanings his words might hold for others. The metaphors used by Joe and Edward were powerful indicators that these young people *were* able generate communication through narratives that challenge medical and cognitive repertoires situating them in a Big 'D' discourse of impaired theory of mind (Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith, 1985). If Joe and Edward found it difficult to 'read' the thoughts and emotions of others, then how could they generate words and metaphors that prompted such powerful emotional responses in their co-researcher?

Describing the autistic spectrum as an "array of colours" (Joe, Joint narrative, Line 253) provoked an optimism in me that had been attacked by the DSM IV description of autism as a "lack of social and emotional reciprocity" (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Joe must have wanted to help me share his feelings, and knew they would hold meaning for me, to have chosen this metaphor. Joe and Edward's narrative telling was a shared experience that generated shared meanings, stirring strong and vivid emotional connections.

Chapter Seven A cautionary note

In hindsight I admit that the scope of this research could be perceived as overly ambitious. In attempting an interpretive analysis of a range of narratives around Joe and Edward I soon realised that rather than painting across a canvas upon which they were the main characters, I was offering fragmented and limited sketches of the discourses *I* felt to be available. My acceptance of subjective meanings in some ways inevitably reduced possible interpretations to the ones I identified. It could be argued that this contradicted my aim of generating thicker descriptions that did not essentialise or reduce. I found it frustrating to confine such a diverse range of field texts and academic narratives and discourses to what could be viewed as superficial descriptions, thinner than the rich and colourful landscapes I had hoped to co-create, leaving less room for life's complexities (Geertz, 1973).

Many, many social and psychological issues featured in my interpretations but there was little opportunity to journey sufficiently in any particular direction. Adolescence, theory of mind, parental identity, the ambiguity of normalcy and pathological labels were just a few constructs that could have been explored more extensively. The fuddle of possibilities created by this range of narratives, however, did reflect, for me, the partial and often turbulent narratives told around and within my two subjects. My strategy to present a pen-portrait *Gestalt* version of my subject's narratives (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000) in a coherent form might therefore have been misleading. Frosh writes about the temptation for the researcher to re-tell narratives in this way:

> The appeal of the human story is just too great, and the political urgency attached to giving people 'voice' in research is too immediate, to allow us to break everything into bits and not try to put it together again.
> (Frosh, 2008, p.37).

He postulates that if, as researchers, a key issue is to stay close to what is happening in the narrative and admit that there might be many and various dynamic and contradictory interpretations, then it is inappropriate to try *any* kind of coherent presentation and analysis. In Hollway and Jefferson's psychosocial model the subject of the research is perceived to be unconsciously using narratives to defend a sense of unitary self which has been socially constructed through the narrative identities made available within the cultural context. Hollway (1989) writes that this process is about creating a sense of self as a 'unitary rational subject'. She maintains, however, that this sense is not a reality, but an aspect of "oppression which... [is] ...multiply camouflaged" (Hollway, 1989, p.7).

Why should I, then, have tried to perpetuate the myth by offering *Gestalt* narratives that attempted to be consistent and unitary? Perhaps I, too, was being duped by more dominant narratives. Yet, as Frosh points out, attempting to disintegrate narrative is a challenge for any researcher whose convention and social expectation is to 'make sense of it all' (Frosh, 2008, p.38). In terms of validity, it could be argued that the trustworthiness of the research has been compromised because an interpretation of the narratives that has more integrity would have more readily attempted to reflect their fragmentation in the way they were presented and analysed.

The small-scale nature of this research might invite the criticism that any interpretation will be limited in its reliance on the stories of just two young people within a particular school context. Indeed, I would have valued hearing the stories of others, motivated partly because I would have liked to have extended the scope of the action research occurring at an individual level for the young people through their narrative telling. I was also aware of the limitations of words within the stories that were generated. In addition to what it was possible to interpret from what was being said and done within the stories, by adopting a reflexive approach I tried to consider what it was possible be, feel, think and experience. Billington (2006) describes this as a Lacanian perspective, suggesting that "there is a fissure between experience and any explanations of that experience" (Billington, 2006, p.78).

However, if the words are seen as signifiers, they are also 'signified'. They are open to interpretation by the reader or listener, offering themselves to a host of possible meanings that cannot be contained merely within the word. Rather than increasing my sample size to make available more narratives that could have prompted thematic content analysis, I hoped to promote a perspective that could tolerate the "problems, ambiguities or uncertainties of language" (Billington, 2006, p. 137) and make the words available for analysis and interpretation that was generative rather than reductive. Listeners and readers would be able to make their own emotional connections and share and experience their own meanings.

Nevertheless, I hope that I have not strayed too far in the direction critiqued by Hepburn (2003) and used psychoanalytical language and metaphors as explanatory frameworks (Hepburn, 2003, p.95). Although I have felt comfortable using psychodynamic terminology to describe the meanings I have experience in the narratives, I fear that some readers might be less comfortable because of the tendency within this paradigm to confine experience to the limits of psychoanalytic theory (Parker, 2005). I was optimistic that words like containment, for example, would instead be interpreted in a metaphorical sense as a descriptor of an intensely personal experience that would make it available to be shared because it would point to meanings and feelings within the reader.

For me, the most problematic issue within the research was to reduce the power differential between myself and my subjects. Although I took steps to privilege the voice of my subjects (described above) I was nevertheless conscious of my intrusion into their stories as an adult and a professional, particularly in my position as Educational Psychologist at their school and from the perspective of my therapeutic involvement with Joe. I could only try to counter this with an honest and reflexive approach towards my own unconscious strategies to infiltrate Joe and Edwards' narratives with my versions of their experiences, and to offer choice for dissent and withdrawal at every opportunity. That I had mixed idenity relationships and interactions with the two young people is illustrative of the muddiness of the research-practioner role for Educational Psychologists.

Chapter Eight Opportunities to write more stories?

What I have unable to do within the practical limitations of this study is to consider the interpretative value of discourses *other* than words such as posture, gesture, look or touch and non-verbal signs that we all make when what we feel will not go into words (Winnicott, 1964). I tried to move some way towards this through a micro-analysis that included tone, emphasis, pauses and reference to sounds. However, I feel that further reflexive exploration of non-verbal narratives would at least start to travel towards more marginalised voices being heard. The opportunity to listen to individuals who communicate in ways other than words would then be facilitated.

Like a three-dimensional, dynamic and fluid construction I feel that my subjects' stories are the beginning of a professional and personal journey to listening that I hope to continue. For me it will be important to follow the meanderings of the stories, to explore the meanings they generate when they interact more fully with the tellers of the stories around the young people.

Another narrative journey upon which I would like to embark is to provide space for the stories of the parents and school staff I interviewed to be separately privileged. These narratives reflected the complexity of the experience of competing discourses within unique experiences (Lasser and Corley, 2008). I found the warm, human responses to my questions moving and compelling and I felt that these voices, too, deserved the chance to be centre stage.

I am therefore keen to share this rich mixture of co-constructed narratives with other parents, professionals, Local Authority strategists and medical staff and explore the interactions that are then performed. Will the young people's preferred versions of autism begin to take precedence? How will their voices be heard? I particularly hope that the insight expressed by my subjects within this narrative might challenge some of the thin but powerful discourses that potentially exclude possibilities like theory of mind from the repertoire of being autistic and include superior theory of mind skills in the repertoire of not being autistic.

Implications for my own professional practice

In addition to using narrative approaches in many of the conversations I have as a psychologist, I have become mindful of the need to be reflexive about my involvement and interpretations, especially of the duplicity that occurs when I accept discourses and repertoires, like those around autism, that reduce opportunity and limit potential. Joe and Edwards' stories have also become my story as their co-researcher and have transformed my practice. I now have the confidence to continue looking for voice, resisting the pressure to reduce narratives around young people to thin versions of their experience. Any constructed narrative, be it within a consultation or within Statutory Advice, I perceive to be active and influential.

I feel that this research has provided permission for me to continue to co-construct messier versions of experience that might facilitate the possibility of transformation and unique outcomes both for young people and for those constructing narratives around them. The intention of this research is to raise awareness that language within any narrative is rarely neutral, but instead is purposeful and has implications for status and interest. I therefore aim as a practioner to avoid the passive acceptance of powerful statements about children presented as neutral truths, such as the medicalised descriptors of autism. I hope to continue to look for alternative versions that provide young people with greater potential for agency within their own lives. For Joe and Edward this will involve me ensuring that their stories have the chance to be co-constructed again with the staff at their school, their parents and those professionals whose narratives have provided the backdrop against which the stories are written. Presentations and follow-up discussions will provide the opening scene for this next stage of the narrative.

Implications for the profession

This research also illustrates the potential Educational Psychologists have to challenge, rather than perpetuate by their acquiescence, the powerful problem-saturated versions of autism and other pathologisations being endowed upon young people they are frequently expected to confirm. If the right to the child to express his or her views *freely* (UN, 1989, Article 12) is as fundamental to the young people bearing those categories as other young people then I would urge the profession to question descriptions that assume their limitations, like the triad of impairment or limited theory of mind, which are presented as truths rather than cultural constructions. If Educational Psychologists wish to avoid the pursuit of voice being nothing more than a tokenistic gesture, then the methodology they use to listen has take account of those Big 'D' discourses enveloping any young person whose voice they wish to hear.

Facilitating narrative helps avoid the restrictions imposed by those approaches that isolate the young person from their cultural context. Educational Psychologists can pay attention to agency by offering choice making, refusing to assume fragility. Externalising techniques offer the opportunity within talk for a young person to become free of the fetters of their diagnosis or problem and speak from a more powerful position.

Within my own service I am engaged in promoting narrative practice as a way of practising Educational Psychology, in addition to a methodology for research. I am hoping to stir alternative narratives around autism by inviting a criticially reflexive approach towards the language we use and what it signifies, especially for those whose lives are being formulated. I intend to introduce the insightful voices of Joe and Edward to the group gathering in my own Local Authority to discuss language around autism. I hope to ask this group, colleagues in my service and other professionals to consider the following questions:

- Is it always in the interests of a child or young person to impose upon them the language of pathology and disability prevalent in the diagnostic criteria surrounding the autistic spectrum?
- Is it desirable to pursue objective versions of autism when the experience of the researched and autistic 'insiders' suggest that autism is a construction that involves multiple realities?
- Should the possibilities for young people with an autism diagnosis offered by a narrative approach prompt researchers and professionals to look again at what we mean by theory of mind?
- How far is the principle of celebrating diversity within a broader spectrum of normality eroded by the imposition of category and diagnosis?

For my service, and for my profession, being involved in the issue of how to encourage young people who are attributed a diagnosis of autism to achieve an optimistic sense of self given the powerful and negative discourses surrounding them could provide a useful and positive role. However, the wider discourses being challenged within this research stretch beyond Educational Psychology. A paper has been drafted with the aim of conveying this narrative to medical and educational professionals as well as Local Authority strategists. Publications such as *Disability and Society* might reach an audience wider than the confines of autism and psychology and offer the potential to challenge the social narratives of deficit and disability that have become Big 'D' discourses through which the allocation of resources and the restriction of voice seem to have become embroiled.

Chapter Nine Finale and the point of it all

For me using narrative strategies with Joe and Edward opened up possibilities for new understandings of what it means to be on the autistic spectrum as a young person at secondary school. I have come to realise that meanings are dynamic and will inevitably be entwined within my own subjective experiences as interviewer, listener, reader and co-constructor. I was delighted that I did not squeeze the opportunities for meaning flowing through a narrative approach by assuming that narratives would be unavailable to my subjects because of their diagnosis.

I feel that my subjects' narratives demonstrate that the notion of an autistic spectrum cannot be a neutral concept. Academic literature seems heavily packed with medical and cognitive discourses that appear to be searching for some kind of objective truth (Burr, 1995) that is questionable when viewed from a more relative position. The pathological descriptors of autism contained in the DSM IV seemed to be powerful subjugators of lived experience. They did not resemble the rich and vivid landscapes of Joe and Edward. From a social constructionist perspective citing 'true', and therefore powerful, classifications has created limited destinies for those bearing the categories that close down experiences (Foucault, 1980, White and Epston, 1990). My subjective experience of autism is far more like Joe's "array of colours" than the barren, 'problem-saturated' narrative of the medical classifications.

I felt that making autism available to subjectivity and multiple versions enabled alternative stories to be told while preserving an honest approach to the range of powerful stories enveloping young people with a diagnosis. The possibility was created that there could still be agency in that there was the opportunity to create a different destiny *despite* what it might feel like to be surrounded by constraining and confining narratives. However, my own assumptions also needed to be made available for interrogation through the reflexive process. I sensed that in the complex mesh of narratives within which Joe and Edward lived their lives there were also colourful ranges of interpretative repertoires that were nothing to do with autism. The discourse of autism, at times, seemed to play a functional role in the performance of competing and often contradictory repertoires of normal and different, and the need to be different to achieve normalcy within some adolescent identity scripts. The small-scale nature of the research allowed the multifarious experiences of Joe and Edward to be narrated, thus avoiding the trap of reducing their lives to one version of the experience of being a young person in a secondary school bearing a diagnosis.

Nevertheless, I have realised through the research process that there *are* institutional discourses involved in quests for objective truth that do seem to dominate as ‘units of power’ (White and Epston, 1990). I hope that through the storying process it has been possible for both my subjects to resist some of these constraining narratives so that they can construct alternative stories of their experience, therefore challenging some of the prevailing pathological truth claims around autism. That I perceive it has been more difficult for Joe than Edward illustrates the uniqueness of their experiences and the complexity of narratives performed always in relation to a tangled hierarchy of discourses and repertoires that communicate, project and protect the emotional, social, political and economic worlds of others.

In some ways my interpretative analysis of the narratives around Joe and Edward has offered two partial accounts of the meanings made available through the experience of dominant discourses and I have gained insight into the interpretative meanings it might be possible to generate when operating within them. That Edward *and* Joe were able to suggest alternative interpretations *I* saw as the performance of agency. I would like to think that this research might open up the possibilities of narrative for transformation to others who, too, might be living an experience crammed with stultifying pathological narratives and discourses.

Finally, I hope that I will continue to live and create my own alternative stories, which partly live within my identity scripts as an Educational

Psychologist, a mother of a child with an autistic spectrum diagnosis and my identification with a marginalised group, each of which has been enriched by the experience. In the same way that the narratives of my subjects illustrated to me that they were experiencing school and the rest of their lives through many interacting identity scripts and interpretative repertoires, not simply those of being a young person with an autistic spectrum diagnosis, likewise I have come to realise that my own identity scripts can be containing rather than constraining. I have come to realise that there is an abundance of possible narratives through which I can choose to experience the world, and still others through which my son might experience *his* world.

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APPENDIX I

Questions used as a basis of analysis adapted from Gee (1999)

How is this piece of language being used to indicate that certain aspects are significant?

What activity is this piece of language being used to enact for others to recognise?

What identities are being created for others to recognise?

What sort of relationship is being sought with others?

What perspective on social goods (status and power) is being communicated?

How are connections and disconnections made?

(Gee, 1999, p. 11)

APPENDIX II

Extracts and analysis of sub-plots and subsidiary character narratives

The children

R: ' ...in the right side not the wrong side'

For me, R's story depicted an ambivalent view of his diagnosis. R told me that he forgot about his diagnosis most of the time, and yet he had been keen to participate in the interview. R seems to associate his diagnosis with problems he experiences that he cannot help, such as worrying about what will happen, being clean and losing his temper:

Line 12 *sometimes* I can be a bit (.) edgy like, not (.) wanting to
do things (.) and *er* (.) yeah/ I'm *not that* (.) thingy, I *can get*, I've
got a *really bad* temper".

Line 309 I don't know *why* but (.) I *think* about (.) my *parents*
dying and if they're gonna *die* like/ if there's gonna be *war* and if
me *dads* gonna get *involved* or summat (.) and er I'm *just*/ I-I
just *think* about dad-my dad *dying* when I don't (.) *want* to.
[*voice gets quieter*

Line 339 Th-there *is* an *issue*, like every time I go to't *toilet* (.) I have to
take a *shower*, 'cos (.) I just don't *wanna* be dirty,
mucky and all that

Lines 89-93
T-*sometimes* like, at *C's party* I, er-I just (.) *whispered* to
myself 'cos *B* were *crying*, you know/ you *know them* er *toys*
what you blow *up*?
Well, we were *both* just hitting *each other* with 'em, you *know*
like, they're *like* just *air* thingies,

and er he *started crying* 'cos a *bit* of it hit him in't *eye* and I went '*wus*'/ cos *earlier I* got hit in't *eye* with one/

I were like 'mmm, *that's* alright'/ and *then* he just o-*over* heard me, and he just (.) *took* me on't *floor* and went 'oi, don't call *me* wus'/ and I'd got 't'*temper* on/ [I ended *up* just *getting* him on't *ground*, just *punching* him in't *face*/ and I couldn't *really* stop it.

I felt as though R wanted me to know that he although he wanted the difficulties that he attributed to autism to be acknowledged, like his temper, the autism was external to him. He attributed blame to it for specific events like his reaction at the party, but at the same time he did not want it to be part of his identity script:

Line 12 Erm, [sighs] it's *hard* to *describe yourself*, 'cos you *forget* about it most o'time

R expressed frustration at those of his teachers who did seem to understand him, but he also appeared to be disassociating himself from a label he perceived reduced his chances of being "in the right side", which is where he wanted to be, even though it only occurred "once in a while":

Lines 141-3 I *just* like to *be*/ you know *once* in a *while* to be the (.) person who gets (.) cheered *on* and, you know (.) *clapped* at and (.) people going 'you're *alright* R' and all that./

Like, school council and *all that* I got *boss* of it/ well *was*, til I *finished* and er (.) *yeah.*/

Basically, what I really *like* is (.) just (1 sec) being *in* (.) in the *right side* not in the *wrong* (1 sec)

Lines 165-2 [You know, you *know* I were looking in't *thesaurus,* then what *happened* were/ Mrs M went '*R*' [*loud*]/ er *like*, you *know*, lo-ong page on't *web*, about *that* big [demonstrates] I were *reading* 'em all/ and I were just *sat* like *that*, you know, *reading* it, and *then* er, I went 'I'm *not talking*' and th-then she *went* (.)'*No*, you-I *know* you're not *talking*, you're *slooping* on your *chair* and you're *staring* at the *book*'/ [*shouting*]

you know, she *really* gets on my *nerves*, she hardly *knows* owt (.) *about* what I'm *doing*.

Line 198 Yeah. (4 secs) [sighs] Er I don't *know* really. [quietly laughing]/ I don't *think* it's important to me at school (.) though.

It seemed to me that the interpretative repertoire that meant being in the right side and not the wrong side did not include autism. The sighs R exuded when asked to consider his identity with the diagnosis suggests that it was the diagnosis that challenged his self-concept and the identity script to which he aspired. He defended his sense of self by making autism external to himself. At the same time, R seemed to want change to come from others, like adults in school whose interpretative repertoire was described in a way that limited any alternative interpretations of his behaviour.

B: 'It's not like I'm an *alien* or something is it?'

B appeared to tell a story that equated autism with being stupid from which, like R, he wanted to situate himself at a distance.

Line 72 I don't really *think* of it actually./ Sometimes when I'm *alone* I might be a bit *stupid* and stuff and in *class* I am./ *But*, I'm not *always* stupid like.

Line 89 [I'm not all *that* stupid, I just can (.) *shout out* and *swear* a bit and be a bit *racist*

Line 167 ...I *didn't realise* I were a bit *(.) different* from everyone *else* but (.) it *didn't* really *affect* me or owt [laughing].

However, he also expressed powerful emotional responses to the reactions of others, particularly his friends, to what he perceived was his autism. B positioned himself as victim in his narrative:

Line 19 *I'm* fine, but people sometimes *hate* me.

B anchored his narrative in long streams of storied events describing the wrongdoings of his friends, for example:

Lines 23-24 And er, the *one* that lives on my *street* all fell *out* with me, except for *one* of 'em and/ (.) because, erm I've (.) been playing with me *other* sets of friends and then *started*, like calling me '*take*-off' and stuff *like/* I don't know *why* though/ and *if*, started being *nasty* to me and calling me a *moley* face and stuff, and 'I *don't care*' and stuff and (.)/

I just (.) *ignore* them but (.) they *always* like *bully* me or, like, do *handsigns* and stuff/ and (.) when I have to go in *early* a bit, like for me *tea* or something/ they always say 'it's your *bathtime*' and stuff and er they say erm *when I'm* hanging around with me *other* friends they call me a 'take off' and *that/* like the *other day*, off this person called *J* (.) C, erm (.) *he* went to *my* house 'cos my *other* two friends were *there/* and then he said 'are you coming *out?*' and I said '*no*' and he said '*why?*' and I said 'I'm playing with *these*' and he went 'but *why?* Do *they* want to come out?' and I asked them and th-they said '*no thanks*' and I said 'I'm, not coming out if *they* don't wanna come out 'cos I'm not leaving *them*'

And '*I* c-called for them *first* before (.) *you*' and then he *started* saying/ in my own *garden*, erm/ '*take-off*' and stuff and then I told him to *leave* and I said it 'walk out the front *door*' and then he just went '*no*', jumping o'er th'*fence./* Where *my* (.) *fences* were it's a bit *dangerous* 'cos (.) it's got (.) *spikes* all over it

B used rhetorical strategies throughout this narrative. It is diaological (Bakhtin, 1981),[13] in that B attempted to show his living relationship with his peers through the telling of the story using intertextuality (Kristeva, 1986a). He frequently adopted the voices of his peers in the context of the story, making the emotional impact of his betrayal at their hands even more terrible to me as listener. B disclaimed any responsibility for the events he described by emphasising J's recklessness, for example when J jumped over the spiked fence, and by inserting several clauses in the first person showing that the bullying had taken place and was unjust because *he* had *not* been a passive character within the story.

B's narrative as victim continued within the school context where he spoke of his interactions with a particular teacher. I felt that it was interesting that he equated the word 'stupid' with the teacher and with autism:

Line 114-6 Er when I *first* moved *there*, saying 'if you're not behaving I'll *hang* you all', which were a bit, over the top of *stuff*, and (.) *all* of us were a bit *scared/* and then he started being *stupid*, and saying 'don't drop your *pen*' and he just *drops* it, and then he ma-he *makes* the (.) p-*person* pick it *up*, and *that/* and then he hadn't, when I, I'd say the sixth or seventh *lesson*, he started having stupid *can't* act, no *arguments* we me/ and I've got a friend called *DH*, that's got the same *thing*, but he's got a bit of a speaking *problem*, and he made fun of him, he went '*do* this, *do* that, *do* this' [mimicking speech impediment]

Yeah, and then I – he said *something*, but I can't *remember* and *that* and he (.) were a bit *upset* and he asked/ *still* he goes to his lessons *but* he's *alright* now/ but erm I-*/* don't go to his lessons 'cos he's a bit *stupid* and stuff/ and (.) I don't understand his *work* because he co-he speaks *half* at'time, *some*times erm, *Latin* [laughs]

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[13] Please refer to references (above) for this section.

This extract also illustrates that B was positioning himself with his peers at school as opposed to with the teacher. This kind of solidarity and empathy is further demonstrated in a later reference to a member of his tutor group and the same teacher:

Line 120 Oh, it-it's a bit *scary* and it's a bit *annoying* 'cos he just-it's the way he *says* it and his (.) *personality's horrible* 'cos *some* teachers yo-(.) yo-(.) you *annoy* you/ 'cos some people *hate* him, and that and he's got a stupid *personality*, and how he *talks* and stuff/ like when he had to (.) come into my *tutor* he-he went 'g-g-g-g-good *morning*' [B knocks on the table] (.) to be *stupid* and *embarrass* other students like when he goes '*how* does your-*how* does the *ink* run out the thing?' s- my friend *D* said 'the *ink* ran out so I couldn't *do* it' and he went 'what do you *mean* the ink *ran* out' and stuff.

B seemed reluctant to associate himself with his diagnosis, perceiving it in negative terms. For me B's sighs resonated with sadness as he linked what he saw as the unjust and incomprehensible actions of others with the times he believed the autism leaked out.

Line 188 I don't *know*, it just comes *out* sometimes, and that, and (2 secs) stuff (6 secs) [sighs then laughs]

I did not detect any coherent, unifying understanding of autism within the very different narratives of these young men. Rather, I interpreted an incongruence between the need to defend a more positive sense of self with the need for others to show greater understanding. Neither of the boys claimed responsibility for aspects of their lives they described as difficult; they each attributed blame to autism and other people and experienced strong emotions as a result. In so doing it could be argued that they tried to reject any assimilation of their difficulties into their sense of selfhood. The problems the boys experienced were being positioned within an interpretative repertoire of autism which I felt was drawn as a limited and unwelcome feature of their lives that did not relate to who they felt they 'really were' as unitary rational subjects (Hollway, 1989), but which defeated them from time to time. Positioning themselves in relation to alternative, 'autism-free' repertoires (on the 'right side' or with peers), seemed a more desirable option for these children in their formulation of coherent identity-scripts. It would be interesting to analyse how far the narratives of my two subjects had progressed from or incorporated similar narratives.

The parents: 'You get *extremely* protective of them'

I made an emotional connection with the personal narratives I felt emerged from parents who attended the focus group (P1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) and the parent I interviewed (Mb). Metaphors were employed by many of the parents to point to the enormity of the feelings by which I sensed they felt overwhelmed. Metaphor was being used as the language of emotion (Sunderland, 2000).

The interpretative repertoire of parent as protector became pivotal to the narratives, heightened because of the perception by these parents that their children were more vulnerable than other children, yet were being cast into a lions' den at secondary school. I was gripped by the fear and anxiety thrust out from this narrative through the use of this metaphor, which transferred to me the parents' experiences of loss of control and impotency. Frustration occurred because the parents were being cut away from performing what they saw as their role and identity:

P4 Line 33 It's like, for *me* it was like cutting off absolutely *every* apron string possible

"Cutting off" made the activity of sending the child to secondary school seem brutal and savage.

P4 Line 34-5

> I *went* though the six weeks *holidays*, and *hated* every minute/ and its *literally* you feel as though you're sending your child off to outer *space*, and *any* contact is *gone/*
> 'cos with *Infant* School and *Junior* School I was always sort of very *in* and very *active/ not* hands on, not *nosey nebbing* erm (.) but it *is/* you sort of (.) *leave* them on that school bus that *first* day and *that's* it, you've got *no* concept of what they're going through at *all* [it *is*, it's like a *bereavement*

It felt to me that this parent was grieving for the self she felt was integral to her role as parent, being able to keep her child safe.

The parents' narratives expressed distrust against what were felt to be more powerful systems and decision-makers that appeared to concurrently blame, refuse to believe, ask the impossible or keep information secret. Emotions like hurt, fear and disempowerment were described at what the children might experience at secondary school, which the parents felt they had little power to influence. Guilt arose and depression ensued because as parents they felt unable to keep their children safe and thereby fulfil the identity-script as parents they wanted to live. Anger, but also uncertainty and a lack of confidence, seemed to run through the stories being told that anchored the narratives.

P5 Line 52 *Er* (2 secs) [sighs] I *think* it's just, it's (.) *not* so much what they say or do it's just the general attitude and I suppose *that's* (.) partly erm coloured by my own *guilt/* because I feel that I should be able to *protect* this child and these things shouldn't *happen* (.) and/ (.) the *system* of education in *schools* says (.) they must fit into that little *box*, and/ (.) no matter *how* I try I *cannot* get him to fit into that *box/*

P5 Line 61 and I want to *ring* 'em up but how the *hell* do they want me to achieve [*this*?

Mb Line 196 And to *me* that's (.) to *me* that's the bit with the *autism.*/ That, that *affects* him./ Or do *you* think that I'm talking *nonsense* because *I've* said that a *lot* of times?

P4 Line 236

so *then* you build a great big bubble/ you go through the *depression*, you go through the *anger*, you go through the *anti-depressants,* you go through *absolutely* everything/ and you get a *big* bubble half-headed bubble around you that *says* '*it is* my job to protect this child no matter *what*/ I don't care what anybody *says* to me, I don't care what they *think* about me, *that's* it.

P3 Line 266 [Yeah (,) it's *choking* me [*quiet*]

P5 Line 283 It's a bit like a secret society

An autism diagnosis seemed to be resisted but was in the end important to the narratives, not only as a means to acquiring social goods (Gee, 1999) or educational resources for the children, but also as a way of containing the intense emotional response to the interpretative repertoire of being challenged in the perceived role of being a parent that appeared to flow from these narratives. The diagnosis seemed to offer validation despite the ambivalent feelings it generated:

P1 Line 9 And I *think* the the thing is with a *lot* of it, er, erm [sighs]/ some (.) part of *me*, thought at the *beginning* (.) '*why* give him a label?'/ Is *that* gonna make things *worse*, or is it going to make things (.) *easier*?/ *Erm* and I (.) I *think* its, the *thing* is, you *know* it's (.) in *my* case it's *been* (.) you know (.) both./ I think you *feel* sometimes that (.) you *know*/

Mb Lines 342-3

> *this* kid hasn't been wrongly *diagnosed* he *has* this *condition*./ And when you *talk* to other parents with kids like *this*, *they* can understand exactly where you're *coming* from. So *I* mustn't be talking *rubbish*

There was considerable tension expressed by the parents between the interpretative repertoire for the children to be "like everybody else" and their perceived need to feel safe, which seemed to come most easily when the child was positioned within the repertoire of autism as a pathology or disability.

P1 Lines 10-11

> and I *think* that's one of the *hardest* things about any *mental* disability/ (1 sec) *erm*, it's *not* a *seeing* disability *it's, it's*, you know, it's not *immediately* apparent to people that will *stand* and *talk* to him/

P1 83-5

> *yeah*, it's autism *day* and off to, all the *rest* of it because he doesn't feel out of *place*, because he *knows* that he doesn't feel...
>
> [in *that* little *group*, he doesn't feel *different*, he is the same as *everybody* else

P5 Line 107

> When-when they *are* segregated, you don't *want* 'em segregated/ but when they *are* with *other* kids, and they're *in* the Learning Support Unit (.) it's a positive experience for *them*, they *get* the work done, and there's no *hassle* when they come *out*.

P5 Line 241, 243

> It *is* hard/ I-I want him to go out in the *world* and I want him to be *independent*/...

> But I-but *every* time I do *that* I know that *somebody* (.) is going to *hurt* him, whether physically or mentally

There seemed to be worry and anticipated disappointment for this parent that the aspiration for her child to be independent in the world would be crushed by the actions of those in the world with whom the child interacts. I found it interesting that most of parents placed responsibility for this situation upon systems and individuals around the child rather than the child's diagnosis, in the same way that the children did in their narratives.

The parents seemed to position themselves together, and described their children as "our children".

P1 Line 26 [Yeah (.) well for *our* children (.) I think *most* of 'time

Alternative stories came from the solidarity gained through the sharing of experiences that demonstrated to me that these parents were able to laugh at their own pain and thereby absolve themselves.

P1 Lines 137-8

> [Laughs] I mean I was taking our S a *while* back to the *dentist* or something/ and you *know* they have a community support worker for the, the people from the education *checking* why your *child's* not in *school* and *that* sort of thing/ and she *came* up to me and asked 'do you *mind* me to, asking what *school* he goes to and *why* he's off school'/ I said 'oh he's got a *dental* appointment and all the *rest* of it'/
> and *just* as I was going I turned round and I, and I *laughed* and I said, I says, I says, I says '*no*' I says 'you're looking at the wrong *person*' I says, 'if you *think* that I'm, you *know*, *letting* him have time off school, [so, *honest*
> [[Laughter]

The parents were also grateful to those who seemed to hear them:

Mb Line 244 and when I *went* to the meeting in and the lady at the autism *outreach* team *said/* which *I* think is a good thing that they *do* praise parents because it makes us feel *better/* (.) as if *we're* not talking rubbish.

The parents' sub-plot was experienced by me as being coloured by torn emotions and conflict between the apparently opposing interpretative repertoires of protective parent and the powerful demands of institutional systems that were often felt to prevent this role being affected. Mainstream secondary school seemed to carry particular fear for these parents, although the fear was alleviated when the parents sensed their voices were being heard. The diagnosis of autism as a pathology, despite the sadness it generated, offered the potential for resources to be accessed and as a result, some empowerment and the ability to protect, at least indirectly. The solidarity offered by sharing stories provided relief, maybe from guilt and perhaps from pain, at the identity script they felt as parents they were being disempowered to maintain.

I was curious to explore the implact of these narratives upon the narratives of my subjects. Had the intense emotions being expressed by the adults around them transferred to their experience and how far did they, too, feel disempowered, not only by the institutional narratives in operation but also the narratives their parents had chosen to tell as a result? Did they also feel the need to find solace in sharing their autism narratives with others who experienced similar narratives? What metaphors did they generate when speaking about school?

The secondary school staff: '...at the *end* of it I'm just a *teacher*'

The six staff members that I interviewed as a focus group took turns to deliver personal narratives about their experiences with particular young people diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum before contributing to a general discussion. I realised that several were keen to defend their position that they lacked professional knowledge, suggesting that it was important to them *not* to be perceived as experts in 'autism':

6 Line 155 then I,/ almost felt that *I* was trying to explain to him that 'oh *no*, there's a huge *range*' and I'm thinking 'well *I* don't know' [laughs and others join in]/ *I* was trying to explain to *him*, d'*you* know?

5 Line 166 You see *I* don't think I know many of the, well I do *know* some of the typical asperger's but I don't know a *huge* amount/ you know just what I've picked *up* over the last few years./

3 Line 289-90

We're very *aware* of what kind of person *I* am/ I'm *certainly* not an expert./ I am *aware* that there are *lots* of challenges that different children can, you *know*, be *experiencing*/ whether it be *asperger's* or *dyslexia* or *dyspraxia* or things like *that*/

but I'm *not* an *expert* in any *way*, I *think* it's just that I *know*

Making it seem amusing to admit an interpretative repertoire that included understanding autism pointed to a version of autism that required a level of expert or scientific knowledge being disclaimed by these staff members. Conversely, the narratives being told about their pupils were warm. I felt there was a reluctance to equate these experiences with their perceptions of the coldness demanded by an understanding of autism the pathology. The limitations of the interpretative repertoire boundaries of job roles were affirmed, perhaps because of the pressure of the regulatory power of wider discourses linked to employment contracts and Local Authority and government expectations of schools. It is also possible that there was a fear of being made responsible for a concept that engendered a lack of confidence as a result of the power conveyed by scientific connotations that made it mysterious:

1 Line 281-2 at the *end* of it I'm just a *teacher*, I'm *not*...

a trained *professional* in-in *that* sort of, in that sort of, *well*, in *some* respects I *am* but/ you *know*, in *other* (.) I'm, I'm *not* that sort of *worker*, a *counsellor*, a I've *not* been *trained* in *that* (.) sort of *thing*./ I just talk about (.) what *life* is wi'em and *talk* about the things that they wanna *talk* about wi'me/ in *that* respect and er I *know* that there's boundaries with, with all *that* sort of thing but/

Autism as a unitary concept became removed and intangible within the narratives, yet the stories suggested characteristics that were associated with an autistic spectrum diagnosis. Words like "typical" "classic" and "disorder" were scattered through the stories, but then these were often tempered, perhaps because the staff members felt uncomfortable with the associated emotional implications:

6 Line 91 didn't have a *clue* erm erm that *didn't* go down very well with mum and *dad*, unfortunately/ erm so there's *been* some *dealings* with, with mum and *dad* that have *obviously* come from (.) his *disorder/ asperger's, autism*, *not* quite sure *where* he fits into (.) the bracket.

3 Line 150 *Typical* and not *typical*?/ I don't know I always think of it as *extremes*, myself, I don't know.

However, there was a perception that knowing a young person had a diagnosis changed the thinking and the behaviour of members of staff as well as being positive for the young person :

5 Line 174-175

I *think* it *helps* staff sometimes when we're *aware* of it because *S* I think he had a hard *time*/ because he *just* came across to *us* as a very (2 secs) not *naughty* but (3 secs) just a *bit* (.)/ well I don't know what the word *is* really, I *don't* know how to quite *describe*/

I think that now we're *aware* of him, well *I* am definitely a lot more *patient*/ and I think *sometimes* that just suits us.

6 Line 92 But erm, erm (3 secs) what *I* think, is that if *anything* I think it's *helped* him to er er realise that he *is* a bit different./ *I* really think it's *benefitted* him./ And he's, he's made a *booklet* recently 'All about *me*'/ I don't know did he do that with *you*?

I felt many of the narratives were ripe with affection and emotional investments, anchored in stories and anecdotes that were told with humour, as a parent might tell a story about their own child. I laughed along, feeling secure that the stories being offered reflected episodes of warm connectivity these adults experienced with young people for whom they cared deeply:

6 Lines 56-7 Erm in *tutor* time he *loves* to bring things to *show* and *tell*, he *loves* to show you things./ So, if he does (.) *anything* he brings it into tutor group to *show* me./

And my *first* experience of *that*, which I'll *never, ever* forget was *when*, about the *second* or third day of term *he* brought me his *towel* from *home,* to *show* me, that *had* a Dalmatian on it./ And, and [laughing] he had to *stand* at the *front* and this whole *group* of children/ that and he'd come from K *school* which is *outside* the catchment as well/ and he *just*, but he just happily *stood* at the front of the *class*room with all these children and *went* 'I've *brought* my towel'

[everybody laughs]

with a *dog* on the front of it, and I was *sat* there thinking (2 secs) 'oh my *goodness*, how is he getting *away* with this?'/ Because, you *know* every-but *everybody* seemed to *appreciate*, straight *away*, that *he* was just a *little* bit *different*, and very *luckily* the class is *very* responsive to him, and they really *supported* him since day *one.*/

The young people being discussed were described to me primarily as individuals, and some staff members were insistent that it was the young person rather that the autism that was their main concern.

5 Line 247 / wouldn't say I *was.*/ I *don't* think I've got any affection *for*, you *know*, it's *not*/ *any* more than I have for *other* children

However, I felt that the connections being made with the young people being described were situated within a narrative of social vulnerability that then prompted a response of compassion from these adults who recognised and wanted to resist for them the loneliness they felt could arise:

6 Line 242 ...but I *think* (.) [intakes breath] *because* (.) B comes *across* as slightly *vulnerable*/ because he *doesn't* understand sometimes and he *puts* himself in strange situations and you end up *having* to spend that bit more time with him/ you *know*, (.) I guess you *do* (.) *tend* to

3 Line 246 That like *vulnerability.*

2 Line 257 I *think* there's a *general* (2 secs) er vulnerability of *all* (3 secs) these *autistic* kids, definitely./ I think they have an *air* of vulnerability about them./ I don't know *what* it *is*, but they *do.*

3 Line 263 It's *almost* kind of that *awkward*, *socially*, though, don't you think as an *adult* and as a *teacher*?

5 Line 267 You *shouldn't* be, you *shouldn't* feel *lonely* or awkward.

That the experience for some of the young people at school was not always positive as a result of their perceived vulnerability was hesitantly recognised with some sadness, particularly with regard to the inconsistent responses of some fellow staff members:

6 Line 253 I-I *think* it's, a *bit*, it *depends./* (2 secs) / think it's very *variable*, to be *honest*, [/ think it *is* patchy

5 Line 255 *Some* staff, I think *some* staff are very, *extremely* good, *some* staff are *just* (.) you *know* (.) a bit *unaware* maybe and then *some* staff are a *bit* kind of *dismissive.*

1 Line 279 ['Cos they were, 'cos they were *saying/* sorry/ they were *saying* it's a *communication* disorder they were like 'well (.) *so* well you *know*, / teach erm, you know, D and *T* or' [laughs]

The implication of this comment is that for some members of staff the interpretative repertoire constraining the agency of their role was even more confining than that experienced by members of the group, restricting the potential to tolerate negotiating autism. There was a sense in which the group with whom I was speaking, however, did recognise their own agency in being able to affect a different experience for all of the young people in the secondary school context in which they operated:

5 Line 281-286

The problem *is* you can *quite/* / know this from a *PE* background (2 secs)/ / can, I can have *all* them kids in this *class*room and I can *deal* with them in a *certain* way and I wouldn't have an *issue./*

Now (1 sec) they could go *out* of that *lesson* and (.) *be* in floods of tears *or* (.) run *off* or whatev- you *know./* It wouldn't affect *my* lesson....

Yeah...

because I've dealt with it in whatever way I like, you know,

I can *do* whatever I *want/* I *think* that possibly *some* people don't *see* (.) the (.) *impact* upon the *children* and I *think*

> maybe that's the *difference* / I think that *I'm* aware that *my behaviour*/ the way I *talk* to *C*, the way I *talk* to *S*, the way I talk to *someone*, would *affect* them a lot *more*, I *hope*.

These seemed to me to be secondary school staff members creating narratives that were constrained by professional interpretative repertoires and identity scripts, and more powerful discourses for teachers and school staff, but as human beings they were making strong emotional links with those young people with a diagnosis that placed them on the autistic spectrum. Scientific pathology was hinted at when autism was broached and seemed to be deliberately resisted, positioned at a distance from the narratives being told which were permeated by stories of living relationships, although the diagnosis of autism was perceived as useful. The school context backcloth seemed a complex fabric of powerful discourses and emotional undercurrents that waxed and waned as the staff members attempted to make sense of their own feelings and repertoires. I sensed the need to protect this group of young people at school emanating from these adults, mirroring the need the parents had to protect their children.

I wondered how far the tensions between the regulatory constraints and resistance to embracing autism as a pathology being expressed by these narratives were also being experienced by the young people themselves within this secondary school context.

Local Authority professionals (including Educational Psychologists): '...we're *locked* into the *triad, aren't* we?'

This was a group of professionals that had already positioned themselves within a professional narrative around autism. That they met informally seemed to provide permission for some of the individuals to question more dominant autism discourses. I was situated within the group, and as a result I contributed to the narratives. Within the narratives I detected the performance of stake inoculation associated with protecting the interpretative repertoires and identity scripts of professional roles:

CT Line 3 Erm, so (.) I mean we can *do* them in any *order*, er or if anybody *else* has got *anything*/ erm but *one* of the things I want to keep *discussing* is something we were discussing (.) *earlier* about the (.) *Disability* Team and *access* and *all* of *that*./

CT inoculated her stake and status in driving the discussion content by beginning her statement to suggest that others might also have items to contribute. She went on to repair the statement with "erm but *one* of the things I want to keep discussing" to indicate it was in the interests of her role to drive this agenda. Discourse based on autism as disability is suggested. Later in the discussion the limitations of the identity script driven by CT's role are also defended against the restrictions of institutional social goods and resources:

CT Line 245 erm (.) and *then* sort of have *that* opportunity and it's *that* sort of *set* up that we'd *like* to (.) *somehow* extend/ but it *is*, it *all* comes down to *time* and resources/ erm *and* the and the *will* is *there* and the *need* is there (.) [erm

The assumed needs of parents featured significantly in the narratives, which were anchored in discussions about events facilitated by professionals around autism within the Local Authority. One of the events was a workshop about puberty for parents. The professional leading the workshop was thought to have credibility because she was also a parent:

L Lines 66-67

She's a *nurse*./ Fundamentally she's a *nurse*./ She's the *parent* of a er of an adolescent *boy* with an *autism* diagnosis and severe *learning* difficulties./ ...

Erm (.) and (.) *as* a nurse *one* of her specialities has been sexual health *clinics*?/ So she *still*/ or up to *last* year she's *still* doing *one* clinic a week, *just* to, to sort of (.) *keep* up to date in *that* erm, and (.) you *know* so it's, it's all *that* added *together*/ and she's *based* in Ch [quite local town]

L Line 85 ...*real, practical* situations

L Line 90 Erm (.) so the *last* day I organised at er *H* with, with *J, I* wasn't able to stay the whole *day*./ I *went* in the morning and, came *back* in the afternoon./ So we *did* like *half* past nine to half past *two*, with *lunch*./ Erm the-the *atmosphere* changed from a group of *strangers* to *people* who were *really* (.) sort of *friends* for the *day* was quite *marked*.

L Line 124 And I think that it's *very* much like (.) my *SMILE* group or the *group* that I-I *meet* in *A* [special school]./ The, the *only* people who bother to *come* to groups like that are gr-people who *care* about their kids (2 secs) and they *love* their kids to *bits*./ And, you *know*, they *quickly* gel, those *groups*/ *because* (.) this most *important* thing in their *lives* is something they *share* (2 secs) and *I* think it's *lovely*./

This interpretative repertoire suggested that it was practical situations and finding others in a similar situation that dominated the interests of parents. The Educational Psychologist speaking appeared to make an emotional connection with the parents, perhaps projecting her own experience and needs as parent to the parents who attended the groups.

That there was a need for families' needs to be met by professionals was prominent in the discussion:

CT Line 187 Well, it's *not* only newly diagnosed you see *because*/ well, we *started* off with the waiting list for Early Birds *Plus*/ at the *end* of this session *more* or less *down* that, cleared the backlog which is *great./* There were about, at *least* (.) *forty* names on it *weren't* there?/ Erm, there *might* be a few more./

For me as a parent, the numbers seemed to reduce people to objects. The perception of what it meant for a child to be autistic within some of the narratives also felt to me to be restricted to diagnoses and what was lacking in the child, to the extent that at times the child became nominalized, became the label (Fairclough, 2003):

L Line 66 ... So he's sort of (.) *makaton* and (.) single *word* communication level, couple o' *words* maybe./

L Line 80 And that can *not*, then *lead* on/ *J's* (.) message is *very* much oriented *towards* (.) keeping the *special* needs child *safe* and keeping *other* people *safe./*

P Line 287 ... *but* for a *lot* of *these* (.) *children* (.) that (.) we *work* with/ *you* don't, *they* don't *have* a real sense of what's *happening* for them in a (.) *busy* social *world.*

The notion of a collective responsibility and shared professional and parental responsibility mirrored previous narratives that described the children as 'ours'. The speaker below is a professional but like me, also a parent of a child with a diagnosis.

Ca Line 326 but *what* do *our* children do (.) or *our* pupils that we're *talking* about?

There was also questioning within the narratives about the challenges of secondary schools for all children, not least for those with a diagnosis of autism:

P Lines 295-296

But I *think* it's actually much *harder* in *secondary* schools (.) than it is at *primary...*

because (.) because *deliberately* what they want is *more* (2 secs)/ wh-wh-*what* not wh-*not* what *they* want as a *school* but what yo-*what* you're trying to *achieve* for children (.) *when* they reach *eleven* and *then* going into *secondary* school is growing *up*/

P Line 303 the *rules* are so *complicated*, the *social* experience

P lines 315-317

But *had* you got *kids*/ you know *if* you've got *your* son [to Ca] or *my* younger son, where *that* was *meaningless*/ (.) s-*why* would you want to *stay* in a place where (.) *all* you *get* is *curriculum* that you don't *like*, with *adults* telling you what to *do*/ that you *don't understand* why they're telling you what to *do* or what it's *about*/ and you *haven't* got the *social* (3 sec s) [explanation...

If there's nothing *in* it (.) *why* would you want to *stay* there?

For the first time in these professional narratives I could hear the voice of the young person being represented to be questioning the sense of the interpretative repertoire of secondary schools. Likewise, the dominant discourse around autism, the triad of impairment, was also questioned:

CT Line 371 we're *locked* into the *triad*, *aren't* we?/ We're so *often* locked in, you *know,* in the *way* that autism *is* (.) *talked* about, *generally.*

P Line 375 [Sighs] I *think* it's just an over-simplific-*simplification*/ and I *think* that er it came *about* as a way of understanding autism that *came* from (2 secs) from, from the the Camberwell *work* which is about *looking* at/ it it was *almost* self-*defining.*/

Nevertheless, there was conflict within the narratives, and even for those who questioned the triad there seemed to be an acceptance of the constraints imposed for the benefit of diagnosis and for parents to gain an understanding of autism. For me, the powerful medical discourse maintained status as container of resources and social goods within the discussion as a result, its stake being defended by the assumed needs of parents:

L Line 391 I think the *triad* can be (.) quite a *useful* thing to say to somebody who's (.) *completely* naïve

CT Line 395-401

(.) but *very* much when you're *talking*, and I'm *finding* it *more* and *more if* if I'm *using* the triad as a *basis* and I *know/* because *that's* where *parents/ they* have to go *through* that journey, *don't* they, because *that's* what's *used* as a diagnostic (.) *tool/*

...Erm (.) so you *do*, kind of have to *talk* about it/ but it *limits* things/ and they *are* arbitrary divisions./ [*Everything* links

P Line 355 but it's *also* very focused on a medical *model* isn't it?

CT Line 356 It *is*, it *is/* and *that's*, and *that's* the *thing* is *that's* where the diagnosis *comes* in, *that's* where the *provision* comes *etc etc* so we *are* still (.) erm sort of tied *in* with *that*.

These professional narratives seemed entangled within the emotional and practical experiences of some of the group members as parents, myself included. The confining discourse of a pathological medical model of autism was tangible, and those narratives which attempted to subvert this discourse seemed quickly swallowed by its power to define and control resources. There appeared to me a contradiction arising from conflicting professional narratives that restricted agency for children and young people by smothering them within their diagnosis and needs then, in turn, offering agency by presenting their voices and questioning the dominant interpretative repertoires of secondary schools. The need to defend professional stakes and create professional interpretative repertoires separate from those of parents might have been prompted by the messy and complex professional stances reflected within the group, and the overlap with the personal narratives of group members. Was the struggle for a coherent narrative despite seeming acceptance that there could be several variations of experience also reflected in the narratives of the young people at secondary school in the writing of their interpretative repertoires and identity scripts?

Local Authority Strategy Group Meeting:

'Might that be an *agenda* item...?'

The field text of this narrative was performed within the interpretative repertoire of a formal meeting at which, in the main, I adopted the role of observer. For me, there seemed to be much activity defending the need for the discussion to be contained within the coherence of these parameters.

Ch Line 13 Ok, erm (1 sec) if I *can* I'd like to go through the *minutes* and matters *arising* of the last *meeting/* (.) what I'll *try* and *do* if there is *items* that are *on* the *agenda* (1 sec) I'll *pick* them up on the *agenda*, if that's ok, so/

The chairperson exerted his control over the meeting by inoculating his stake through deferent humorous reference to his own weaknesses. He also frequently positively affirmed the comments of others in the group then gained permission to make his own point, thereby gaining authority over the narrative:

Ch Lines 5-7 OK, thanks (.) J, so I'll, I-I'll try my best to [somebody clears their throat] bring the meeting to a conclusion round about [half past...

but you might have to throw something gentle at me for me to do that.

Ch Line 691 I understand your *point*, C, and, if-if I *may*, if I may finish,

Ch Line 718 Will-will you *please* excuse me?

Ch Lines 890-891

When (.)./ *Thank* you for that, that's very *useful*./ *When might* we (.) *when* could we put that *on* to/ (2 secs) are you *with* me erm (.) perhaps in-in six *months*? Or *twelve* months? *Might* that be an *agenda* item, are you *with* me?/

To *perhaps* have a *look* at it and, you *know*, to *have* on the *table*, here.

Deference was reflected back towards the chairperson as a result by all the group members:

9 Line 1,318 *As a* parent./ *Can* I (.) have a (.) *two* minutes?

9 Line 1,339 *Thank* you.

The members of the group consisted of representatives from education and health services as well as parents representing several of the organised parent's groups within the area. Despite the mixture of professional and personal stakes within the narratives told, all the group members attempted to restrict their own and others' narratives to the formal meeting repertoire, suggesting that it was assumed that following the social and conversational rules of this kind of strategic meeting was more likely to facilitate social goods and status.

5 Line 702 Those are, those are individual issues, aren't they…

Nevertheless, it felt strange to hear parents' talk technologized in this way (Edley, 2001):

6 Line 209-210

> It's, there's no over*bearing* the diagnosis for parents (1 sec)/ and then as soon as they *phone* (.) an agency for some *help* and they say '*what's the* diagnosis?'/
> If it's got AS*D* in it then there's a *slight* more *chance* of (.) *accessing* some *help*/ if it's *just* asperger's they *don't* get help.

9 Lines 211-213

> The thing possibly I don't get S, as a group is that [several members talk at once]/ if children and families are signposted-er signposted to the Children's Disability Team/
> (2 secs) then when you go to them and they say 'no, you don't fit our criteria you're not suitable'/
> that service offering an alternative, because currently, the majority of the time, we are finding that/
> I personally have to (.) find myself, and go to managers and search for the right people to help our family/ other families [haven't got that ability

The psychosocial subject (Emerson and Frosh, 2004) of many of the narratives of the chairperson seemed to be the Local Authority or Children and Young People's Services. He positioned the group collectively within the wider and more powerful strategic discourse that spoke for the council by making the whole group the grammatical subject of the sentences, linking them with these institutional authorities, thereby claiming power and dominance for the discourses being created:

Ch Lines 407-410

> And (.) *still* (.) *on* with the *provision./*
>
> *Erm* (1 sec) *JP* whose our Development Manager around *SEN* , and *HB* whose our Head of *ASSENT/ that's* our special needs *assessment team/* are *doing* some work around the Early Years *assessment* processes (2 secs)/ erm trying to speed that *up*, trying to make sure that we're offering *equalities* (.) and linking that up with (.) *also* the Enhanced (.) Resources at (.) *A, A* and *R* [Early Years Enhanced Resources]/ we *still* have those *places*, the *enhanced* nursery places (2 secs) t-and

Likewise, some of the professionals at the meeting also appeared to reflect the solidarity they gained through their collaboration as psychosocial subjects, which again generated for them a more powerful narrative within their professional role:

5 Line 661-663

> Our *survey* that went into secondary schools...
>
> so there was a *gap* for *subject* teachers i-in *secondary* schools, erm/ and so we *don't* know what the *take-up* will be but we're going to offer some *joint* training in that area./ That's in September, *October.*

I wondered whether the talk was becoming removed from the experiences of the young people who were living with their diagnosis in schools. The agenda seemed permeated with reference to dominant discourses arising from central, area and local government groups and initiatives, for example the Autism Education trust being sponsored by the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF):

4 Lines 1,344-346

> [I *did*, *yes./* I-I *really* just *wanted* to make people *aware/* I don't know just how much people *know* about this, but/ (2

> secs) *erm* (.) that there *is* a *new* (.) *organisation* (.) erm called the [*Autism* Education *Trust.*
>
> I *went* to the roadshow in *H./* What-what what's *happened is* the er the AE*P* (.) was given *funding* from the Department from *Children* Schools and *Families* last *November/* and erm to *look* at erm *basically*, *provision* and to (.) *get* views of *parents*, professionals, *whatever./*

For me, the voice of the young person was tangibly absent from the long two hour meeting, particularly when the discussion centred upon labels and diagnosis. Consideration was given to who might contribute to a further meeting which was to have the aim of agreeing a coherent narrative around diagnostic labels for children that were currently affecting Social Care resources available for parents. Children and young people were not mentioned as potential contributors:

Ch Line 281-282

> (6 secs) a *one* agenda meeting (.) with (.) erm (.) *specifically* invited people/ which l-*sound* like (.) Representatives of the Children's Disability *Team/* which may well *include* (.) Y*W* as the er Director of Borough Wide *Services*, *P* and *M*, parental *representation*, *members* of the diagnostic *team/* which might *include* er Dr *S*, A*W*, J, *H/* are you *with* me here?/ A *number* of (.) appropriate colleagues, possibly Dr *D/*
> a *one* agenda *item* which is (2 secs) *around* the l-*labels* and loc*a*liti-er-er-er-erm [clicks fingers] of *diagnosis and* it's implications.

Creating a unitary and coherent discourse for autism within the Local Authority as a positive move, however, seemed to be assumed, and the narrative around the labels accepted the medical need to define it more clearly as a pathology in order for the diagnosers to achieve greater status:

1 Lines 761-762

But we're *not*, we *can't*, we *still* can't get a trainer for *ADOS*./ What we're looking for is an *accredited* tool so it *won't* change the fact that/ you know we're *still* very *strong* in terms of our diagnosis but we *haven't* got the accreditation *behind* us./

Er, *ADOS* was identified through *this* (.) team as a-as a *good* tool erm and *one* that *everybody* thought would be *useful* to us, but we *just* can't *get* (.) *trained*./ We can't *get* anybody to *train* us./ So we've erm *shifted* our focus *slightly* and we've *gone* for one called the 'Three DI'

12 Line 795 than Ch, and other people/ I mean (???) other people that diagnose only Ch (???)/ er but, you know (.) there needs to be a conversation about 'are we all going to use the same tool?'

The narratives being expressed at the meeting suggested to me that the discourse being adopted was one heavily influenced by powerful groups and decision-makers. There seemed to be pressure to secure a unitary and coherent medicalised version of autism to which professionals could respond with authority. The parents attending the meeting had to mirror the narrative style of a formal meeting in order for their voices to impact and the interpretative repertoire of the meeting seemed to disclaim or discredit other means of affecting strategy. I wondered whether these dominant narratives and discourses had also constrained the potential for my co-researchers to formulate alternative versions of their experience and how far their voices might be able to carry towards influencing the activities of this strategic group.

Reflections on my own position as researcher: 'Do you *know* that *happens* to everybody?'

My 'position' in relation to the research (Willig, 2001) in part involved being parent to a young man, DJ, of a similar age to my subjects. As previously stated DJ also has a diagnosis that places him on the autistic spectrum. When DJ received the diagnosis, just before his fifth birthday, this was a narrative that I had been seeking. He is now a teenager and for me there have been many variations of this narrative, including one that concluded with his transfer from a mainstream to a specialist school setting. I realise now that there may have been alternative versions for DJ all those years ago, but DJ has had to exist within the one I have chosen for him. His identity script and interpretative repertoire is constrained by the powerful choices I made and I was conscious of attempting to facilitate greater agency for him at the same time as I was attempting to perform a similar activity for my research subjects. I have attempted to be honest about my own position throughout the research process:

C Line 221 (to Edward)

> 'Cos erm (.) I've said- I *think* I've said that my *son's* got a diagnosis of asperger's syndrome but his younger *brother* (.) *doesn't quite* get it

My investment in this activity was evident when I listened to the transcripts and I realised that I had persistently imposed the narrative that autism could be perceived as a difference like any other, or a way of thinking, as an alternative to considering it as a pathology always requiring a diagnosis. I had interjected this interpretative repertoire of autism throughout the interviews despite attempting to minimise my own voice within the narratives:

C Line 84 (to Edward)

> *so* it's whether you *need* to have *a name* for the *way you* think *or not* isn't it, I suppose,

because *everyone* thinks (.) differently.

C Line 175 (to B)

No./ So is it *just* your bit of *difference*, you *know*/ like *I've* got (.) a different shaped face to *you*, *haven't* I, and *that's* how *we're* different, and *I'm* a female and *you're* a male and er, people have got (.) red *hair* and black *hair*, haven't they and brown hair and *everyone's* different.

C Line 154 (to Joe)

A description *of* (.) a way of *being*/ (.) a *response* to things (.) that everyone has (.) to a certain or lesser *extent* (.).

I wanted to explore the extent to which this attempt to 'normalise' autism to my subjects had influenced their narratives, how much it was shared and how much it could be resisted.

A fundamental interest for me lay in the way that people often seem to want to place names and labels upon those whose behaviour may seem different to what convention terms 'the norm'. I have quite recently been perceived by others to be a member of a minority group, yet my experience has been that I am not separate from others in the way this labelling seems to insist. I experience the names and labels as reducing my potential as a human being within a complex mesh of relationships. I have felt betrayed by this marginalisation and associated prejudice and the resulting appropriation of power and resources that has occurred for some as a result. What I do seems to have become what I am ('nominalization') (Fairclough, 2003). I had already heard the autistic spectrum perceived as a 'nominalization' for young people who think and act in a different way to 'the norm'. This linguistic act could be viewed as a means of reducing "agency and responsibility" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 220), and thereby the potential for power. I was therefore keen to challenge the meaning pathological medical and special needs narratives might have for individuals and the implications for their experience of mainstream contexts, such as secondary schools, and I feel that this has been evident in the narratives I have created with my co-researchers:

C Line 150 (to Joe and Edward)

> *To* (.)/ you *both* described yourselves, and (.)/ *my*-well J, you mentioned a *little* bit/ the *diagnosis*/ I think it's interesting that you *haven't* really focused on the *diagnosis* and/ (.) that's *interesting*, to *me*, because (.) you're showing that you're *people*...
> and there's *more* to you than there *is* a *diagnosis*./

I have therefore attempted to encourage my co-researchers to consider problem saturated narratives from solution-oriented perspectives (Dykes and Nevill, 2000):

C Line 279 (to Edward)

> *but* you *could* make a *change* don't you *think*?/ *Yourself*, because you're *aware*, it's not *like* y-you don't *realise* that you're being disorganised. (.)/ Do you quite *like* having that approach?

C Line 229 (to Joe)

> So what-what helps *you* then (.) now (.) *here*? What's helpful?

C Line 301 (to Joe)

> What could *happen* to make you *less* scared?

Finally, in my work as an Educational Psychologist in Doctoral Training I have noticed that accounts of children presented in Educational Psychology files and meetings generate constructions that sometimes seem at odds with my own experiences of these children and young people. I have reflected upon the role of the Educational Psychologist in contributing to these accounts. If stories actively generate meanings (White and Epston, 1990), then I wondered how far the Educational Psychologist is contributing to stories that provide 'problem-saturated', pathologised meanings? However, if stories also have the potential to generate agency in the telling (Parker, 2005), then the Educational Psychologist might also be able to facilitate the telling of alternative versions of the same story outside of the dominant pathological stories generated by their diagnoses that so far may have been assumed to be 'real'. These alternative versions, in turn, may provide greater insight for practitioners, promote empathy and open up new possibilities for their responses to the child or young person. I therefore frequently moved the narratives of my subjects to school, which at times seemed to be my agenda rather than theirs:

C Line 327 -328 (to Joe and Edward)

> Th-g-the *whole* erm (.) the other *part* of the research is about *school* (.)/ erm I'm just looking at the *time* (2 secs)/ we *might* be able to *start* talking about school and when I see you *individually* (1 sec) I'd sort of, like to know a bit *more* really/ *but* I want you to *think* of (.) *school* (.) as a *story*, your *story* at *school/* because *usually* in a story there is a *beginning,* there are *important* things that *happen* and (.) there's, there's an *end/* because of your *age* you haven't got to the *end* yet, but *so* far your story,

This research has allowed me to reflect upon the power of my role as a person able to co-construct stories that separate and exclude, or alternatively, open up possibilities (Billington, 2000). The contradictory narratives Educational Psychologists might create around themselves, and my own personal experience as I sit on the threshold of the profession, were sub-plots running through my exploration. However, I came to realise that these are narratives that might not be shared by my co-researchers. I am hopeful that the power of my position in the co-research relationship, particularly as I am Educational Psychologist at their school and one who has worked closely with Joe in that role, has not impeded either of their voices.

APPENDIX III

Information sheet and letter to pupils

Information Sheet

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

PRINCIPAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST
XXXXXX M.Ed M.Sc

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST
IN DOCTORAL TRAINING
Claire Whiting
20th May 2008

Children & Young People's Services

To teachers and support staff, XXXX High School

I am currently involved in a research project as part of my Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Sheffield. I am exploring the experiences of young people with an autistic spectrum diagnosis who attend mainstream secondary school through their 'stories' or narratives, and the narratives that have been created around them. The title of the research project is:

Narratives around the experience of being a mainstream secondary school pupil with an autistic spectrum diagnosis

I am working closely with a small group of young people as co-researchers, their families, school staff and staff from Local Authority services.

Purpose of the project

This is an area of great personal and professional interest. My hope is to generate greater insight into the meaning an autistic spectrum diagnosis has for a young person within their mainstream school setting, and how this is experienced.

My primary aim is to facilitate the voice of young people with this diagnosis being heard by those planning to meet their needs. However, I am keen to explore how far the narratives being told about these young people are reflected in the stories they tell about themselves. Offering accounts from young people of their experiences might help to build relationships and lead to practical teaching and learning responses, and hopefully have the potential to inform those involved in making strategic decisions.

In addition to interviewing individual young people, I would like to analyse the discourse, or talk, that exists around these young people at different levels. It would therefore be extremely helpful to be able to record the conversation as it happens between school staff by holding a focused discussion around their experience of teaching and supporting young people with autism. **I intend to facilitate the discussion on Thursday 10th July at 3.45 in school.** A digital voice recorder will be switched on during the meeting. I could switch off the recorder at any point during the meeting if it was felt to be necessary.

The research will also involve groups of parents, Local Authority professionals such as Educational Psychologists and members of the Autism and Communication Team and the Local Authority Strategy Group. A parent focus group will also be held at school at a convenient time in July 2008. Analysis of Educational Psychology reports will be considered with permission from the young person and parents.

Confidentiality

All the information that is collected will be anonymised. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

Any audio recordings of discussions and interviews that will be made during this research will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

All records both recorded and written will be held and analysed by me as the researcher and destroyed appropriately on completion of the project. On completion of the project, anonymised information (unless previously negotiated) will be shared with school and Local Authority staff where it relates to potential areas for improving the experiences of young people with an autistic spectrum diagnosis in mainstream secondary school.

The research will be published as a University Thesis (Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology) and will inform an academic paper. It has been ethically approved via the University of XXXX School of Education department's ethics review procedure. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

Should you wish to raise any complaints during the project please contact me, either in person or through the contact details provided below. If any specific complaint is not handled to your satisfaction please contact the University's 'Registrar and Secretary'.

Questions

I am more than happy to answer questions you might have. Do contact me on
(Contact details)

Otherwise contact for further information:
(Contact details)

XXXXXX
Senior Educational Psychologist
XXXXXX Educational Psychology Service
(Contact details)

Yours sincerely

Claire Whiting (Educational Psychologist in Doctoral Training)

Letter to pupils

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

PRINCIPAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST
XXXXX M.Ed M.Sc

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST
IN DOCTORAL TRAINING
Claire Whiting
18th January 2008

Children &
Young People's Services

Hello!

My name is Claire Whiting. I am the Educational Psychologist working with *(name of school).* I am currently involved in a research project at the University of Sheffield, and I am looking for co-researchers. I would like to talk with young people in mainstream secondary school with an autistic spectrum diagnosis (including Asperger's syndrome) about their experiences. With their permission, I would also like to talk to some of their family members, friends, school staff and other professionals and analyse reports that might be relevant.

This is an area of great interest to me. My aim is to help give greater understanding of the experiences of young people with this diagnosis in order to help to inform and change practice in schools.

In order to make the research possible I have to rely on your help! I would like to interview you to hear your 'story'. The interviews will take place at school or at home arranged at convenient times for you and your teachers. They will occur between June 2008 and October 2008. There will be two to three interviews, each lasting about half an hour.

Sometimes telling your story can be an emotional experience so there will be staff at school that can support you if necessary. I will be analysing what you tell me, but you will have the chance to change what I say because you will be a 'co-researcher'.

All the information that you provide will be confidential. It is your choice to keep all your personal details anonymous. This means that your real name will not be used. At anytime during the research you can change your mind and no longer take part. You do not have to give a reason.

I am more than happy to answer any questions you might have about the research. I will come in to talk to all those of you who are interested in order to answer your questions, once your parents have given you permission to participate.

If you would like to take part, please take a letter home and give it to your parents. This is an information sheet for your parents which includes more details about the research, and the rules about how the information will be used, which you might also find helpful to read when making your final decision about whether you wish to take part.

I am very much looking forward to working with some of you to hear what you have to say. Thank you for reading this letter.

Best wishes

Claire Whiting

Educational Psychologist (in Doctoral Training)

APPENDIX IV

Raw Transcripts

Key

Micro-analysis

Italics : Emphasis placed on the word
(.) (1 sec) : Pauses
[:Speakers talking simultaneously
[ ] : Non-verbal action or event external to the narrative
/ : Change of tone to signify new idea unit
??? : When I could not determine the words spoken
(sic) : This is what was said

Macro-analysis

Red : Parts
Green : Stanzas
Blue : Idea units

Transcript: Joint interview with Edward and Joe 18th April 2008

Speaker	Line		Macro-analysis
C	1	I'll just pop that *there* (3 secs) [background noise] so it gets *your* voices rather than *mine*	Introducing roles
J	2	Is that *recording* what you just said *then*?	(Contradictions and power issues researcher-participant and adult-child Constraints and agency)
C	3	Yes. [laughing]	
	4	[Clears throat]. Right, I just want to check *out* with you *both* that you *still* (.) want to participate in the [research	
J	5	Yeah (.) yeah that's *fine*	
E	6	Yeah.	
C	7	and (.) you *must* ask me questions as I go *along*/ stop *me*, if I've *said* something that , you know, you think (.) '*ooh*, t-I don't really agree with *that*' (.) don't/ (.) feel free to *stop* me, 'cos it's *your* research, as opposed to *my* research [anyway.	Me and them Your research
E		[Yeah	
C	8	Erm, and, what we said *before* was that you'd participate *together this* morning (.) and *then* I'd see you *individually* later on in the term.	
E	9	Yeah	
C	10	and I've just said to *E*/ (.) that (.) what I'll *do*/ I'll probably ring *home* to make that arrange- *best* arrangement with *you* [clears throat] so you know and you can write it in your *planners* or *whatever* and then I'll organise it with *school*./ School had forgotten this morning	My research
J	11	Oh	
C	12	*So* (1 sec) but *not* to worry, I'll make sure that it's better *organised* next time.	
J	13	[Good./ [*School* forget a few things.	
E		[Mmm [yeah	
C	14	[Laughs] *Erm*, *so* (.) just to *recap*/ the *purpose* for *me* is to underst-er my, it's about *my* understanding getting better (.) of *your* experience (.) at *school*./ That's what it's *about*/ (3 secs) [intake of breath] with the sort of background being your *diagnosis* (.) but it's about *you* as *people*	My purpose
E	15	[Yeah	
J	16	[Yeah	
C	17	(.) And at *any* point that you want to not take *part*, that's *fine*	Giving agency

J	18	Ok	
C	19	and if you give *me* information that you suddenly think '*ooh*, I don't want that (.) *shared* with anyone/ (.) ' erm (.) *tell* me about it and I'll make sure it doesn't *go in*, but it is *anonymous*	Confidentiality
E	20	Yeah	
C	21	if you want it to *be*./ You have a *choice* about that because you *could* have *your* names in it if you *wanted*, but you can make up *names*/ I know J you were thinking of a name last *time* [that you *might*	
J	22	[was I?	
C	23	Yeah	
E	24	Probably	
C	25	But y-we don't make-*need* to make that decision yet, you can *decide* (.) whether you want it to be *yours* or you want it to be an *anonymous* (1 sec) piece./	Imploring trust
	26	*Erm*, in terms of *confidentiality*, everything that you *tell* me / (.) *will* (.) *keep* confi*dential*./	
	27	It'll *be* a part of the research, if you *choose* it to be/ er *unless* you tell me something that / *feel* puts you at risk or in danger.	
E	28	Yeah	
C	29	and if *that* happens I *do* have to tell (.) *someone*, *an* adult,	Justifying
J	30	Yeah, fine	
C	31	with your *agreement*./	
	32	*erm*, and *you can* (.) talk as *much* or as little as you *like*, don't feel under *any* pressure, *ok*?	
J	33	A-ha	
C	34	Have you got any *questions*?	
E	35	(1 sec) Not really, [no	
J	36	[Not (.) at this [stage	
C	37	No, and I'll probably *say* those *things again*, every time I *see* you and it's just [what	
J	38	[That's fine	
C	39	you *have* to say, and it's *important* because they're like the *boundaries* around (.) and that protects *you*./	Externalising the boundaries
C	40	*Ok*, there are two of *you*, I don't know if you want to agree any *rules* about (.) who talks and *when*, or do you just want to (.) *chip* in when you feel like it?	Establishing the dynamics between J and E

E	41	[Mmm	
J	42	[You could always flip a *coin*?	
E	43	(3 secs) I *think* just (.) chip in	E takes control
C	44	*Just* (.) as you w-as you go *along*?	
E	45	Yeah./ Ok, *alright*./	
C	46	*Now* (.) *some people then*, would describe you *two* as being on the autistic *spectrum* (2 secs) t-and I was (.) sort of interested in *knowing* how you'd –*how* you'd describe yourselves.	Questions about identity and how others see me
E	47	Ooh (.) hang on [*quiet*]	
C	48	I don't know if you want to take *turns* on that?	
J	49	Mmm	
E	50	J (???) [laughing, *quiet*]	
J	51	*Yeah* I can go-I can (.) have a *go*	
C	52	Alright	How do I describe myself?
J	53	You mean if somebody *asks* me	
C	54	to *describe* [yourself	
J	55	[to *describe* myself?/	
	56	(4 secs) Mmm, in w-what *way* should I *describe* myself?	
C	57	You choose.	
J	58	But I *can't really* describe it (.) I've got to describe it as if I've *met* somebody? If I've just *met* somebody, is it *that* sort of thing?	Need others to describe me
C	59	(2 secs) For *you*, thinking about *yourself*, when you think about *J*, how would you *describe* him?	
J	60	[Sighs] Mmm (.) stands *out* a little bit?	
C	61	Ok	
J	62	Erm (5 secs) it's *tough*. Tough *question*.	Standing out and being different to them
C	63	In what *way* would you say you stand *out*?	
J	64	*Sometimes* the way I talk and the way I act, *sometimes* makes me (1 sec) *stand out* a little bit.	
E	65	Like when you *hit* C.	
J	66	Which *one*?	
E	67	O	
J		[Laughs]	
E	68	*actually*.	
J	69	*Yeah*.	
C	70	Is there anything *else* that *you'd* pick out [that is something that is about *you*?	
J	71	[erm (.)/	
		Unique, perhaps.	Being unique
C	72	(2 secs) Do you think *everybody* is?	

J	73	Well yeah	How (other) groups are not unique
E	74	Mmmm?	
J	75	There are *some* that are more *unique* than *others*, though. [clears throat]	Groups who are all the same
E	76	I mean, *like*, *all* the chavs are *like*, go round *vandalising* stuff/ and *they* are all *really, really* alike, I mean there *are* a *few* that are d- *completely* different but *most* of them are *exactly* the same, you wouldn't be able to tell *one* from another, 'cos (1 sec)	Chavs
J	77	sort of thing	
E	78	Yeah	
J	79	I mean they vandalise (.) *everything*, including peoples' *minds*.	
C	80	(2 secs) *Ooh*, tell me about *that* then./ What do you *mean* by that, J?	
J	81	Well, they're the *sort of* (.) group you can (.) class as (.) *evil* (.) sort of thing/ they're the (.) *trouble causers* in our world.	The same and evil
C	82	Have they affected *you* then, in some [way?	
J	83	[*Erm* (2 secs) well a *few* have (.) picked me out as *being* (3 secs) a *little* bit (2 secs) *different*.	
C	84	So in what way is *that* evil?	
J	85	*Well*, a lot of people just tell me I'm *weird*./ *They* (.) sort of (2 secs) well they make *threats*, don't they?	How they say I am weird
E	86	Yeah. They *victimise* people.	
J	87	Th-that's what makes *them* (.) *different* from the rest, that's what makes them (1 sec) *evil*.	They are different to us
E	88	Yeah	
J	89	[Is that what *you* think?	
E	90	[my (.) *bag* was stolen and chucked off the *bus*, somewhere in *D*, and I live in *T*, so (.) er (.) I *still* haven't got that back, that was a couple of *weeks* ago [quiet laugh]/ so yeah, I mean, they *just* er *victimise* people.	
C	91	How does that make *you* feel?	
E	92	Er (5 secs) t- I don't know because there *wasn't* exactly (.) important stuff in that bag [*quiet*]./ I don't think they actually *gained* much, I think the most *expensive* thing in there was a bottle of coke.	They are less powerful, they do not win
J	93	*Wow*.	
C	94	Have *you* got anything different to *say*, E, to *J* about (.) have you, how you see *yourself*?	

E	95	How I see *myself*, mmm. (6 secs)/	My self-image is positive –
	96	Well I'm, like, *always* up for a *laugh*, *erm* I like to have *fun* (.) and (.) I like to play on my *guitar* (.)/ so does *J*.	
J	97	Yeah	
E	98	erm (4 secs) I'm just like *a* (.) fun sort of *guy*, like (.) *friends* with everyone and everything, so. [*quiet*]	I have a sense of humour – social discourse model
C	99	That's good [*quiet*]	
J	100	I try and *make* people laugh./ There's not really *much* that, that *does* actually make me laugh. [laughing a little]	
E	101	No	
J	102	I mean there's stuff I find *funny* but I just can't get *laughter* out [still laughing a little]./ I mean I look at my *past* and it makes me *laugh* [laughing more]	Things are funny but I cannot laugh…I am sad?
C	103	In what *way*?	
J	104	I've done a lot of funny things in my *past* [laughing]	
C	105	Can you think of an *example*?	
J	106	A *few*./ Erm, it's about my *granddad*./ We were in *M* [*shopping centre*], he were just going *round* everywhere/ and he-my granddad went into *GP* [*shop*] [laughing] and I *c* [more laughing] and erm (.) he just took *too long*/ so I decided to get him *out* by whipping his *trousers down,* [laughing] in *M* [laughing more]/ I were quite *small* I were only about er *six or seven*.	I am funny I tell myself (stories from my past: my granddad)
C	107	You tried to pull *his* trousers down?	
J	108	I *did*./ They were *elasticated* [laughing hard]	
E	109	*No way* [*quiet*]	
C	110	Were *you* finding that funny at the *time* or is that [(???) [laughing]	
J	111	[We still find it funny *now* [still laughing]./ I were only *small* though.	I am we – my family
C	112	Yeah./ Did you granddad think it was *funny*, when you *did* it?	
J	113	He does *now*, but I know-I don't know *now*./ He got *up* to [laughing hard] (3 secs) he got up to my *mum* and *told* her [laughing]/	
	114	'cos my *nan*-my nan *doesn't* really (1 sec) she *accepts* me but she *doesn't* accept that I've got a *diagnosis*. [*calmer*]	Diagnosis and acceptance by others and my acceptance of them
C	115	Ok	

J	116	she w-finds it *hard* to *accept* it, and she's *very funny*./	
	117	This-this *does* relate to it she can get a little bit *eccentric* about *explaining* things/ 'cos she-according to my *mum* when she was in the *gym once*, she decided to go into 'toilet block to get *changed* and she were complaining about this *terrible smell* that'd come drifting into *her* little bay/ and she were like '*Oooh*' and she were like '*ooh* he's whipped his trousers *down*' [laughing] he got, he-he wer- [still laughing] (3 secs)/ it's *one* (???) [laughing] one of the *funny* things of *my past*.	Empathy and understanding because she is funny – she makes mistakes
C	119	*Families* are funny, *aren't* they (???)	
J	120	I'll never forget *that* [still laughing]	
C	121	Have you got a *different* kind of sense of humour, E?	Lots of laughing when I cannot laugh – a contradiction
E	122	Erm (2 secs) I don't know (.) erm I can't *think* erm of a *lot of* stuff, like 'cos (.) still [*quiet*]	
C	123	So *what* do you-*can* you give me an *example* of something that *you'd* find funny?	
E	124	(4 secs) erm, well *horror* movies always make me *laugh* because they're so (.) *bad/*	
	125	but (2 secs) *that* sort of stuff and [*very quiet*] and I like (.) the (.) *Scary Movies* and everything, I think *they're* really funny.	
J		Mmm	
C	126	What makes *them* funny?	What is funny? (Social discourse)
J	127	The-they *are*, actually, th-they're not (.) really *scarey* at *all*.	
E	128	No th-th-they're quite-it's *just* (1 sec)/ I *dunno* it's just the way that they *do* things/ I mean on Scary Movie (.) *Two*, I think it is/ t-erm (.) there's *this* erm (.) *black* guy, who's like got afro and everything, and he's *always* smoking *weed*, and he's got this little (.) *weed* plant, *and* he's making it *grow/* and they're in this haunted *house/* and then it, like, *grows* really big and it *rolls* him up in his bed sheets and starts smoking *him* (.) [laughs]/ its (.) the way it *does* things	
C	129	*Right*.	
E	130	it's *really* funny. [laughing]	
C	131	Ok, thank *you*.	
J	132	I *think*, erm, *that* programme called '*Ghost*	

J		Hunters', or, no, *not*, sorry/ 'Most Haunted'/ that *programme* where they just go *'Oh-oh'* (*loud*) [laughs]	
E	133	Like the Blair *Witch* project, it's *pointless.*/ There are just people running *around*, screaming into *cameras*.	
J	134	They're not gonna *find* much [laughing]	I find these things funny too – teenage repertoire? Laughing at people doing silly things
C	135	So do you find the *people*, [do you think the *people* are funny?	
E	136	[Oh, *yeah.*/ I was watching one with my *auntie* the other night/ and this *person* was like (.) *so scared* that they ended falling down these *stairs* and [laughs] and they got back up and they fell down *again*	
J	137	[Laughs] Probably nearly ended up *joining* 'em.	
E	138	Yeah./ It-it's really *stupid* some of the things they *do* on there.	
C	138	Do you want to talk abou-about that any *more, or* do you want to move onto another *question*?	
J	139	What do *you* think?	
E	140	[Move *on*	
J	141	[Yeah we can move *on*.	
C	142	Ok	
J	143	I'd *just*, sorry I'd (.) just like to *finish off*./ I *do*, I *do* find a lot of things on't *telly* funny./ Friday *Night* Project's quite *funny*, erm, *bowls* of stew [*quiet,* laughing]/ where they get round doing *stupid* things trying to prove how *brave* they are./ It's pretty *stupid*, but (.) some of the stuff they *do* is (.) *hilarious*.	(Back in control and leading – moving on)
C	144	Quite a lot of the (.) *things* that you're *both* finding *funny* are to do with (.) *people* really, and how *people are*.	
J	145	Peoples' *downfall*	
C/E	146	[Yes [Yeah	
J	147	Because of these *people.*/ But I *find* like, the Friday Night Project's quite *funny*, (???) Happy Hour's quite *funny,* (???)and stuff, it's *all*, it's all quite *funny*	But need to reinforce that I am part of that discourse – still identity And laughing at people
C	148	(3 secs) Lets move *on* if that's *alright*.	
J	149	That's *fine*, fine	
C	150	*To* (.)/ you *both* described yourselves, and (.)/ *my*-well J, you mentioned a *little* bit/ the	

C		*diagnosis/* I think it's interesting that you *haven't* really focused on the *diagnosis* and/ (.) that's *interesting*, to *me*, because (.) you're showing that you're *people*	
E	151	Yeah [*quiet*]	
C	152	and there's *more* to you than there *is* a *diagnosis./*	
	153	I just wondered what it was *like* (1 sec) being placed on the autistic *spectrum*, you've being *given* this diagnosis./ I'll *just* ask first of all were you given a *choice*?	(Returning to diagnosis – my interest, my agenda)
E	154	No (3 secs)	
J		[No [*quiet*]	
C	155	[Ok./ So what's it *like* (2 secs) *then*, to have this (.) diagnosis given to you?	
J	156	Well, erm (3 secs) well like *most* people I have a nan and a *granddad* and *another* nan and a granddad./ My w-*one* of my *nans*, *she* (.) sort of *predicted* I was on the autistic spectrum before (.) I was *placed* on it./ Sh-sh-she'd watched a *programme* and sh-she *obviously* didn't *observe* me, but she *noticed* some of the things I were *doing* and said '*he* might be on the autistic spectrum' and my granddad went '*don't* say things like *that* s-s- and that',/ and *he* was the one that Bar-fifty pound that Barnsley were gonna win in normal *time*, against *Cardiff* [quietly laughing]	Them not me? Still how others see me Granddad can't be right then
C	157	[clears throat] *Right*, go on [laughs]	
J	158	and then my *other* (.) nan, erm [clears throat] just erm struggles to *accept* it./ (2 secs) I mean I was getting erm (2 secs) t (.) getting *help* at er em at a clinic which I'm getting help at *again now*	
C	159	*Right*	
J	160	but sh-she just (.) *stormed* in and (.) said I weren't gonna *go* and get treatment there any more and stuff/ (.) it was *only* because I-I moved primary schools that caused a lot of *chaos*, it'd just go (.)/ but sh-she's coming to *terms* with it. (.) [sniffs]	Differences of opinion around me from my family
C	161	*So*, how do *you feel* about the way *other* people *feel* in your family about [it	
J	162	[my mum-my mum and *dad*, I-like I said my-*one* of my nan and *granddad* they get quite [taps table and clears throat] but they *accept*	

J		it quite well.	
C	163	(2 secs) And does *that*, are you *happy* that they accept it?	
J	164	T-yeah, yeah./ They *do* ac-well as long as they do *accept* it they *sort of* (2 secs) do you know what I *mean,* they th-th-they sort of (3 secs) erm, I don't know what the *word* is but they can they sort of, they can *help* me, sort of thing, they *like helping* me, that's sort of, that's *it*, they like helping me.	Acceptance or help?
C	165	And it's helping *them* to help you?	What helps them?
J	166	Yeah.	
C	167	What about for *you*, how is it for *you?*	
J	168	*Erm-* (.) well s-*obviously* wi-ith *this* condition it ha-has a lot of *up* sides and a lot of *down* sides./ (2 secs) A lot of the *up* sides er, sort of, *well*, *some* people call them *obsessions*, some people call them strong *interests*/ it *depends* who you *are*, really.	Still others
C	170	What do *you* think?	
J	171	Ooh [*quiet*] (2 secs) I don't know, I'm not *good* with decisions, it generally comes down to just flipping a *coin* (.) or choosing the odd one *out*, sort of thing./ I-I don't *know* really, it could be *either.*/	It is hard to talk about me and what I think about myself
	171	'Cos there *is* a difference between strong interests and *obsessions.*/ So I *guess* (.) it's hard to *say*.	
C	172	What would you *prefer* it to be?	
J	173	(2 secs) Mmm (.) that's a tough *question.*/ [Laughs] I'd have to flip a *coin* for that to *help.*/ [*quiet*]/ I-I-I'm *not* very good at making decisions, sort of thing, I-I'm, I'm a bit *naff.* [E?	Making decisions is hard (about me)
E	174	[*I'm* not (.) good at making decisions, *no*/ because I mean, whenever I go out, with my *girlfriend*, she always makes me *choose* things and everything/ 'cos I had to choose a *film* and (.) I had to er go and er buy the *food* and everything 'cos *she's* really shy about everything, so (.)/ yeah (2 secs) [I'm not too bad, no.	I can't make decisions but actually I can
C	175	[Do you *think* that, when you *think* about those things like '*I'm* not very good at making *decisions*'/ do you think about *that* being *you* or do you think about it being (.) to *do* with	(Separating this from asd – my agenda again)

C		that you're on the *autistic* spectrum?/ *Which* way do you think about it?	
J	176	*Ooh*, that *is* a tough question and a *tough* decision to make, erm, it's *not* (.) that's (.) that's gone, it's gone [*quiet*]	It could be, but...being able to stand back
C	177	(2 secs) *E*?	
E	178	I'm *not* sure because I *mean*/ (.) I'd *normally* say it was *me* but, I *do* know quite *a few* people that have (.) er *autism* and they *all* seem (.) to think (.) it's pretty *hard* to choose decisions- er to make decisions for *themselves*/ (3 secs) it *might* be something to do with (.) *autism*, don't know. [*quieter*].	
J	179	We-we-*we* just don't (.) *know*.	
C	180	It (1 sec) can I just ask *E*, how is it for *you*, then, being, having this *diagnosis*?/ How do you *feel* about it?	
E	181	Erm (3 secs) I'm not *sure* really, erm (2 secs) 'cos I wouldn't say it (.) *affects* me that *much*, 'cos I *mean*/ you can *ask* Mr S about this but I *always* go onto this point that (.) / er people with *autism* tend *not* to have many friends and (.) be able to get *girlfriends* and things but *em*/ I'm, I am being big headed *but*/ I *am* quite popular and stuff *so* (2 secs) er (1 sec) I mean I wouldn't say it affects me *so* much, but there *are* (.) bits of it that *do* affect me.	I am not that affected- and stake inoculation Girlfriends and popular
C	182	Right	
J	183	Perhaps *more* than others, *that* sort of thing, *like* a [clears throat] t-a pie chart or a *bar* chart.	
C	184	[Yeah	
J	185	[A *lot* of pie chart.	
C	186	So what are the things that *do*?	
E	187	Erm (2 secs*) like,* erm, *sometimes*, *I* (.) *erm*, I can't think, erm (6 secs) *not* sure [*very quiet*]	Cannot think of anything that does affect me
C	188	(2 secs) Is it *easier* to think about the ways it *doesn't* affect you?	
E	189	(3 secs) Not *really*, erm (7 secs) I don't know 'cos I *mean*/ I know me and *J* don't really have like really *severe* autism (.) 'cos *we're* in a *normal* school instead of a *special* school so (.) it doesn't affect us that *much*, so. (4 secs)	Normal school
J	190	Mmm	
E	191	I think it affects *me* less than it affects *J*.	J more than me

J	192	Who *knows*?	
E	193	It might be the other way *round* and *I'm* [just crazy	Or are we mad? Ok to be mad?
J	194	We just don't *know*, we're just going *mad*	
E	195	Hooray [laughs]	
C	196	I suppose the way that I'm asking the *questions*, what I'm trying to *do* is separate you a little bit	
E	197	Yeah	
C	198	from the *diagnosis*/ or make, think (.) *not* to make/ I don't want to *make* you think anything/ I'm *wanting* to *help* you to think that you're a *person* (2 secs) *first* if you know [what I *mean*	I understand the idea of separation from asd
J	199	[Like an *individual*?	
C	200	Yeah	
J	201	A *super* unique person?/ 'Cos *everybody's* unique	
C	202	Yeah	
J	203	But there's *some* more unique than others, sort of thing/ like he came-went *back* when it came to the *chavs*/ well (.) well they're all *unique*, they're very *similar*, sort of thing.	Back to chavs and groups, differences and similarities: identifying with the group
C	204	(.) I suppose in the *same* way you could talk about the autistic spectrum *couldn't* you because you could say/ 'well *yes* (.) I might belong to *that* group, but everyone's *different* within that *group*'/	
J	205	Yeah [*very quiet*]	
C	206	and *most* people would (.) and you could say-you could say *a lot of* people that don't have that *diagnosis*/ (.) you could say *most* people that don't have the diagnosis, are *also* in that group to *some* extent.	Most people are in the group
J	207	Yeah	
E	208	Yeah, 'cos I *mean* (2 secs) *my* (.) mum *thought*, after I'd had my *diagnosis* that my *dad* also *had* aspergers, but he wouldn't *go* for the *tests*, so./	
	209	but I mean I think *everybody has* (.) a bit of *autism*, there's *no way* to completely, *not* have it/ but s-erm it affects *some* more than others, so there's (3 secs) yeah.	
C	210	Ok. [sighs] (.)/ and I *think,* J, *you've* answered this a little *bit* but do you think it *affects* the *way other* people feel about *you*?	(Diagnosis and how others see you)

J	211	Mmm	
E	212	(7 secs) I don't think it *does* (.) affect me *that* much [*quiet*] (4 secs) I don't know/ I *mean* [*louder*] [3 secs] there *are* a few people that know I have asperger's and *they* (.) treat me exactly the *same*, as when they didn't *know*, so	It doesn't affect me
C	213	(2 secs) So what *helped* them not (.) what do you think it *is* that helps them (.) *treat* you exactly the *same*?	
J	214	Erm (.) probably they *fully* understand what it's *about*.	Understanding helps
C	215	(2 secs) Sort of *awareness* of	
E	216	Yeah	
C	217	understanding./ *J*, you were *nodding*, and	
J	218	Mmm	
C	219	is it the same for *you*, it *does* affect the way, you think it *does* affect the way people (.) *feel*, about you?	
J	220	Definitely about *me*, it *does*.	It does affect me
C	221	Can you *explain* it a little bit?	
J	222	Well, *yeah* (4 secs) t-erm (.) I were-I were telling the *truth* here/ my *friends* thought I was weird before I they even *knew* I had asperger's (3 secs) they thought I was weird *before* (.) they *found out*.	They thought I was wierd before they found out
E	223	(2 secs) Thats 'cos your friends with *J* and people [laughs]	
J	224	Mmm (1 sec) *yeah*	
C	225	Oh, do you mean-so are *you* saying its J's *friends*?	But is that because of them not you?
E	226	Ah	
C	227	it's *because* of J's *friends*?	
E	228	Yeah 'cos th-*they're* a bit strange [*themselves*	
J	229	They *come* from T [laughing]	Who is strange?
E	230	Oh *thanks*	
J	231	[Laughing] but they *mix* in with sort a the (.) s-*people*, that think they're *hard*, sort a thing.	
E	232	Yeah	
C	233	(3 secs) *So*, *J*, have things *changed* (.) in *their* heads or the way they responded to *you*/ do you think that they've *changed* since they've known about your *diagnosis*?	
J	234	*Maybe* yeah, that they *might*, that they *might* (.) have *become* a bit *more* (.)	

J		*understandable* to it/ I mean there *will be*, there's *some* that's sort a (3 secs)/ I don't know this is a *tough* question to *answer*/ they erm (1 sec) they *have* a little bit, yeah./ Th- they've sort of come to *terms* with it.	Understanding helps
C	235	Can you give me an *example* of anything they've done *differently*, since they've, since they've *known*?	
J	236	Well they *haven't* called me *strange* as much, they don't deal (.) normally *call* it me *now*, at *all*/ but (1 sec) they did (.) they *did*, they did at *first*, sort of thing.	Strange, weird and different? Things we laugh at
C	237	So *is* it-is there *any* (.) *time* when it's *not* been helpful (.) for people to *know*?	
J	238	(2 secs) Well, if people find out that I've *got it* and they don't understand what it *is* they start (.) with *the* (.) sort of [intakes breath] 'it's *strange*, summat *wrong* with you', sort of thing	If they don't understand they think something is wrong with you
E	239	Yeah, 'cos I *mean* (.) er when people didn't used to *understand* about *autism* and *stuff*, they erm/ (.) they *used* to just *jeer* and stuff and/	How it used to be – showing it is better
	240	I can't remember who it was that *told* me but erm someone told me that er *children* like as young as *eight* who were diagnosed with autism, used at have a '*R*', like, printed on their head with a-a (.) *cattle* prod or something, for *'retard'*/ (1 sec) don't know *where* (.) I heard that but yeah	
J	241	What do you *mean*?/ Ah *that's*	
C	242	I think (.) in the *past* (.) *some* children, who *might* have been autistic (.) might/ I don't - I don't know whether they'll literally have had an *army*, if they have I don't *know*/ but people *were* perhaps *categorised* more as having learning difficulties and if/ sort of *a long time* ago people used to like, wear *dunce* caps and things like *that* and it-it, *until* there was more understanding about what it *was*/ erm (2 secs) t-yeah, because it's not *new*, is it?	(Me trying to help by explaining)
J	243	No we've only *known* since about, summat like the *year* I were *born* they started *understanding*	Coming to terms? For whom?
C	244	Yeah	
J	245	and coming to *terms* with it	

C	246	and so young people and *children* that, that, *might* have been autistic might have been (1 sec) *wrongly* treated/	(My agenda what if the diagnosis had not been given?)
	247	but on the *other* hand, there might have been *other* people *who/* (.) in the same way that *you* two (.) cope in a *mainstream* school/ might have *not* had th-th-the diagnosis and *might* have	
E	248	Yeah	
C	249	just got *through* it being a bit *different.*	
E	250	Mmm	
C	251	like I, like *you said* everyone's different.	
E	252	Yeah	
C	253	*So* (2 secs) how do *you* understand it, *you* two, how do you *understand* (2 secs) the autistic *spectrum*, what do you understand *about* it?/ What do you think it *is*, in your heads?	
J	254	It's *like* (.) an *array* of colours, sort of thing (2 secs) if you know what I *mean*, it's like an array of-*like the/* like the *electro-magnetic* spectrum (.) or something *else* like that (2 secs)	An array of colours – availability of metaphors
C	255	Right/ in *what* way?	
J	256	*Well*, you know what I'm *getting* from? It's like *that* (.) like *some* people towards *this* end, *some* people towards *this* end [demonstrates with hands] (4 secs)	
C	257	Where do *you* fit in? [*quiet*]	
J	258	*Mmm* (.) I *don't* feel that's for *me* to judge. (2 secs)	Not for me to judge
C	259	*Oh*	Getting it wrong, sensitive to how others feel
J	260	*(.)* I'm *sorry*.	
C	261	*No,* it's *interesting* (.) *because*	
J	262	it's about having to *comprise* information together.	
C	263	Yeah	
J	264	It-it's t*ough* when people *ask* you (1 sec) that (.) you *know*, where do you say you *were* and it's like 'I don't *know*' (2 secs) yeah, *very* tough. [*quiet]*	
C	265	So is it more about *other people's* needs do you think than *your* need, to, to be *able* to explain it?	
J	266	*Mmm* (2 secs) I-I *would* like to be able to explain it more *myself*.	Wish I could explain it myself

C	267	For *you*.	
J	268	(3 secs) Yeah [*very quiet*]	
C	269	E, what about *you*, how do *you* understand it?	When the diagnosis is a good thing
E	270	Erm (4 secs) I think of it *like* (.) computers, 'cos sort of like (.) *everybody* that's *not* got autism is like *'Windows'*, loads of different *ones* (2 secs)/ (.) and people *with* asperger's are like 'Apple *Macs'*, *so*/ (.) there's a (.) *few* different ones. [erm	Being an apple mac
J	271	[That's a good way of *putting* it [*very quiet*]	
E	272	(1 sec) Well *yeah*, I mean they're not *exactly* the *same* erm, they've got, they're *different*, but they still work (.) the *same*	To explain same and different
C	273	Yeah	
E	274	if you *know* what I mean.	
C	275	'cos they're *all* computers.	
E	276	Yeah	
C	277	Do you *prefer* to be an 'Apple Mac' or a 'Windows'?	Preferring to be an apple mac – positioning as ok, better to be different (within social discourse)
E	278	Oh 'Windows' is *crap* it's going down the drain, so, [(???)	
C	279	[(???) '*Apple* Mac'	
J	280	That's *believable*.	
C	281	*Yeah*?/ (.) That-that's a *really* good, does that- is that-is that *helpful* to *you*, J?	
J	282	Yeah, it helps me explain it a bit *more*.	
C	283	*Yeah./ When* you meet with/ this is *not* on the *interview* (.) schedule/ but I just wondered when you meet with Mr *S* as a *group* do you still *do* that?	(Interruption and constraints of the interview, my agenda)
J	284	*Yeah*, got a *time* table [yawning]	
E	285	Yeah I've got a *new* one (.) *somewhere* I can get a *cross*	
C	286	Are *they* the sort of things that you *talk* about?	
E	287	*Ooh* (3 secs) [*quiet*]	
J	288	Yeah	
E	289	*sort* of.	
C	290	(2 secs) Is it *helpful* having *that* group?	
E	291	Yeah	
J	292	Yeah, yeah we-we *get* to sort of *talk* about with other people that are (3 secs) more *similar* to us/ not the *same*-they're not the *same* obviously but they're more *similar*.	Back to same and different
C	293	'Cos *I* just *wondered* er, because *when* I was-	

C		erm had-I had to talk with my supervisor *about* (.) *how* I'd got to *know* (2 secs) that (.) you two were, had this *diagnosis*/ and I said *well*, I was (.) talking to the man who runs a *group*/ and (.) so then I got asked what's the name of the *group* and I couldn't/ I said well the *only* way I *know* it is the *asperger's* group, 'cos that's what Mrs *L* told me it was *called.*	
J	294	Oops [laughs]	
E	295	Do we actually *have* a name for the group?	
C	296	But *I* just [??? [laughing]	Similarities come from music – social discourse
J	297	[Mmm *why* don't we *call* it (2 secs) the-would you, do you [*like* that '*Rock Shop* AB' or something like *that*, just put '*AB*'s in '*Rock Shop'*/	
	298	(.)'cos we *all*, we *generally* all listen to similar sort of *music*, apart from a *couple.*	
C	299	Yeah./ Would it be *helpful* for, people who would *not*, didn't also have that *diagnosis*, though to also be in the *group*?	
J	300	*Ooh*/ (1 sec) I think it's time to flip the *coin* again. [Laughing] I'm *not* (???) [*tough* question.	
E	301	[I don't know I *don't* think it would work (.) *as* well.	
J	302	Reading my *mind*, mmm.	
C	302	*What* wouldn't *work* about it?	
E	304	(.) The *people* that are *there*, you know, they all have some form of (.) *autism* and so you can talk *openly* about *that* because it could (.) help *them*,/ erm the problems you've faced and *conquered*, you can help *them* conquer/	Good to have the group, to be the same – contradictions, winning
	305	whereas if there were people that *didn't*, they'd (.) probably wouldn't *understand* as *much*, so.	
J	306	Mmm	
C	307	D-er-do you *know* if there are any young people at *school* who (.) won't *go* to the group, who have a *diagnosis* because (.) they *struggle* a bit with it?	(My agenda- is anybody uncomfortable with the group?) No!
J	308	(2 secs) *Ooh*,	
E	309	Don't *know*. [*quiet*]	
J	310	(3 secs) I'm not *sure*./ *Really* Mr S likes to get to see everybody that's *got* it, *really*,	We – young people with a diagnosis
E	311	Yeah	

J	312	we've taken on five Year *Seven's* this *year* (.) which (???)/ he's *got*, he's got *five* t-hours a *week* to do it.	These other people in school like us
C	313	Do you mean in *this* year's Year Seven?	
E	314	Yeah	
J	315	Yeah	
C	316	T-and do *you* offer support to *them*, *then*, is that what (.) do you try to *do*?	
J	317	Yeah we-we *can*, we don't really *see* them that much.	
E	318	Yeah, when we *do* we (.) try and help 'em. Mmm/ but I only *know* of a couple, like *B* and somebody *else* that have it, I-I don't know *many* (.) Year *Seven*/ I mean I know the ones in Year *Eight*, *D* and E, I know (.) *most* or em in Year (.) *Nine*,	
C	319	Mmm	
J	320	I know a lot in Year *Ten* (.) 'cos there's only *two* [laughs]/ and I think there's *one* in, is it in Year Eleven or *Sixth* Form? If he's carrying *on* [with it?	
E	321	[Sixth Form	
J	322	Yeah, so	(Is it survival? My question)
C	323	I suppose it *must* be good to know peop-, you *know*, people *survive*, *don't* they?	
E	324	Yeah	
C	325	and have a good *time*, I don't know, I mean survive's a negative *word* in one *way* 'cos it makes it sound [(???)	
J	326	[but generally only *one* has yet (.) as *far* as *we* know [laughs then yawns]	(My research, about school)
C	327	Th-g-the *whole* erm (.) the other *part* of the research is about *school* (.)/ erm I'm just looking at the *time* (2 secs)/ we *might* be able to *start* talking about school and when I see you *individually* (1 sec) I'd sort of, like to know a bit *more* really/	
	328	*but* I want you to *think* of (.) *school* (.) as a *story*, your *story* at *school*/ because *usually* in a story there is a *beginning,* there are *important* things that *happen* and (.) there's, there's an *end*/ because of your *age* you haven't got to the *end* yet, but *so* far your story,	(Setting the narrative at school, my agenda)
J	329	*Oh*	
C	330	if you think of it as *so* far your story at	

C		*school*/	
	331	*so* [intakes breath] (2 secs) *but*, I mean I suppose you could *chip in* with each *other*/	
	332	but, what I want to *know* really is, *what* the, *what's* been *important* to *you* at school so *far*, *what* sticks *out* as *being* important/ th-those important things can be *events* or it can be *feelings* or it could be *incidents* or it can be just a *whole* (.) *feel* of it (.)/ and you can, I want you just to talk about *anything* that you think's *relevant*, really.	
J	333	Mmm (.) [*quiet*] so we start talking about *school*? [*louder*]/	So we start talking about school?
	334	(2 secs) Well you *could* put the words *in* (.) it-it ha-*has* been pretty tough (1 sec) *school* has/ *I* didn't like primary school./ Because I didn't *like* it, I was unable (.) to get on in *class* and I used to get rubbish *marks*/ but I don't, I don't *now*, I'm quite clever *now*. I'm getting level *sixes* (.) and, fives and *sixes* now, but back *then* I used to get terrible/ but *that's* because I couldn't get *on* at primary school so I *do* see it as being quite a big, big *problem* in the story of (.) my *life*, like it says on that advert.	It was tough It was about marks
C	335	*School's* the problem?	
J	336	*Well* erm, it *has* sor-it *ha-as* been s-sort of thing, there's an *overall*/ I mean I just didn't *like* the primary school, they didn't (.) *deal* with me properly and *stuff*./	They did not deal with me properly
	337	When it came on to secondary *school*, erm (2 secs) it-it-it's *still* been quite a *big* problem, but *I'll* be (3 secs) [yawns] still (.) *trying*.	
C	338	What, *school's* trying or *you're* trying?	
J	339	Both	
C	340	(3 secs) I'll come *back* to some of the *things* that you've (.) just *mentioned*, J,	
J	341	*Ok*	
C	342	I just thought as an *overall*, E, what about *you*?	
E	343	Oh (.) well if I start at the *beginning*, I think the first *lie* of High School was Miss D, my Head of Year saying that (.) she had a (.) bubbly *personality* (.)/ *completely* not, she's sh-*always* shouting at people (1 sec) so/	They lie (saying things that are not true) These things happen
	344	(.) er [sighs] (2 secs) let me *think*/ er Year	

E		Seven (.) was a s-like *mess about* year, you don't (.) really *have* anything to *learn* 'cos you've just finished your *SATs*, er you're not *preparing* t-for your Year *Nine* SATs 'til Year *Eight*, *erm* (.) that's *just* a *mess about* year/ went *out* with a few people, made a few *friends*/	Not learning at secondary school, messing about and meeting my girlfriend – social discourse, interpretive repertoire
	345	Year *Eight*, pretty much the *same*, but a-at *end* of Year *Eight*, erm I started going out with (.) my *girlfriend*, who I'm going out with *now* (.) so, *our* anniversary's coming *up*, so er	
C	346	Quite a long *time*, *in't* it?	
E	347	*No* not *really*, erm (1 sec) t-*yeah* sh-sh you know, so, average *school life*, I think.	Average school life for a young person
C	348	You *nodded* (.) when *J said* (1 sec) 'it's been *tough*'', so	
E	349	Yeah, I mean (.) *everybody's* school life's (.) *tough* 'cos there's *bullies* and (.) *peer* pressure and stuff/ but (3 secs) you *live* through it (4 secs)	Peer pressure and bullying happens
C	350	Can I come *back* to that	
E	351	Yeah	
C	352	in a *minute*?/	
	353	So go *back* to *J*, to *you*,	
J	354	Yeah	
C	355	you talked about *primary* school/ *primary* school sounds as though it was quite *important*, [an	
J	356	[Yeah	
C	357	important *time* in *some* ways, for *you*/ and the *things* that (.) *you* found *tough*/ (.) you mentioned rubbish *marks*.	Moving from marks to how others saw me
J	358	I *used* to, until I *moved* to *another* school [clears throat] [yeah	Telling the story
C	359	[What *happened* though/ what-what was it *made*, what *was* it that made that *tough*, what was it *about* that, that made it *tough*?	
J	360	Well, can-can I sort of integrate it into a little *story*	
C	361	*Yeah*	
J	362	a *quick* one?/ I *started* in, as you normally do at *school*, you know when you go to R-Receptio-*Reception*, One, Two, Three *carrying* on, *even* sort of Reception, One and *Two*/ (2 secs) things didn't, were *ok* until I got	

J		into Year *Three* where things started going down *hill/* in the fact that when people that *age* th-they *notice differences* more/	Noticing differences
	363	'cos when you're a small (.) *child* (.) unless you em (3 secs) [sighs]/ it's hard to *explain*, really, 'cos what I s-say may sound a bit *offensive* to *some* people/ for-for like *five* year olds, sort of if *they've* got a lot up *there* [points to head]	Do not want to offend
C		Mmm	
J	364	they *don't*, they generally *use* it to-to not *say* things if they f-find somebody *different*, it's the *ones* that (.)/ I-this might-this might sound really offensive, but *aren't* as clever as the clever ones/ that when they get to Year *Three* and (.) start *realising* things, they realise that you're *weird* and they'll start (.) *digging* sort of thing/ and it was like *that* all through primary school/	It changes as the way others see you changes Being weird is noticed
	365	until I *moved* er primary schools *where*, although I still got the *jip*, I *got* (3 secs) I got sort of *help* from the teachers a lot more/ I *actually* went from (.) level *three* to *nearly* a level *five*.	Back to marks
C	366	So (.) *that* was th-the *problem*, that (.) the big *problem* was/ were two *things* then, it was the (.) *way* the teachers were dealing with *it*, and it was the things that people were *saying*, other *children* were saying.	Teachers helping and things children say
J	367	Tha-*that's* it, *yeah*.	
C		And things changed for you when you went to your other *primary* school, so what kind of *things* did *help*?	
J	368	Erm, well t'*teacher* helped me *more*, I-I actually had a teaching assistant (.) *with* me all the time.	Teaching assistants help
C	369	How did that *help*?	
J	370	A lot, a bit *more*	
C	371	*Is*-was it a *lady*?	
J	372	[Yeah	
C	373	[What did she *do*?	
J	374	T-*erm* (.) [clears throat] all the teaching assistants *do*, they like to erm *help* you/ obviously they *help* you go *through* things [clears throat] without the teacher *having* to (2 secs)/ they em, obviously they are *there* to	Protection, safety explaining

J		help stop people from *saying* things, 'cos peop-when *they're* there people don't generally like *saying* things.	
C	375	So is it just the *presence* of the (.) teaching assistant that *stops* somebody saying something?	
J	376	W-well it *can* be./ I mean if they turn their *back* and go somewhere *else* then i-it doesn't stop it/ but then when you've got that *encouragement* as *well* from them, to do, to-to-to sort of (.) you know what I *mean*, they *give* you that bit of *encouragement*.	Encouragement
C	377	So what is it you needed to be encouraged to *do*, to just to *carry on* doing, what-[*what* is it?	
J	378	[Keep *trying* and (.) things, and that it-it-it's *very* hard to *explain* about (.) what-what they *do*, but/ I mean *look* at the ones in Learning Support, *they* (.) they *do* a good job.	It is hard to explain
C	379	So what is it *they do?*	
J	380	I mean they *are* barmy, but/ and they *admit* it to *me*, they say 'we're all *barmy* down here'./ I say 'come off it I'm *going* that way I spend too much *time* down there'/ *erm* (2 secs) [intakes breath] t-*but* erm (2 secs)	They are balmy!
C	381	Do you *like* that, though, that they *say* it, that they've (.) yeah	
J	382	Yeah (3 secs) *but erm* i-i-it's *generally* quite a calm *place*, a-apart from/ I'm go (.) I'm gonna *sneeze*	And it is calm
C	383	It's alright (1 sec) shall I go onto *E* while *you*	
J	384	I don't know, *no*,	
C		[Laughs]	
J	385	'cos, *practically* [sniffs] *no*, it's ok [sniffs] erm/ but they *do* think they're balmy/ *but* (.) they *do*, do a-quite a (.) good *job*, *some* of 'em.	
C	386	So how do *they* make you feel?	
J	387	Obviously I don't have one *with* me, because they can't *afford* it/ [clears throat] it's *all* because of *money*.	But I don't have one Money, we cannot afford it
C	388	Is it *good* that th-that, th-that you-they're not *with* you all the time now?	
J	389	*Erm*, well *sort* of (3 secs) *sort* of (1 sec) [intakes breath]/ I mean, you *know* th-they said to mum and *dad* we-we just can't afford to get *one* in, sort of thing.	
C	390	How did that make *you* feel?	

J	391	*Erm*, *well* obviously if they can't afford it, they can't *afford* it/ but it-it *is* a in *some* cases a bit of a *let down* (1 sec) in *other* ways they obviously can't help being *skint*/ [clears throat] well, you *know* what I *mean*, not *skint* as in *no* money at all, but you just can't help *being* (1 sec) I don't know what the word is to *use*, unable to *afford* something.	
C	392	*How* did your mum and dad react to *that*?	
J	393	Erm (.) well (2 secs) what *can* you do really?/ I mean there's not much you can really change by *saying* something (2 secs) that, sort of thing./ *Actions* speak louder than words *apparently*. (2 secs) So I *guess* (3 secs) they *can't*.	What can you do? What can words do?
C	394	Ok./ *J*, I'll pick up on (.) *more* when we talk *together*,	
J	395	Ok	
C	396	about *some* of the things you've just started *today, there*, 'cos there are *other* things I wanted to ask you about/	
	397	but *just*, *E* (.) you started off saying, the first *lie* (.) suggesting to me there might be *other* lies?	
E	398	Er (.) *yeah*, 'cos they say stuff *like*, er (.) 'if you don't have fun in all your *lessons* it's not *hard work*' but (.) it-it really *is*/ and (.) and also Year *Nine*, now that we've *got* our (.) options to take and stuff/ I mean they've all been *chosen* now/ but *like* the *French* teacher saying that you *need French* to get a good *job*./	Back to the things that are said that are not true
	399	You don't need *French*./ (1 sec) I mean, you s-speak an-other *language*, *so* what?/ I mean, *ok* if you work in a, in a (.) *telecom* place, or something	
C	400	Yeah	
E	401	you night *need* to er (.) *learn* another language, but it's not *dire*./ 'cos- I mean I want to *be* a (.) t-what *is* it? Elec-no (.) t-*mind's* just gone blank, elec*tric*	How this affects my choices, how I have worked it out myself without believing them
C	402	Right (.) electrician (???)?	
E	403	That's the *one*	
C		[laughing]	
E	404	mind gone *blank*/ erm, so I don't really *need* a (.) *second* language,	

E	405	I mean same with geography and *history*, you don't really *need* them for a *job* (.) that's just because you want to *learn* them. (.)/ But they're *saying* that you need 'em for a *job*, but you don't really *need* (.) geography unless you're going to *be* (.) *excavating* something/ *so*, (1 sec) *not* really true/ I mean, *I've* (.) chose subjects that I *like* and that I *enjoy* so I've *chosen* expressive *arts*, er religious *studies* and electronic *engineering* 'cos (.) I *like* them I have *fun* in them *subjects* (.) so/ (.) I'm just going to see what I can get with *them*. [Intakes breath]	
C	406	H-how do you *feel* about the *fact*, then, *that* (1 sec) *yo-you see* some of the *things*, some of the *messages* (.) as not being *true*?	
E	407	I just think they're wasting their *breath*, *'cos/* (.) they *know* not everyone's going to choose their *subject/* they just trying to make *people* to choose their *subject* because otherwise it looks bad on *them*, like they've not made it *fun* enough that (.) people *want* to do it. so (2 secs)	Why I think they do it
J	408	Yeah	
E	409	wasting your *breath*.	
C	410	(2 secs) Before we *finish* (3 secs) you've *had*, *you* don't feel to badly about J, *E* about, about *school/ but* you just slipped *in* (.) t-about sort of *peer* pressure (.) and *bullying* that goes *on/* and you've obviously *dealt* with *that, yourself* (1 sec) and (.) *some* things must have *helped* you deal with it/ but could *you* give *me* just *one* example, *now*, this *morning*, of something that (.) you can *think* of, an example of *where* something *has* been said, or something's *happened* (.) and what it *is* that's helped you *deal* with it?	(I return to peer pressure – looking for problems?)
E	411	Ok./ Erm (2 secs) don't know *erm* t (7 secs) t-there's not *much* you can do/ I mean I *don't* (.) *generally* get *bullied* or anything, so (.) that's alright *erm/* (.) *peer* pressure doesn't really *affect* me/ 'cos, like, *probably* people *ask* me if, I wanted a *fag* or som'at and I just said '*no*' erm (.) so, went off and had a *fag*, and that's *illegal*, so they're *bullies*, *erm*	Peer pressure happens and I can deal with it

J	412	Fag or a *fight*?	
E	413	Fag.	
J	414	Fag, I didn't *get* what you said.	
E	415	Yeah, *erm* (.) s'been *alright*/ (.) s'not been something *that* (.) *needs* to be *dealt* with/ 'cos (.) I mean, I go *out*, to like a friend's *parties* and then, and *have* a (.) little *drink*, so.	I didn't need to deal with it
C	416	What *is* it, d'you *think* E, that's (.) *helped* it be ok for *you*?	
E	417	I don't know, I mean it's just like my (.) *personality* to *be* (.) *ok* with everything	My personality makes it ok
J	418	(3 secs) Have you *noticed* it different for anyone *else*?	
E	419	(3 secs) A *bit* yeah, but it's *not* (.) *like* (.) *all* the PSHE *peer* pressure *videos*, *that's* (.) *extremely exaggerated*, but (.) it *is* different for other people.	It is exaggerated
C	420	(2 secs) Have *you* got *involved* in any of *that*, that?	
E	421	Erm (5 secs) [makes noise with mouth] not *really*, erm (5 secs) I don't think so [*quiet*]/ I mean a couple of *people* [*louder*] were like, *er* (.) being *idiots* and sticking (.) *condoms* on their heads and like, putting them over their nose and blowing them *up*, [I don't know *why*	People can be idiots, it is how it is
C	422	[Oh *yeah*, d'you *know* they used to do that when *I* was at school? [laughing]	
E	423	Oh *well*,	
J	424	There they *go* [laughing]	
E	425	and one of my *mates* (.) *didn't* want to do it 'cos he, was *like* (.) he didn't like (.) *bags* or *anything*/ 'cos he was, *he* was panicked he was going to *suffocate* and/ but they were trying to *force* him to do that so I was just said '*leave* him (.) *alone*', with a couple of *swear* words *in* there/ *and* [laughing] they *left him* alone.	I can stop it
C	426	So, you *seem*, do you have, *feel* that you've got quite a lot of *confidence* with your (.) *friends*,	
E	427	Yeah	
C	428	with your *group*?/	
	429	and *you* put that *down* to your *personality*?	
E	430	Yeah	
C	431	Has *anything*, is there anything, do you think, that's *helped* you have that kind of (.)	

C		confidence, personality where you're prepared to speak *up*?	
E	432	(3 secs) I don't *know*, erm (5 secs)	
J		[yawns]	
E	433	I think it *might* have like *started* with the asperger's, so/ that I'm *different* and I'm (.) kind of singled *out*, so if somebody doesn't like what I'm saying it's tough on them/ I can't get *singled out* for it 'cos I'm *already* singled out for something else/ (.) *great*.	It might have started with the aspergers! I am already singled out
C	434	So the asperger's has *helped*	
E	435	Yeah	
C	436	'cos you've already had, *thought* about that before you've (.) had to deal with the *other* things?	
E		Yeah	
C	437	So when, when did *you* find-get your *diagnosis* then, were you quite *young*?	
E	438	Er, *yeah*, I *think* I was, I *think* I was (2 secs)/ what *year* is it? I *think* (.) it was *in* (2 secs) two *thousand and* (.) one or *two*, so I would be *about* (.) s-seven or eight or (.) *something*.	(Getting the diagnosis – but I move on to a different topic, because of the time, constraining and controlling)
C	439	And did you *know* straight *away*?	
E	440	N-not *really*.	
C	441	(2 secs) Is that another *story*, *finding* out? [laughing]	
E	442	[Er, *sort* of	
C	443	[*Thinking* about [the time, go *on*	
J	444	[I found out when we were going to this *clinic* that my nan *stopped* me from going *to* [intakes breath]/ and *erm*, and I were about eight, nine, ten, *eleven*, well I were *about* eight or *nine* (.)/ but I *don't* think I was *quite* as young as *seven*.	
C	445	(2 secs) I'm, I'm (.) I'm just *conscious* that we *do* need to *stop* in a minute/ er *is*, and I can, so I'm gonna *write down* that I'm gonna talk, that I'm gonna see you both *again* about the (.) *getting* the diagnosis bit/	
	446	but I *have* got some other things written *down*/ from what you've already *said*/ that I'm gonna pick up *on* when I see you both *individually*./	
J		[Yawns]	
C	447	Is there anything that you want to *ask* me, about what I've asked-about my *questions*, or	

C		(.) anything you think I *should* be asking you, but I *haven't*?	
E	448	Er, *no* (.) I think you've done a (.) good *job* [school bell goes] mmm.	
C	449	*J* you found the questions *tough*?	
J	450	A *little* bit but I (.) *can* answer them./ I-I *know* what I'm gonna *answer*, I just struggle to put it into *words*, sort of thing, but I *can* answer the questions *ok*.	
C	451	Yeah, yeah, I just wondered if I *could,* any, just change any, in *any* way	
J	452	*No*, just *keep* 'em as you were gonna (.) *ask* them/ (.) *I mean* if they trouble me at least it shows that I'm *thinking* hard about them, (1 sec) maybe too *hard*.	
C	453	(2 secs) But maybe that's how you *deal* with [questions, *yeah*.	
J	454	[*Good*, yeah	
C	455	You've *both* been absolutely *fantastic*/ I mean your *answers* (.) are *showing*, that *actually*, sometimes the way other *people* might describe someone's experiences (.) or that other *people* might think of, *up*, *that's* (.) what it's like for somebody with that *diagnosis*./	
	456	What you're *showing* is that it can be really *different*, and it's about *individuals*,	(My interpretation is that you can be an individual)
E	457	Yeah	
C	458	and-and *that's*/ *I* think that's a really important *message*, actually./	
	459	I'll just turn it *off*.	

Transcript: Interview with Joe 26th June 2008

Speaker	Line		Macro-analysis
C	1	Last time (.) *erm* (.) we talked *about* (.) some people would describe you as being on the autistic *spectrum*/ and I *asked* how you would describe yourself and we talked about *school*/ and I'm (.) going to just *pick up on* (.) *certain words* (.) that you *said* (.) and go back to them./	(Returning to previous narratives – their words, my agenda)
	2	*So one of* the words that you said was that school was *tough*? And that it was (.) *evil*.	
J	3	Well, you know what I meant by *evil*, its (.) a *cruel* world	It's a cruel world? Or good and bad and not so sure now – hard to think
C	4	So t-tell me, *tell me* a bit more.	
J	5	(4 secs) [*sigh*] Lo- *can I have* a think?	
C	6	*Yeah*	
J	7	(4 secs) I've got- *I have actually* got something to say I just need to transcribe it into something.	
C	8	That's fine, [*so*	
J	9	[Would it be something *about* how you get tret by people in *school*?/ Cos you get tret the *same by* (2 secs) all the t (1 sec) all the teachers in *school* treat you the *same*/	Guessing (different agenda now, is it this?)
	10	which *sometimes* is a bit (.) is *good* but at other times is (.) quite *bad*	
C	11	What do you mean by *the same* then?	
J	12	By the *same* sort of tret the same as everybody else as if *you weren't* on the [autistic spectrum	Being treated the same
C	13	[Right, right	
J	14	And *sometimes* it's a (.) sort of a *positive* (.) and other times it's a negative.	Being treated the same is positive and negative??
C	15	*Tell me* how it can be a positive first	
J	16	*Well* erm *it's like* in *class* when erm (.) t- a tough one/ [*quiet*]	
	17	(.) But it's like when you get t-tret the same by *teachers* (.) and they set the same [*work*	
C		[Mmm	
J	18	[you get the same amount of (.) *help*/(.)	Same as everybody else is fair?
	19	and (2 sec) it's *fair*, [*louder*] you just get tret *fairly* the same as *everybody else* (.) sort of thing.	
C		Yeah	
J	20	*Erm* (2 secs) sort of- I could- I could *say* (4 secs) t- s-similar things are a bit (.)/	
	21	*it's* it's like-like in *science* I get tret the same as everybody else which i-is sometimes *good* (.)	

J		but sometimes *bad* [sniff] (.) and/	
	22	I can actually relate the *bad* things and the *good* things to science	
C	23	OK	
J	24	It's *like*, *say* i-in (.) *physics*, *I* (.) it- s-me getting tret the *same* you know I get the *same* (???) same *work* and I get (.) erm the so-same *help* as everybody else/	Good and bad Same work and help
	25	*sometimes* there's this lad with *ADHD* who gets a teaching assistant so I've got a teaching assistant *in there* with me *and* I sometimes get help from *her*.	How accessing help can get me in trouble because it is there for somebody else
C	26	Are you *tired*?	
J	27	*A little bit* (.) *erm* is-*is that* on the recording?	
C	28	*Me* saying 'are you *tired*?' was	
J	29	Ah that's Ok [*quiet*] *erm* [clears throat] *but anyway* (2 secs)/	
	30	but when I get tret *differently*, it's *like with this* lad with *ADHD*, it's *sort of* (2 secs) *what's known* as (.) *bugged me* all year/ but it *hasn't*, (.) *at times* it's OK, he doesn't normally get on my *nerves*/	Ambivalent feelings about the help and the other boy
	31	but (.) I-I've noticed as the *year's gone on*/ in (.) chemistry *especially* I've been (.) *shouted at* during practicals because (.) I've (.) had t-to go with *him*/ and the other three people on our desk have gone *together* so I've got to deal with *him* and it makes it *harder*/	
	32	(.) and I've *noticed* with erm (.) m-most of the practicals we're *do* in (.) *science* that I get tret the same as *everybody else*/ and (.) the teacher doesn't *quite realise*/ that i-i-it's sort of *not my fault* that we're struggling to get *like* (.) say *practicals done.* (.)	Not my fault
C	33	*Is that* (.) something to do with *you*/ or is it (.) *to do* with the fact that *you're* working with (1 sec) with the *other boy*?	Not fair to be shouted at the same as anybody else
J	34	It could be the fact that *I need* [s-some help [*laughing*]	
C	35	[*Laughing*] Yeah	
J	36	[Well i-*it's true* m-it could be the fact that I *need* some [help (???) [*laughing*]	
C	37	[Yeah (.) yeah	That I need help is not recognised, do not have a TA
J	38	[And that I don't have a *teaching assistant* in chemistry/ so it makes it a little bit (.) *harder.* (2 secs)	

C	39	But on *the other hand* (.) it's f-*fair*? That you- you think you -you see it as *fair* that (???).../ Do you think that it's *fair*/ that *erm* (.) teachers will treat you the *same* (.) erm?	
J	40	But then again i-it is *unfair* in some areas as well.	
C	41	Does it make you *feel better* (.) that they treat you the same?	Fair or unfair?
J	42	T- (2 secs) [*Sigh*] *It* depends I'm, I'm I've got mixed *very* mixed views on it./	
	43	But it's *sort of* split in two sort of thing the (.) the concept of being tret the same as everybody else. (.)	
	44	*I mean* i-it you could see it as *fair* for other people who *aren't on* the autistic spectrum	
C	45	Yes	
J	46	and (.) it's *fair* sometimes for *me as well*/ but sometimes it's *unfair*	
C	47	(2 secs) I can understand *why* i-i-it's *mixed*/ (.) because (2 secs) do you want to be *seen* as the same as everybody else?	
J	48	Mmm (.) *yeah* (.) 'cos *like* (2 secs) normally people that are *seen* the same as everybody else *like I said, earlier*, get *tret* the [same	Being seen as the same means you get treated the same
C	49	[Yeah	
J	50	[as everybody else/	
	51	*like* (.) *when* (.) something *happens* (.) y-know-*say* if *I got* (.) *shouted at* for something/ I *might not* want to go in *that lesson* for (.) a couple o-of days until (.) the teacher might have *forgot* about it/	(Do you want to be seen as the same?)
	52	I *dwell on* things and *s-some of*, *some of* my teachers don't realise this/ (.) *Some do* and some don't.	Yes…but no, because I dwell on things and some teachers do not know
C	53	*Do you think*, erm (1 sec) it's about them understanding the *asperger's*?	
J	54	(3 secs) [sigh] Could be, because *I find* that the teachers that *know about it* and understand it treat me sort of (2 secs) with a *bit more* sort of [sniff] *understanding* and (.) y-you *could even* say *maturity* [intake of breath]/	Those who understand?
	55	*well* (.) *you know what I mean by that* (.) a bit (.)sort of (.) well you *know* there *are* some/ there are some teachers that are quite childish towards it, *no names mentioned*	Teachers who understand are more mature -
C	56	Tell me how that *works*, what [(???)	

J	57	[Well the ones that *show* more *maturity*/ know how to *deal* with me, they know how to *deal* like I said they know how to *deal* with me properly they know how to they know what'll *upset me* and what *won't,* what'll get the best *reaction*, [sniff] you know, *things like that*	Question of maturity?
C	58	Is that *understanding* any *different*/ to (.) them needing to *understand* about *someone else's*/ needs that might not have got a diagnosis?	They know how to deal with me and get the best out of me
J		[Mmm	
C	59	[Is that any *different* to them?/ Sh-should they understand (.) say if someone gets anxious in a (.) *in a* (.) I don't know/ (.) *in a* certain situation, should they understand that *too*?	
J	60	*Yeah*, they should-they should, well they should *try* and understand everything./	
	61	The-there are obviously there's- will be some reall- th-that can't, there *are* some people that can't be bothered and I know of a *few*/ no names *mentioned*/ and before you ask it's not the *headteacher*.	(Is that different to knowing others' needs?)
C	62	I wasn't going to ask.	Some can't be bothered
J	63	*No* I-I'll *just say* it's some people (.) *slightly* below him, just some people *slightly* below him [clears throat]	Wants me to ask?
C	64	D- *have the* (.) having the (.) *diagnosis* having the *label*, then, (.) 'cos it's got *a name*/ has that been a *good thing*, or a bad [thing?	
J	65	[*Erm* (.) well t- er i-it *does* have quite er (.) a good thing [sniff] because people know what *condition* it *is*./	
	66	Some people *may* have *training* in it *or* have worked with people with me before and *have learned* how to *deal* with people with me (.) so if they (.) and they *know* (.) *yeah* (.) and if they know that *I've*/ got asperger's they might (.) sort of treat me the *s-same*/	(back to diagnosis – good or bad) Helps them understand
	67	'*cos* (.) I know, I know that that might sound a little bit (.) bit silly because (.) everybody with asperger's is *different* but then again they're *similar*. *Everybody* with asperger's is *similar*.	So they can treat me the same!
	68	They're not not *the same* I mean *I'm* different to C, C is different to *E*, E's different to *'B'* or B whatever (???) he's called, you *know* what I *mean?*	Same, different and similar (aspergers)
C	69	Yeah	

J	70	But *then* again (.) we're s-very *similar*.	
C	71	Is the- is there, *is there any time* that you think it's (.) *not* a good thing?	
J	72	Good thing [*being*?	
C	73	[T-to have *the name*, to have the asperger's diagnosis?	(back to the name- not a good thing?)
J	74	Erm (1 sec) t (.) c-could I have a *think* about that, for a minute 'cos (2 secs) t-/	
	75	*well* we could refer (2 secs) this to the people that *don't care*, sort of thing/ [sniff] w-we could *say* that (2 secs) *they* made us *think*/	
	76	(2 secs) I've lost –so, I'm *lost* now.	Confusion, not J's agenda?
C	77	Oh [I was just thinking *actually* [*quiet*]	
J	78	[*Tough* question to *answer*.	
C	79	I was just thinking that what you'd *said was* erm/ (.) it's a good thing because then people can *understand* if it's got a *name* (???)	
J	80	Yeah	
C	81	then *there is* some similarity with people who *have* (.) [that	(good to have a name?)
J	82	[Mmm but some people like my *nan* and *granddad* th-that sort of *know I've* got/ well *one set*, my nan and granddad, that like erm, I-I'll speak to you about this afterwards, s-s about them being the (.) *childish* version of the (.) Osborne's/ and then I've got another nan and granddad/ *they* show a bit more understanding (.) 'cos they've *seen* programmes on the telly about it I've given them, this thing I've printed off the internet/ which are *my dad's* mum and dad. [sniff]	Family The name might not make the difference Denigrating those who do not understand but those who do I can share information with
	83	Erm *nobody's going to be* listening to this are they apart from (.) *you*?	
C	84	*No* (1 sec) and *that* (.) if you wanted me to *take* (.) this bit *out* a th- not to *transcribe* it	
J	85	Well, you [can take the *names* out	
C	86	[(???) That's what I (.) that-*yeah*	
J	87	[For the *transcribing* but you can listen to *this* for [your *training*	
C	88	[Yeah	
J	89	Right and then I've got my *mum's* mum and dad that (.) t- [sigh] show a little *less* understanding./	Worry about who will hear this in family – constraints
	89	We *try* and, perhaps, (.) try and change the conversation (.) if we're ever talking about it/ *or* they *shout* at me (1 sec) for my *problems* whereas my *dad's* mum and dad (.) *don't* sort of	

J		shout at me/ *they* sort of (.) i-they *know* when I'm [bangs on the desk] you *know* [bangs again] [or [bangs again]	Understand less goes with shouting
C	90	[Mmm	
J	91	going *off* on one/ *erm*, sorry if that scared you a little bit/ *erm* (.)	Strong emotions
C	92	No, I'm *fine*	
J	93	when I'm going *off* on one they know just to let me *calm down* [sniff]/ and sometimes when I'm going off like when my *mum and dad* sometimes have a *bit of a go* and it winds me up even more (.)	Appreciates understanding but sensitive to feelings – mine
C	94	[So	
J	95	[*But that's* because *they're* wound up.	
C	96	You've got *really good*/ empathy, you know/ really good *understanding* of (.) *where* they might be coming from (.)	Comparing people who know what to do to help
J	97	Oh yeah, (.) it-it's *'cos I'm* sort of (.) fantastic, brilliant,	Sensitive to feelings- mum and dad
C		[Laughter]	
J	98	superb (.) in(.) the *majority* of ways./ *N-nobody's* perfect in [every way	
C	99	[*No* they're not.	
J	100	but there are people that are perfect in (.) *most* ways.	Deflecting complement about empathy
C	101	(.) I don't *know* any *J,* I've never met anyone who is perfect in *most* ways/ *oh* apart [from you.	
J	102	[Apart from *me*	
C		[Laughing]	About perfection
J	103	*No*, no th-there's nothing wrong with erm (2 secs) *no*, there's *nobody* th-that's (.) *completely* perfect anyway [sniffs] [(.) [clears thoat]	Nobody is perfect
C	104	[*Erm*, go on	
J	105	*Even* though my Nan thinks she's perfect/ *but then again*, everybody does	Back to nan, but then again (deflects)
C		[Laughing]	
J	106	*Erm*/ *anyway* they sort of (1 sec) turn quite a *blind eye* on it, which is/ y-*you know* what a blind eye is don't you?	Link to not being able to understand
C	107	Yeah, I understand	
J	108	Like they *shut themselves* off from it (.)/	
	108	it's like *me* here, there's a *door,* here, sort of thing, or a-a *wall*/ or a *window*.	Metaphors like blind eye, door shutting off
C	109	*What* do you think makes them *do* that?	
J	110	S-it could *be* they don't want to *admit it*, (2 secs) t- it could be they don't *care*/ I'm sure it's *not* (.)	

		that they don't care but that could-that could *still be* what *it is* (.)./ It *could be* that they don't *want* to know, (2 secs) it could that the-they *don't know* how to *deal* with it	Don't care, sure it is not... don't want to, don't know how to?
C	111	Yeah [*quietly*]	
J	112	And that could be *it*./ Th-tha-that *last* one definitely, could be that they *don't know* how to deal with it/ and *probably* the fact that they *can't* accept it *either*/ [clears throat] because they want a perfect world.	Wanting a perfect world
C	113	(1 sec) Right (.) so it doesn't *fit in* to (.) how they think things-things should *be*?	
J	114	It could be the fact that they want a *perfect world*/ or th-they want a perfect world around *them*/ and when they've found out that there's one little *difference* like *me* that *makes it*/ (.) well what they would see as *imperfect*/ (.) it *gives them* that sort of opinion./	For themselves (insightful)
	115	If you *know* what I *mean*/ it's like *everybody*, they don't want a perfect world but they want a perfect world that fits around *them*/ (.) and if *I* was like *them*, [clears throat] I'd qu-even feel quite, not *threatened*, but (2 secs) but quite sort of *upset* that their perfect world's gone	and I am not perfect so they are upset – my fault?
C	116	[Yeah	
J	117	[But it *hasn't*.	
C	118	*No*	
J		[Clears throat]	
C	119	What would *you* say to them if *you* could (.) if-if *they* opened the *door*?	(trying to give agency – what would you do/say to open the door?)
J	120	[Yeah	
C	121	[I'm *using* an idiom so, if I (.) -if by mean [it	
J	122	[Or knocked *the wall* down	
C		[Laughing]	
J	123	or *opened* a window?	
C	124	[Laughing] Yeah, so you understand what I'm *saying*./	
	125	If *you* were (.) to *do* that and th-if you could *say* to them (.) their world could still be *perfect*	I would tell them they are on the autistic spectrum, they would be scared – aren't they? (self-doubt)
J	126	Yeah	
C	127	how how-wh-what would you *tell them*?	
J	128	[Laughs] I'd *frighten* them and say *everybody's* a *little bit* on the autistic spectrum [laughing]/ that'd scare *the life* out of them [*quiet laughing*]/	
	129	*Everyb*-is it true that everybody's just a *tiny bit* on the autistic [spectrum?	

C	130	[Well if you *think of* a *spectrum* (.) as being like *that* [C draws an arc on paper and shows it J]	The spectrum metaphors Rainbow
J	131	[A *rainbow*	
C	132	[A *rainbow,* that's how I *see* it	
J	133	[A rainbow [*singing quietly*]	
C	134	[Is it, that's in *my* (.) head it's a rainbow/	
	135	So *yeah* everybody *would*, wouldn't they, even if they were *there* [points to one end of the arc] they're *on it* (.) a fraction (.) erm.	
J	136	Mmm I'm *sure* some members of my family have got even *tiny* little tendencies of-a-of *autism/* cos I *notice it* in them.	
	137	My *granddad* gets, like *me*, gets worked up very *easily* (.)/ he, sort of (1 sec) he *has* to *do* things, some (.) sort of/ not necessarily *habits* like me/ but things like in the world of *work/* has to be done in a certain *way* and *that's* showing tendencies [of autism	My family on the spectrum that I notice
C	138	[Yeah	
J	139	I'm sure my-my *other* granddad does, shows them *as well.*	
C	140	So in a *way* could you –could they think of it (.)/ *this* is like completely *not* to do with this *research* but [I	(not to do with this research??)
J	141	[*Yeah*	
C	142	[but if they think of it-	
J	143	[but it *could be*	but it could be – persisting, so it is for J
C	144	[it *could be*	
J	145	[It could be to do with *my world*	
C	146	Yeah –*yes*	
J	147	My *slightly imperfect* world [laughs]	
C	148	But *everyone's* [slightly imperfect world	My slightly imperfect world - identity
J	149	[Of course	
C	150	So (.) in a *way* (.) rather than it being a	
	151	*condition* (.) is it a *description* of (.)	
J	152	a *variation* of normal.	
C	153	(1 sec)Yes [quietly]./	(I normalise, what I want it to be)
	154	A description *of* (.) a way of *being/* (.) a *response* to things (.) that everyone has (.) to a certain or lesser *extent* (.).	
	155	I know that *I*, I –I what I *have to do* is after we have had our conversation I have to do a *reflection/* I have to think about wh-ooh wh-*why did I say* that? Because I *know* that it's [nothing *to do* with the research.	But do you ever think it is stupid – are you like me? (serious)
J	156	[D-do you really think 'God it's *stupid*' though?'	

J		[quietly]	
C	157	*But it's* (2 secs) I can *see* that *you're* (.) you reflect on *this* (.) *a lot* don't you/ *in your head*?/ [Because we've *talked* about it *before*.	(You are reflecting)
J	158	[S-some of *my family* don't *understand* (2 secs)./ I know *my* (.) auntie and uncle and my *cousins*, that live up in (.) *Barnsley*/ my uncle's a police officer and *he's* d-dealt with people like me before./	Straight to family who do and don't understand, (important to J?)
	159	*One erm*, (.) t-s-I'll *quickly tell you* about one of a *story* about that he's *dealt with* somebody like me./	
	160	*Erm*, this-this kid was scrolling through the internet and he *clicked* on this *thing*/ and it was (.) he didn't (.) *know* it was a (.) child porn site/ but he *looked* on it and he went 'I'm a *paedophile*' and he *handed himself*/ over to the *police* and they said 'don't *worry* about it' and he cleared his computer of (.)	A story about what it means to understand
C	161	Yeah	
J	162	[what he'd been on (.) *not all*- obviously – not all his documents but he just said '*Oh* right so *don't worry*, we'll take the (.) *bad stuff* off and then you're not a paedophile'.	(Human – inter-texuality)
	163	I know he's (.) learned to deal with people *like* me or he's *had to* deal with people like me/ so that he's *sort of* (.) showed a bit of an understanding.	People like me
C	164	*So lets*, lets bring it back [to school because we haven't heard that much	(Back to school)
J	165	[yes, of course	
C	166	about school,/ so is that the same at school then that *kind of* (.) some people are o- (.) [*open* and some people are closed?	closed and open link
J	167	[Yeah/ [*yeah*	Some teachers that want a perfect world
C	168	[Is it similar?	
J	169	[Well *yeah*./ I think with *most* the teachers at school though they *don't want* a perfect world, some teachers at school./ There are there *will be* the odd ones *that do*./	
	170	I-I-I *notice* from how some teachers behave that they *want* a perfect world/ but (.) *some* (2 secs) probably don't know *how* to deal with it, some teachers, they don't know *what* to say./ Some just think 'I'll *just leave it*', and it will *go away*.	Don't know how, don't know what to say, ignore, like family

C	171	What would you say to *them* (.) if you could?	Learn about it, the information is there so not to upset them
J	172	Well the ones that say I'll *leave* it and let it go *away*?/ I'll say *don't*, *learn* about (.) th-*research* about (.) the condition (.) and learn about the different *things* and (.) *parts* of it, the *tendencies*/ (.) and think 'how could I deal with *that* properly?' without *upsetting* them.	
	173	Because *on a* th-on the (.) internet it *will tell you* that *asperger's syndrome* (2 secs)	
C	174	Got a bit of *a* (.)?	
J	175	*Yeah* a wet nose./	
	176	Erm (.) it *will tell you* that (1 sec) some people with asperger's *get upset* with this and others wi-will (.) *not*/ and they'll react in *this way* and this way *and*/	People with asperger's – less easy to say?
	177	(.) it will be *good* if I could print this *sheet* of pa- (.) these *sheets* of erm *paper* (.) off of, a *page* of the National Autistic Society (2 secs) *website* and *give it* to them/ t- (.) which I've done to my nan and *granddad* (.) and I *might do* for this one./ Well it might *end* up at my aunties (.) and *my* little cousin [*low voice*].	Feelings stronger? Not used to the agency, taking a risk?
C	178	So it's really *important* to you to be able to *share* that *information* with them?	
J	179	And *broaden* the understanding	I could help and share this information
C	180	Right (.) but I *can* (.) from what you've *said* (1 sec) it's *not*, it's not (.) a *straightforward* thing [is it?	
J	181	[No	
C	182	And that, is that *hard* for, for *you* to come to terms with and to tell, sort of relate other people?	
J	183	Oh yeah, I find it *hard* to say 'will you have a look at *this*?'/	Broaden understanding
	184	Like I said if they turn a bli-ind eye on it or just don't *bother* to even *say* that *they have*/ it's erm, it's quite (.) it *hur-* it quite *hurts you* actually (2 secs)	It is hard to share because it hurts when it is ignored
C	185	Tell me about that, how does it hurt you? [*quietly*]	
J	186	It's the fact that they (.) can't be bothered, they don't *want* to, they can't *accept* it./ It shows that they just treat you with everybody *else* and/ when something *happens* like (.) I get into *a fight* caused by somebody *else* but because I've thrown the *punch*, how it *al-always works*, the	Because they cannot be bothered

J		person who has thrown the *punch* always gets into the most *trouble*/ and that's happened in the past (1 sec) *and erm*/ (2 secs)	Getting the blame
	187	t – I've lost myself again [*very quiet*]	They treat you like everybody else and then I get in trouble
C	188	Has *that* happened *at school*?	
J	189	Yeah (.) *yeah* and there are *some* people that (.) don't understand that people with asperger's *will* react like that./	
	190	*And I went to find*, you know somebody called Mr *S*?	Strong emotions
C	191	I do.	
J	192	Yeah, strange man, *very strange* [laughing]	
C		[Laughing]	
J	193	*Delete that bit*] [laughing]	
C	194	[Still laughing] I think I *might* leave that on and just let Mr S listen [to it	Somebody who helps
J	195	[*Oh no* h-e's not *that* strange/ he's me *Head of*	Strange man! (like me?)
	196	*Year* next year.	
C	197	I *know*	
J	198	Yeah [*quiet*]. T-*Poor thing*, he needs some divying/ the man'll go *grey* within six months [laughing], *beard'll* go grey *with it* as well (.) nivea for *men* should do it *erm*/ (.)	Jokes, affectionate
	199	but *yeah* he's *sort of* (.)/	
	200	t-I was going to go *to him* when I punched this lad on the face (.) but *he* wasn't in school/ he had to look after a s-a family member at *home* which is o-which I don't (.) *mind* about because you *always* look after your family (.)/ *apart from* if you've (.) *done* it *yourself*, at least *you can run*/ [laughing] (.).	Family is important to me
	201	But anyway, erm [sniff] he *wasn't in* that day so I had to go to *my tutor*,/ and with my tutor being sort of Deputy Head of *Year,* and he-he works round like Mrs D and (.) Miss *B* and stuff, well mostly Mrs *D* and stuff, [sniff] he'll *speak with* Mr *D* and stuff/ he might take a har-*harder line* on it than, say Mr *S* or he won't show enough *u-understanding* if you know what I *mean*?	Anticipates who will understand – constrained
C	202	*So who* would you *go to* (.) or would it be possible for you to have *someone else* lined up that you could go to that you *did feel* understood?	Other possibilities
J	203	I could come down *here* [J indicates Learning Support]./ *This* is (.) [yawning] a (.) *sort* of a (1 sec) an *option* now to come to now if I've got a	

J		problem.	
C	204	[And is that better	
J	205	[*Yeah* because *I know that* (.) Mr *S* might be *teaching*.	and reasons why the helper cannot always help
C	206	Yeah (.) Yeah [*quietly*] (.) or (???) as Head of Year *Ten* next year.	
J	207	He might *still* be *teaching* next *year*	
C	208	Yeah	
J	209	'cos Mrs *D* in Year *Seven* she still *taught*.	
C		Yeah (.) [I *think*	
J	210	[*lots*	
C	211	*she* (.) he *will* be teaching, I'm sure he *will* be [teaching	
J	212	[Oh *yeah* he teaches art and (.) *photography*.	
C	213	(1 sec) *So* (.) [sigh] it's a (.) what *I've got* from *you* I think is that it's,/ you *can* step out, *you* can step out of (.) *how* you're feeling to understand that '*Oh actually* they might be thinking *this*'/ but wh-it *doesn't* stop it, feeling	(know why but does not stop the feeling)
J	214	Mmm	Cannot read minds??? (Can anyone – not convinced?)
C	215	making it the feelings [that *you've got* about it.	
J	216	[*Yeah* you can't read somebody's *mind*, if only you *could*.	
C	217	*Noone* can do that, can they? (2 secs)	
J	218	Mmm [*quietly*]	
C	219	[Quiet laugh] (2 secs) T-One *of* the things we've *talked* about (.) was (2 secs) your *brain*/ (1 sec) *last* time (.) we talked about (3 secs) getting rubbish marks at *primary school* [and how	(back to school narrative)
J	220	[I *did* get (.)	
C	221	[that made you *feel*	loved primary school(??) but it did not set me up well for life (marks)
J	222	[it d-didn't set me up very good for *life*/ but I *loved primary school*/ it was sort of (.) quarter of the way through *the year* and my results *shot up* I was like *Two-A* (.) which is (.) *way* below average. I shot up to (.) f-*Four-A* (.) almost *straight away* when I – when I moved *schools* I beat my targets.	teaching assistant can really change things (marks)
C	223	What made *that* ch-*change*, then?	
J	224	I *had a* (.) teaching assistant with me at my (1 sec) *second* primary school *all* the *time*.	
C	225	(1 sec) *How* did that [make a difference?	
J	226	[So (.) *well* er you could have people reading the *questions*, the questions for you, helping your *understanding*, *stopping* people from (.)	helping, stopping others, stopping me
	227	*distracting* you (.) *and* things like *that really*,/ cos	

J		like you, *like I said* she *helped* me (.) understand what it was *asking* me to do	
C		Mmm	
J	228	*and* (.) she *stopped* people *from* (.) like I *said* (.) er *disturbing* me and *stopped me* from *disturbing* other people [laughing] *which* I was *quite* prone to do./ *I still am* quite prone to do that *now* but (.) (???) [*quiet*]	I know what I do, what my faults are
C	229	So what-what helps *you* then (.) now (.) *here*? What's helpful?	
J	230	Well I *don't* have a TA with me all the time *here*,/ wh-I *only* have it via somebody *else*, like say *A* whose got ADHD	TA is not mine she is for A – feelings about that??
	231	take that out, if you want, take the *name out* if you want [*quietly*]	
C	232	Oh I'll take *all* the *names* out, *J*	
J	233	Yeah, but I *have to* say it when you're *here* because it'll (.) help me./	
	234	*A* who's got *ADHD*	
C		[Yeah	
J	235	[Erm (.) *he has* a TA with him because erm (.)/ *well*, *you* ought to observe him he's well (.) *chaos* [J points at his head] chaos king [*quiet*]/ and *erm* [sniff] I-I-he I'm in a couple of *his* lessons.	You ought to observe him he is chaos king
	236	'Cos *he* was put in the top set for science to *try* and influence his good be- good behaviour *even though* he's not (.) not *up at* [that level	
C		[No	
J	237	*And erm*, *h-he's* like I said he's put me off *all year*/ *apart from* in *biology* because he doesn't go into biology. [sniff]	He put me off all year
C	238	But his teaching assistant helps *you*?	
J	239	*Yeah* in-in *physics*./ I don't *have her*, have her in chemistry and when we *do* practicals in chemistry I've got to work with *A*, which causes the problems because we've got no (.) *TA* in there/	
	240	*the teacher's* not fantastically willing to help *so*(.) if only she sort of showed a little more *understanding* when it comes to A-with *what* I've got to *put up with* [laughing] and with what *he's* got to put up with as well	Don't have TA in chemistry is a problem
C	241	With *you*?	Teacher does not understand
J	242	With *me*./ *I'm* a lot to put up with.	
C	243	*So*, is it about *that* then J? Is it *about* (.) [sniff]/	

C		*H-how* do you *know* that a *teacher's* more *ready* (.) to *understand you*, to show that (2 secs)/ *How-how* can you *work that out* that 'oh *they're* alright because they know-I feel-I feel (.) less anxious *there*, *because*, well, how do you *work it* out?	I am a lot to put up with (How do you know they understand)
J	244	What with cer-certain *teachers?*/ Well I have a *couple* of young teachers which show quite good *understanding*, I have a couple of (.) *older* teachers which show quite a good *understanding*.	Young or old?
C	245	What do *they do*, then, that's different?	
J	246	*Erm* [clears throat] t-well can I go to my *English teacher*, Miss *F* (.) she shows *a lot of* understanding, she comes and *individually* helps me with me *work*, just takes me through it, *lets me* ask questions and (.) lets me *get on*. [sniff]	Helps me individually and lets me ask questions and lets me get on
	247	*and* t-erm (1 sec) *when* we're in like class *dis-scushion* (sic)	
C	248	Discussion	
J	249	Discush-sh-*discussion*, stuff like that,/ she'll *treat* me the same as anybody else [sniff] (.) you know she doesn't *pick* me over anybody *else* and (.) she *doesn't* just *leave* me there/ sh-she likes me to *get involved* in class discussion/ s-which makes me *look* the *same* as everybody else/ *but* I-she sometimes comes and helps me individually (.) *first*. [laughs]	And treats me like everybody else, does not leave me there she likes me to be involved makes me look the same (sensitivity or attuneme-nt?)
C	250	So *is it* about *a balance*, then, *between* (.) erm (.) *you* having the support that you *need*/ some are rec-some are *recognising it* when, when you're not coping because you're being distracted *by* someone,/ *but* on the other *hand*, where possible, (.) treating you the same as everyone else [*is it about*	
J	251	[Yeah	
C	252	*that*?	
J	253	W-well *yeah*/ *L-like* erm like I said in class discussion she treats me the *same* (.)/ *but sometimes* she comes and helps me individually, n-*not always* first, [but *generally* when I've got my *hand up* she comes to me.	and helps me individually
C	254	[Yeah (.)/ It's *hard* to work out, though y-f-for the *teacher's* sometimes, do you *think*?	(hard for them?)
J	255	Yeah because they *don't* (.) generally *notice* it (1	

J		sec)/ *o-only* really the *ones* in the subjects I'm not really *good at* (.) like *art*, the teacher *notices*-*teachers* have always noticed.	Usually do not notice – lack of confidence?
C	256	Ah-*right*	
J	257	'Cos the-*they think* it comes with sort of (2 secs) *being* unable to (.) read, *write*, *do* maths (.) a-also known as arithmetic/ *ye-that's* what it used to be called isn't it?	Misunderstanding learning difficulties, (need to get my identity right?)
C	268	*Yeah* [when my *dad* was at school.	
J	269	[And things like *that*, *but* it doesn't *come* with that./ M-*my* problems when it comes to *learning difficulties* is being able to *process information./ That's why* I sometimes struggle with *English* (.), *that's why* I sh-struggle in the English *tests*./ It's like in the er *writing* test, it *took me* thirty-five minutes to process what I was gonna *write* then again that's why we get extra *time*. (.) And in the *reading* test I can't process what the question's asking me at *all* [sniff]/ I *really* struggle with it/ and (.) in the *Shakespeare* paper, *sorry*	Processing struggle
C	270	It's alright [*quiet*]	
J	271	we had a (.) *one question* and I couldn't answer that at all.	
C	272	Is-*is* the struggle (.) to process (.) *harder* when you're getting anxious?	
J	273	Yeah. I was *very,* very nervous in the English tests as well,/ so, so it made it *har-worse* I guess.	
C	274	So what you're *telling me*/ J, I think is that (.) er (3 secs) it's the *ones* that *know*, you said *notice*	
J		[sniff] Mmm [*quiet*]	
C	275	*they* (.) *they* need to be, have some *skills*? Sort of	
J	276	[*Learn* how to calm me *down*	J says calm me down I say be sensitive, or both? Interactive
C	277	[Be *sensitive* sensitive to the fact that, sort of (4 secs)/ *some* people would realise '*ooh* he's getting a bit anxious *now*'	
J	278	Yeah th- they *can see*./ (.) M-Mrs *H* in the *tests* could see I was quite *anxious* I was my p-*my hands* were sweaty	
C	279	[Right [*quiet*]	
J	280	[I *washed them* afterwards, though, er I didn't shake anybody's hands	
C	281	Erm	
J	282	[Yeah	
C	283	[And *knowing how* to to create it, make it calmer	

C		[for you?	
J	284	[Mmm/ *How to* calm me *down* and how to *relax* me and how to make me *feel* more *confident* towards the test	
C	285	And when *that's* happened *then* you could process it better?	About tests
J	286	Yeah, it's *like* in the *writing* test, once I'd (.) *processed* my information/ I-I'm *quite creative*/ (.) [intakes breath] 'cos once I *knew* what I was gonna write (.) *once I'd*/	
	287	I-I don't like writing it down on paper, I *don't like* (.) people *seeing* what I've planned. But I *plan it all* in my *head* (.) and *then* (1 sec) just start writing.	
C	288	Do you *know* that (.) *happens* to (.) *everybody* to *an extent* that you know when you're very *anxious*?/ A different part of your *brain* starts being *used* and it's not your thinking *brain*?	(I try to normalise again)
J	289	No it's your *useless* brain	useless brain
C	290	So (.) it's only when you can feel a bit calmer that you can *use* your thinking brain *properly*, erm/ and (.) *so* it's *not* just (.) *you* that that [*happens* to (???)	
J	291	[Yeah (.) it's everybody	
C	292	*Some* people can er er don't *worry* as *much* [about it	
J	293	[Oh yeah there are some people that are more *calm*(.)	
C	294	Yeah	
J	295	that *think of* ways *out*./	
	296	For *example* I can *think of* some people that would just go *'pmm'*, er n-*not* just to people but to things like *tests*	People who can be calmer – link with strength
C	297	Yeah	
J	298	They just go '*poom*', kick straight through it and they're *there*./ They know what they're *writing*, and they're *off* within ten, *fifteen* minutes, *most* people *are*./	
	299	(2 secs) *Dear me* I was *sat there* for thirty-five minutes [laughing] (.)/ I was *scared* that *teachers* might, you know/ if they *don't see* me write anything but I'm just sat there *thinking* (.)/ I'm *scared* that even though I (.) do *tests* in the (.) *drama* studio that they might come and (.)	Dear me this is not me I am scared
	300	*say* (.) '*you godda* write something (.) *soon*'/ but I *don't like* that because that puts *pressure*	

J		on me, that makes me *panic*/ and *even* though it *hasn't* ha-/it never *happened*, (.) I'm scared it *might happen*/ it makes me *panic* and it (.) it (.) slows the (.) *processing* down *even more*/ which *isn't good* i-I'm best *just left* (.) to *think*, process the *information* what I'm gonna put *down* and that's *fine* (.) [J bangs the table] *woosh* I'm off.	If I get what I need, woosh I'm off
C	301	What could *happen* to make you *less* scared?	
J	302	Erm (4 secs) well the *fact* that *nobody's* going to come and *say* something to me in *the* (.) drama studio/ or the 'why aren't you *writing* anything*?'*/ *erm* just left to(.) *think* and *process* like I said	
	303	*process* information/ (.) know what I'm gonna write and *when I've* (.) *thought* of something I'm *off*, (2 secs) I've *always* been *like* that once I've thought of what I'm gonna put down on *paper*, [sniff] I'm normally *off*/ (.) unless I've got *distractions* or (???) I won't have in a *test* [laughing].	
C	304	How can you be *confident*, then wh-what do *school* need to *do* (.) to make you confident that no-one's going to go and speak [to you?	(Making it better?)
J	305	[In a *test*?	
C	306	*How-how*-yeah (.) w-what would make you *feel* [that (???) [*quiet*]	
J	307	[well (.) we b- (.) well especially in *English* tests, well like *pre-speak* to everybody before the test and just *say* (.)/ 'if you see J sh-s-*struggling*, [sniff] or you *don't* or you don't see that he's *written* anything, you know/ *don't* have a *go* at him, ask him if he's *ok* or *ask* him if (.) or just *don't say* anything to him *at all*, let him process the *information*'.	What school could do – harder to say? (hope?)
C	308	Is the drama studio where (.) *everyone* does (.) assessments or is that [where	
J	309	[No *that's* where ev-*special* people (.) like people like *me* or people who have trouble with *exams* does it, like *C* does it in the drama studio.	Special people like me (who else do we know?)
	310	Do you *know J* BW? (.) [In the 'Friendship (.) Group'?	
C	311	J is gonna be in the Fr – *is* in the ['Friendship Group'	
J	312	[Yeah, he does it in *there*, l-*loads* of people do it	
J		in *there*, (.) *E*'ll probably do it in there next *year*/ er who *else* do we know?	

C	313	(3 secs) Well [do you have as much time as you *need?*	
J	314	[Everybody (.)/	
	315	*No* it's *only* a-additional *time* that they're allowed to *add on*, roughly *about* t-*well* (.) f-for every sort of *s-diff-ferent* test there is a different time that you can *add on* (.)	
C	316	It (.) I mean this is going *off,* (.) *again, this* bit is about *you,* erm	
J	317	What made me *panic*, what made me panic more is that I *can't* re-sit the *SATs*/ it's *not like* your *GCSE*s where you can *re-sit* them/ but I *feel* there is a couple that I need-that I *needed* to sort of *re-sit* but *I couldn't*/	Back to tests, frustration?
	318	because a-*once* I'd gone through the *test* I'd started to process the information *after* (2 secs) *an hour* and a *little bit* (.) for the *reading* test and I'd started *writing*, I'd started getting to *terms* with some of the *questions* (.) *time* was almost *up* (.) in the *reading* test.	
C	319	So that would have been *frustrating* for [you	Strong emotions, metaphor, big star dies the core gets crushed
J	320	[Yeah but in the *Shakespeare* paper there was *no chance* I was gonna *do it*/ 'cos I read the *question* and I *thought*, you know, [J puts his hands together noisily] *crunch*/	
	321	it's *like* (.) after a big star *dies* (.) the *core* gets *crushed* [don't it,	
C	322	[Yeah	Feelings like fear and anxiety
J	323	[*You know* er erm (.) *into* sort of a (.) pulled through a black hole *or* maybe a white dwarf which is (.) *most* unwelcome/ [*quiet*]	
	324	*Anyway erm* [it's-*like*, *like* gets it gets *crushed*	
C		[good metaphor [laughing]	
J	325	and like *in a* – *in a* erm *neutron star* (.) it eventually *s-stops* expansion/ I mean i-*the contract*-collapsing of the *core*, it *eventually* stops it and then it *starts* (.) *stabling out*/	How my brain works
	326	and that what ha-happens in my *brain*/ it's like *crushin*g but when I start to understand the *questions*, it *evens* out, sort of thing.	
C	327	Is there anything you could *do* d'you think, any strategies you could *learn* (.) that might *help* (.) stop it having to get to *that* before it (.) ge-	(things you could do to help?)
J		[Mmm	
C	328	[get to that *intense* (.) *crunch*	
J	329	[Yeah, [quiet]	

C	330	[before it starts to	
J	331	well I'll *explain afterwards* what you'd have said *there*.	
	332	What *happened* when a big star *dies* it suddenly just *goes in*	
C	333	Yeah, [yeah	
J	334	[and (.) *goes out*, l-like *that* [J demonstrates with his hands] and that's that's *not* what *happens*/ (2 secs) but *then* the *core*(.) collapses a little bit *more* (.) after that [*quiet*].	Need to get the metaphor right
	335	It-it *is* complicated [*louder*] but it's *like that*.	
C	336	You'll *have* to forgive *me* for not *quite* (.) [I-I don't *know* as much about it.	
J	337	[I'll *explain* afterw (.) I'll *explain* afterwards it I l-*like* (.) *astro*-physics	
C	338	I *know* you *do*, yeah	
J	339	Well, *anyway*, erm I'll explain *afterwards*./ But it's *like* that, it *is* like that, and when I can (.) stop all the (.) *collapse* or the (.) contracting [sniff]	
C	340	I *wonder* if you could do, (.) have *that image* in your *head*/ you know when *it* (.) when *it* s-*happened* and you're sitting there and your sh-/ *i-imagine* you're in another *exam* and you'd got a (.) a *question*, and i-it's y-*you* know it's *happening*,/ if *you'd got* that *image* th-that's collapsing, (.) *stop it* and try and *stop it*, and think a-and say n-no [(???)	(Know this is not the right forum for strategies)
J	341	[And *broaden* my thoughts out.	
C	342	And *do* something maybe with your *breathing*, to help you.	
J	343	Mmm, but they might think I'm *cheating* [laughing] if I'm *making* sort of (.) *noise* [J breathes in deeply] like that.	Worry they will think I am cheating
C	344	*One* thing that (.) w-we'll be *doing* some relaxation and things *in the Friendship* Group	
J	345	Yeah (.) [yeah	
C	346	[Erm and (.) I-I'm n-*not sure* whether we're g-we're *on* to it *tomorrow*, [but	
J	347	[No oh it's *Thursday* today in't it?	
C	348	[Yeah, one *quick* thing you could do is (.) *three* breaths in and four [intake of breath] *three* seconds of breathing in and four seconds breathing *out*/ 'cos if (.)you breathe *out* more, *longer*, it automatically *relaxes* you	
J	349	Oh (.) [you *tense* parts of your *body* as well	

C	350	[push your *shoulders* down [*quiet*], yeah, and we-will *that's* what we will be doing, learning to *do* that/	
	351	but the *quick one* is *push* your *sh*-feel as though hands are on your *shoulders* and then (.) breathe in *three* and out *four*.	
J	352	Mmm. Y-you could *creep* yourself *out*, (.) *hand* against *hand* and then once you touch the back of that hand it *feels* (.) *dead*, *terrible*./	
	353	*Anyway* erm, (2 secs) erm (2 secs) yeah.	Changing focus- not J's agenda?
C	354	The *feeling* you were describing though was *fear*	
J	355	Fear, *anxiousness* [as well	
C	356	[*Anxiousness*, (.) being *scared* that the teacher's going to *talk* to you, being *scared*/ that (.)/ and I *think* that sometimes that's what's been happening, you know, when you don't want to get out of the *car*?/ Is it about, is it about *fear* of *things* (.)?	I say it is fear, J says anxiousness
J	357	happening [yawns] (3 secs)	
C	358	and, and it's learning to, *I know* that that's what the *psychologist* is going to *do* with you *isn't* she, she's (.)	I have power in my knowledge?
J	359	Psychologist? [*quiet*]	
C	360	*Is* it the (.) is she a psychologist *as well*? The-the lady that's *working* with you at (.) erm the clinic [*quiet*]	
J	361	*Oh* L?	
C	362	At L	
J	363	Yeah. Er N. [*Is* it *N*?	
C	364	[She's trying to (.) *Yeah*, (.) I don't *know*, [*actually*, (.) the *name*	
J	365	[Yeah, yeah, N.	
C	366	But (.) she *wrote down* that *she's* (.) gonna, (.) so that you start to (1 sec) think (.) more positive (.) *different* thoughts (3 secs) in [different situations. [*quiet*]	
J	367	[Mmm.but my O-my *OCDs* generally get worse and I get more frustrated when I don't *do* them when I'm *stressed* (1 sec)/ and that builds up the stress and I start kicking and *screaming*/	Moving from positive back to the difficulties
	368	[sniff] and that's where the thing about my mum and *dad* getting wound up *as well* all happens, (1 sec) when they should really just leave me *alone*./ They *don't*, they get involved because *they're* frustrated. [sniff]	How my family react

C	369	So you understand how they *feel*	
J	370	T-I feel *frustrated*/ (.)	I understand them but it doesn't make me feel better
C	371	but	
J	372	but it *still* doesn't make me feel any better [sniff]	
C	373	Yeah [yeah	
J	374	[I *still feel* quite sort of/ (.) when when they *do* shout at me when *I'm* (.) angry/ it's *like* (2 secs) [sigh] what would you call it erm t- (3 secs) un-is it *unjustified*? (3 secs)	It is unfair when they shout
C	375	*Yeah* [*quiet*]? I *think* so.	
	376	Could you *reduce* them though? You know the *OCD* things? Make them *more* (2 secs) *manageable*? So *you* take some *control* of them?	(offering control, OCDs?)
J	377	Yeah	
C	378	'Cos they tend to *grow* don't they?	
J	379	Yeah as in- as *if* your sort of anxiety *gets worse*	
C	380	I *just* wondered if you could just think '*right*, I'm only going to do that (.) *that many* times'?	
	382	And yo-*I don*– I need *you* to tell *me* 'cos I –	
J	383	Yeah, that's right I find that *hard* wh-sometimes.	
C	384	Yeah [*quiet*] (2 secs)./ *Right*, we've gone t-*completely off* the *asperger's* and *school* haven't we? [*so*	(off topic???)
J	385	[Yeah. (1 sec)/ I don't-I *do* pro- have a couple of (.) *OCDs* in school when it comes to *slabs* outside [sniff] and *drains* (???)/ I just get-oh start *diving* into them and start *crawling* though them./ Everybody's scared of doing *that*, (.) *erm* [laughing]/ but (.) I have a coup-where I *stand* on 'em and stuff (1 sec) [sniff]./ *Strange* habits but	Back to OCDs Jokes
C	386	*I know*, but *J*, what you *don't realise* is what's going through *other* people's heads/ and they're walking along the pavement and they have to tread on (.) *three* cracks on one leg and *three cracks* on the other leg and *if you don't*	(Normalising?)
J		[Laughs]	
C	387	I mean *what will happen?* But *they do* [because	
J	388	[How can people *be scared* of j-just walking on cracks?	How can they?
C	389	(2 secs) And some people don't like walking on cracks *at all*	
J	390	[No	
C	391	[*Everyone* (.) *does have* these (.) *things* (.) that they *do* [sigh] erm (.) but	

J	392	but then *again* you have to think like in the *street* they're not *cracks*, they're just *grout lines.*	What I tell myself?
C	393	And that's what they *are*	
J	394	They're just *grout* lines	
C	395	They're *just* grout lines, it's just a *drain* and it's just a th-*you know*/ (1 sec) and (.) nothing *will happen* if you *do* (.) don't do that	
J	396	Well you might *fall though it*, but	
C	397	*So* (.) yeah. (2 secs)/ You've been *great*. You've touched on lots of *feelings* [about	This is what I think you said
J		[Yeah	
C	398	feeling *hurt*, feeling *scared*, feeling *anxious* to- *mixed feelings* about being the *same* but being *different* and	
J	399	Yeah	
C	400	and *people* knowing that y- *diagnosis.*	
J	401	Yeah I, *all*, (.) you can refer that to *friends* as well (.) 'cos I've *always* had trouble with friends over the *years*/ sometimes *I've* caused it, sometimes *they've* caused it (.) and it's just (1 sec) *very* out of control.	J's agenda – wants to talk about friends
C	402	(.) Wh-wh-*what's* the *out of control* (2 secs) bit?[*quiet*]	
J	403	*Er* [yawning] (.) (2 secs) *well*, erm (3 secs) sometimes I get unsure whether my friends are friends are actually *friends* with me *or not*?/ Sometimes I think *that* (.) even though I really *shouldn't*, but I *do*.	Are they my friends?
C	404	Do you think it's just as hard *for them*?	(Normalise is it as hard for the?)
J	405	It could be.	
C	406	Being, are you *fourteen* J?	
J	407	Thirteen	
C	408	Thirteen./ Are you fourteen this (.) *soon*?	
J	409	Yes *very* soon.	
C	410	*When's* your birthday?	
J	411	July	
C	412	*So*, you *know*, thirteen, fourteen year old young *people* do you think, (.) *most* of them have confusions about whose my *friend* and whose not *really* my friend?	
J	413	*Yeah,* but it just makes *me* really anxious and (.) I feel that they're *not* friends with me sometimes/ and th-that's why I sometimes *don't* want to get	But it makes me anxious
J		out the *car*.	
C	414	What would *help*?	
J	415	(3 secs) I-don't er I don't know. [*quiet*]/ Just a	

		couple of stable *friends.*	
C	416	If you knew there was *one* friendly face?	I just want friends at school to feel I can get out of the car
J	417	(2 secs) Even *one'd* do.	
C	418	When you got *out* the car?	
J	419	Mmm mmm	
C	420	That'd help?	
J	421	That I could be *friends with* at school./ *Kids* I'm talking about *here*	
C	422	I know	
J	423	not-not (.) *teachers.*	
C	424	I *know* that.	Kids not teachers
J	425	Mmm	
C	426	So is that about having *confidence* in *them*?	
J	427	Yeah (4 secs)	
C	428	Have you got somebody *in particular* that you would *want*, or would it be *anyone*?	
J	429	*Er* (.) it *could be* anybody/ there's a few people that I'm *sort of* friends with at the minute (3 secs) *sort* of thing.	
C	430	Mmm [*quiet*]/ (2 secs) C seems *to* advocate for *you*	
J	431	*Yeah, he's* (.) we're friends.	
C	432	Then that's *good* [is'n it?	
J	433	[Mmm (1 sec)/ we-I don't *hang round* with him at *dinner./ He hangs round* in *here*, sort of thing, Learning Support, *in this room/* and *I don't like* doing that really *I like* (2 secs) sort of to be *outside* where all the (.) [laughing]	Friends I want to have
C	434	I *know* what you're going to [say [laughing] [*nice girls* are are [Laughing]	Girls
J	435	*You know* erm (.)/ it sometimes gets me *quite down* actually.	
C	436	So what *you want* to do is to be *out* with *everyone else/* (.) and that's what's *hard* [*quietly*]	
J	437	Yeah (4 secs)	Want to be out with everyone else
C	438	Mmm [*quiet*]/ So *who* do you *hang around* with?	
J	439	*Er* a couple of lads in my *tutor*, *or* ran-*actually* random people outside./I have a *couple of people* that *I'm* (.) pally with in my tutor.	
C	440	Right, and-n-have are y-you *have you* got *confidence* in them?	
J	441	*Well yeah*, qui-*quite a bit* of confidence in them,	
J		*yeah*.	Friends in here and out there
C	442	So it *sounds* as *though* you've got, you've got friends in *here*, and *you do* have friends out	

		there.	
J	443	*Oh yeah,* it's just they *sort of, might have* other people to (.) that they're *friends* with, they *might* (.)(3 secs)	I want to know what they are thinking – are they friends?
C	444	So they might not be *around*?	
J	445	I *don't know*-well- *I don't know* real-you see I *can't* [*quiet*] (.) *tell* what *they're* thinking/ whether they *are* friends with me *or not*.	
C	446	Does it *help* to *know* that they might *also* have these *thoughts*?	Could they have the same thoughts?
J	447	Possibly. (2 secs). *Could* they?	
C	448	*Yeah,* yeah, (.) *I* remember, *very well*, being (.) the *age group* (.) that you're in *now*/ it could be s-partly an *age*, as well as, it's not necessarily an asperger's or *OCD* thing, it's an *age* thing as well.	(An age thing?)
J	449	Yeah [yawning] (1 sec)	
C	450	And *a lot of* young people I talk to don't have *asperger's*, also *have* the same thoughts as *you*	
J	451	Yeah	
C	452	about *friends*.	
J	453	Th-do *they* (.) *just* (.) *be* like that?	
C	454	But it's *hard* to know who your *friend* is, are they *really* my friends?	
J	455	Is *everybody* in our Friendship Group got *asperger's* or [not?	Is this an asperger's issue?
C	456	[No	
J		No	
C	457	And it wasn't intended to *be* like that [*either*.	The autistic spectrum (connection to friends?)
J	458	[No, *J-J* hasn't got *asperger's* I don't think.	
C	459	Do you *know I* don't know, *I* don't know who *has* and who *hasn't* [apart from I know *you* and (???)	
J	460	[*Apparently* according *to CB* he *has*./ E *has.* E's *got*, she *hasn't* got *asperger's,* she's got something else on the autistic spectrum.	
C	461	Yeah	
J	462	W-we *don't know* what that is./ It *could be* anything. (3 secs)	What I know and want to know about ASD and other people
C	463	W-I know-I *do know* that E *does* have a diagnosis [that's on the autistic spectrum [*quiet*]	
J	464	[That's on the *autistic spectrum*?	
C	465	[Well s-some[It's *very,* apparently it's *quite*	
J	466	*similar* to asperger's	
C	467	Yes	
J	468	i-i-in *some* ways.	
C	469	Its whether *you need* all the different names	

J	470	[*No*, not *really*, not *really*, (.)/ You just need to know it's something on the *autistic spectrum* that's similar to *asperger's*.	
C	471	Yeah	
J	472	I-it could be *anything*, like I say it could be (.) *PDA?/ Is it* PDA**?** That *other* one? *W-what's that* stand for?	
C	473	It *stands* for *Pathological Demand Avoidance*	
J	474	Can *I erm*, (.) can I *have* a *swear* bag please?	
C	475	[Laughing] And you *haven't* got it.	
J	476	*I know* I haven't (.) but could I have a *swear bag*, (.) *please*?	
C	477	*Yeah*	
J	478	[Laughing] I [stuttering]	
C	479	[Laughing] I *know* i-	
J	480	It's *strange*/ I-i-it could I-I *know* of a *few* on the autistic spectrum./	
	481	Autism's a condition in it*self* though in't it?/ Do *they* class autism as-as a condition on-in *itself*?	
C	482	*J* , do you *know* there is *lots*/ even within the *academic world*, and *autism world* of people who think about it and *do research* there isn't *agreement*, there is *no* agreement about exactly t-whether *autism* is different from *asperger's* or whether it's all autistic *spectrum* or whether *PDA* is actually *on* the *autistic spectrum*	My agenda about ASD
J	483	[Yeah	
C	484	[*I – I* have *my view* of *it*, which is that everything can be in the *big umbrella* of *somewhere* along the autistic spectrum	My view?
J	485	Yeah	
C	486	But not-but some people *have* (.) use *different language* to me, which *makes* it *even more* confusing (???)	
J	487	[I don't know. [Mmm er/ *I-I've read* on the internet that autism's classed as a *diagnosis on* the *autistic spectrum itself*.	Wanting to find out, exploring ASD identity?
C	488	Yeah	
J	489	It's *put on* the, like *asperger's* and PDA and *dyspraxi* is?	
C	490	Dyspraxia, yes	
J	491	Is *on* the autistic spectrum *as well, in't it*?	
C	492	Well *I* would say so, but *not everyone* would say	
C	493	so.	
J	494	What else is there (.) *Kanner* or is that?	
C	495	*Kanner's* autism./ *Kanner* was the one [who first	

		made up the *name*.	
J	496	[He *worked with* Hans *Asperger* didn't he*?*	
C	497	They *did* work *together*, yeah,/ and Hans Asperger was *discredited*, did you *know that*?/ That he was he did *a lot of work* with young people, it was *war time*/ er with a group of [young *adults*.	(What I know??)
J	498	[It was *in wartime* weren't it? *1930's, 40's*	Very interested
C	499	Yeah, *something* like that.	
J	500	So it wasn't *that* long ago, then.	
C	501	But his work was dis-*discredited*, people thought of autism as *Kanner's* (.) *classical* autism and then *a bit* later *on* erm, Lorna *Wing* [you *will* have heard of *her*	
J	502	[I've *heard of* her	
C	503	*She* erm(.) was working with a group of [people/ and thought *all* these-these, people	
J	504	[Oh (???) sh-she's (.) *female* i'nt she?	
C	505	Yeah *she is*, yes/ she was thinking of 'these *people* are *very much* like the people described by Hans *Asperger*' and that's [how	
J	506	[Little professors (.) *nicknamed as* (.) yeah	Little professors
C	507	[the term *Asperger's Syndrome* (???)/ yeah.	
J		Yeah.	
C	508	*Do you know* you've done a lot of *research*/ there's a there's a *lot of* thinking *around* erm (.) t-*the spectrum* at the moment/ and em the *words* we use to describe and *diagnoses*/	
C	509	and and I-I think it's (.) like the *world* isn't it?/ We *d-don't* know everything *about* everything, [and (???)	Family, jokes
J	510	Mmm [I mean *I-I*, sorry (.) carry on./	
	511	*My dad*-one of my dad's *friends*' whose erm *ginger*, mum calls him *stunner*	
C		[Laughter]	
J	512	*His son's* got dyspraxia and *he's* very sort of (.)/ it's *actually* he's quite *similar* to me in a lot of *ways*, like *these-these* shoes, *very very* similar when it comes to *this*./ I-it took me *a week* and a *half* m-even *two weeks* to get used to these shoes, *he takes* two or three weeks to get used to his shoes/ it took *me* (.) quite a while to *get used* to them. [sniff]	Making connections with others Jokes
C	513	So is it *good* to find (.) things in *common* with people, like that?	
J	514	*Well yeah* because you can I- *talk* to them about	

	515	it, or talk to his-their *parents* about it/ because *they* talk to each other sometimes about it./ *Erm Stunner's wife* (.)	Can share feelings and help the adults understand
C		[Laughter] (???)	
J	516	[Laughter] No it's what my *mum* calls him, we just *nick*-name him it./ *I don't* think he's a stunner, *I I* think he's er erm just an *ordinary* bloke.	
C	517	[Laughing] But your *mum* likes him.	
J	518	Sh-she quite *likes* him (???)./	Off at a friends tangent, distracted, ordinary people
	519	*We have* a friend that's quite (???) he's quite ver- camp, he's *not* (.) you know	
C	520	Gay?	
J	521	He's *not gay*, but he-he's [quite camp	
C	522	[A *lot of* people are like , a *bit like* that, yeah	
J	523	I'm *not* going to tell you a secret about him, though, *what* he *does,*	
C	524	No you don't *need to* as	
J	525	*He* erm	
C	526	Have we got to the point where we *turn it* off, [yet J? [Laughing]	
J	527	[(???) married women (.)	
C	528	Oh right [laughing]	
J	529	A*nyway* we'll *delete that out*. [laughter] *You know* they *talk* to him and stuff/ and (.) his *wife*, which *is*, of course his *son's* (.) *mum,*	
C	530	Yeah	
J	531	erm (.) erm (.) *know's a lot* about it, (.) she *knows* a lot about dyspraxia, asperger's, well *probably not* (.) *PDA* because probably that's not quite as *common* as asperger's.	Sharing understanding
C	532	(.) *J,* I'm going to have to *stop* you *because* we've got to five past eleven and I think do *people* come in *here* at *break*-breaktimes?	Time constraints
J	533	S-sometimes.	
C	534	So I'm going to have to *switch* it *off.*	
J	535	*Yeah, sure.*	
C	536	Now for the *research…*	

Transcript: Interview with Edward 26th June 2008

Speaker	Line		Macro-analysis
C	1	Er (.) (???) [Background noise] I *noticed* Mrs *D* (.) one day when I came in and I thought '*oh*, (???) *hope* things are alright for *E*' (.).	Me as a person not researcher?
	2	OK I *think* it (1 sec) right let me just *find the* (1 sec) *um* (.) my *notes* (3 secs) [paper shuffling] with *your* name on (2 secs).	Rapport building
	3	*Must* be *hard* you know if *you've* missed the *bus* from *Th*?	
E	4	(???)	
C	5	Have you got *to catch* three buses or some thing to get here or is-is there *one?*	
E	6	It's just the *one* but it takes *hours* (.) and it comes *every* hour (.)	
C	7	Right *so* (.) [if its] you're inevitably *late* then if you, if you miss your *bus?*	
E	8	(???) I wait *an hour* for the next one and (???) *on* the bus, lots of fun.	Moving to the research…my agenda
C	9	[Laughter] *yeah.* (1. sec)	
	10	*Right*, ok, *now*, if you *remember*, I started off last *time*, saying that *some* people would describe you as being on the autistic spectrum *and* (2 secs) I asked the question how would you describe *yourself/* and that's *how* we went on. (.)	
E	11	Yeah	Justifying and controlling the narrative (defending stake)
C	12	And then I *noted down* some of the things you *said,* (1 sec) as we went *along*, (.) *erm* (1 sec)/ and I'm just going to go back to *them* and then see where it *goes.* [audible intake of breath] (1 sec)	
	13	*So*, one of the *things/* that (.) erm (.) *J* said/ that you were nodding in *agreement* at the *time/* (.) was that [it was] school could be *tough*. (1 sec)	(Making E part of this narrative that school could be tough)
E	14	[Yeah	
C	15	[Can you tell me a bit more about *that*?	Others think there is something wrong with you
E	16	*Erm* (2 secs) I think that if *people* think that you have something *wrong* with you, and you act like you go down to *Learning Support* or anything, and you, (???) its something you readily *admit/*	They admit it
	17	and, I don't know *why*, I mean like *plenty* of people go to like Learning *Support or* (.) like	

E		sessions like *these, or,* like sessions with Mr *S* and stuff *so,* I don't know.	**But**, it is true of plenty of people
C	18	Do you choose to *go to* (.) *those* sorts of sessions?	
E	19	Erm (2 secs) Yeah I *choose* to go to the ones with Mr S but I *don't* go to (.) Learning Support.	(What about you, E?)
C	20	So (.) whats...what about the ones with *Mr S*? What do you *get out of* going there?	Choose what I will go to and not go to
E	21	I think (???) the others you can *open up* and he can talk to you and he can *help you*, and stuff/ that are mainly based with *autism*	Because of opening up and autism
C	22	Yeah	
E	23	Like *troubles* with friends and stuff *that* can be associated with autism/ and so *he* can help you *even* if it's not anything to do with autism he can just give you general good advice.	friends and even not anything to do with autism
C	24	Do you think it'd be good *for anyone* to have someone to [*go*...	
E		[Yeah	(Good for everyone?)
C	25	[...to like *that* ?	
E	26	[Definitely	
C	27	That, you *know*/ say 'cos *J*, we talked a lot about erm (.) being the *same* and being *different* and I just thought well ev- if everyone's *different* then everyone will have *some* issues won't they?/	(same and different- normalising)
	28	And will *need* (.) it'd be nice to have someone to *go* to, to *chat* with, *at school* (.)	
E	29	Mmm	Not convinced?
C	30	D'you think there is anything *special*, *or* (1sec) *not* special, that was a *bad word*, anything in *particular* [about] about auti...around *autism* that has made it *tougher?*	(Special is a bad word) (Is autism tougher?)
E	31	Um (3 sec) not that (.) I *don't* think it's(.) had that much of *an impact* on me/ *because* (.) it's not that *obvious* with me that *I have* autism and I *don't* like broadcast to the world that I *have* autism. I don't think its (.) *that* important./ Erm, (1 sec) yeah.	Not obvious I have autism and I don't broadcast it – dis-association – so it is not that important for me
C	32	When we *started,* when you-when we were *talking* and I asked you to start thinking about school as like a *story,* with a *beginning* and you're in the middle of it *somewhere*/	

C	33	and you [*hesitation*] you said 'the *first lie*', *[laughs]* the first lie that er you were *told* by the teachers *was*, (.) it was *about,* (.) Mrs *D* you mentioned,/ I was just *really interested* in the fact that you said the *first* lie, and what you *meant* by *that*.	School and the first lie
E	34	Because *I* think it that like (2 secs) *people* try and *persuade* people to come to *their* school rather than *other* schools where they say *all this*, that its *grand* and magnificent and/ *so* *I* just think that *most* of what is *said* is just *exaggeration*, trying to make people come to *their* school and stuff so *they* get better funding.	E's logic about lies and school – exaggerations
C	35	Are there *other* lies *though*, that you think get *told*, because like I just think that the first *lie*.	
E	36	(.) A *good* example *is* (.) this year when we are choosing our *options* erm (.)/ like French teachers say things like you *need French* to get a (.) good *job* (.) *which* (.) *isn't true* at all I don't think/ because *I* want to go into (.) *business* for *myself/* (.) to be *self employed* as (.) *a electrician*	(Unfinished sentence expecting understand-ing: mirror E, interpretative repertoire)
C	37	*Right*	
E	38	*I* need French? [*laughs*]	
C	39	[*also laughs*] Unless you want to be an electrician in *France*, *maybe*?/ [*more laughing*] Keep your *options* open.	Argument to build point about lies with a question: I need French? School illogical?
	40	Erm (.) in terms of *the* (2 secs), what teachers *say* then, and what sort messages schools *give*, (1 sec) how do you feel about *that*?/ Have things *happened* where you've, where you've felt your diagnosis has (.) *affected* things in any way?	
E	41	Erm (.) *I* don't know *erm* (4 secs)	
C	42	I've asked *lots of* different questions *though*, *all* at the same time, I'll separate it *out* a bit [*laughs*]/ the first bit was about the *things* teachers *say* (.) *how* do you *feel* about the *things* teachers [say?	(diagnosis and feelings – my agenda)
E	43	[Erm (.) *I* think its pretty much the same about *my mum* and stuff, 'cos my *mum* (???) my *sister* as well even/ er they come out with all these *sayings*, (???) but these *old fashioned/* sayings, and I *haven't got a clue* what they're on about (???)/	(Feelings about things teachers say) Them not me: what others

E	44	and *me* and *my (.)* friend called D, who goes to church with me/ (.) er he's (???) he's already *nineteen*, no he's seventeen *and* he's got autism as well/ *and,* we were *talking* in church and my mum was talking to *him* about doing some jobs for us *and* (.) she said something about, er, 'it would not ring *true*', *and* we both went *uh*(???), *both* of us, (???) it was *so* funny we had (???) but it was *just* kind of (.) *yeah*…no.	say (teachers and family) Story (anchoring) to show it is not just me that finds what others say strange and therefore funny – age gives credibility?
C	45	So is *it* (.) is *it, about* stuff like that, idioms and things[like *that*	
E	46	[Yeah	
C	47	Are *they*? You sort of *do* understand what they *mean, but* you puzzle about why other people [*say* them? [laughing]	Social discourse, expecting understanding
E	48	[Yeah (.) *but* yeah	
C	49	Whereas somebody who was er a *bit more* on the *spectrum* might not actually understand what it *meant?*	(Mirroring)
E	50	Yeah	(Reflecting back but constraining or giving? My view of the autistic spectrum?)
C	51	Whereas you, *you're* more (1 sec) what's the point in *saying* it?	
E	52	Yeah	
C	53	Yeah (.) erm/ (1 sec) ok *so*, in terms *of school*, I know you were saying you've had your *ups* and *downs* recently, what's *that* been about?	(Back to school)
E	54	*Er* (.) Because I've been going out with thi-s *girl* for (.) just over a *year*, *and* (.) we *broke up* (.) erm (.) yeah, so [(???)	
C	55	[*Right*, (.) ok, (.) yeah that's *nothing* at all to do with *autism* has it? That's *just* being (.) *relationships.*	Breaking up with my girlfriend
E	56	Yeah	
C	57	And it happens and it's, it's *rubbish* isn't it?	(normalising – nothing to do with autism?)
E	58	Yeah	
C	59	Ok [*quietly*] (2 secs)/	
	60	*but* in terms of *autism* and *relationships* and asperger's *syndrome,* as-and we talked about friends *earlier*, *how* is, (.) how do you feel it might have influenced or *not* influenced, [making friends?	(autism and relationships) Friends
E	61	[Erm, (2 secs) *no*, I mean I *know* people with autism tend not to *have* a lot of friends/ but *I've* been told by quite a few people that *I'm*	I am different to how people with autism should be

E		*actually* quite popular *so*, I don't think it's affected me in that scenario that much.	I am popular and others say so
C	62	And I know that *it's* an issue for *some* young people about sort of [partner], girlfriends and boyfriends and things/ does it (1 sec) *how* has it been for *you*? *Apart from* that you've *just* split *up*, which is bad timing [*laughing*] *but* er	(My agenda but try to repair)
E	63	Well *I tend* to date, when I'm not in *a* (.) *long* relationship I tend to date quite a few girls *so*, I'm *pretty* (.) er I haven't had lots./ (.) Yeah.	What I do as a popular young man (you are an exception?)
C	64	*Because* things have been, *seem* to have been, pretty *straight forward* erm (.) for *you*/ and we've, we've talked about autism and you know, *you've* talked with *Mr S,* and *parents* probably, about the *spectrum*/ *where* would you *see yourself* fitting on *that*?	(the spectrum?)
E	65	Erm well *say* (.)' *ten's* very autistic *and* (.) *zero* was completely (1 sec) *not* autistic [erm	one out of ten for autism, doesn't affect me that much
C	66	[Yeah	
E	67	I would probably say I was *like*, *one* or not very high, I don't think it *actually* affects me *that much*.	
C	68	No (.) *no* and and *yet* you *still* quite *enjoy* going to see Mr *S and…*(???)	some factors do but not that much but do not want to let go of the diagnosis
E	69	Yeah there *are some* factors which *do* affect me/ they're *not,* (1 sec) *I* don't know how to put it, it's *not* (.) a really *strong* affect/ it but it *does* affect me/ (.) if you *get* what I mean.	
C	70	So are you *happy enough* to have the *word*, are you happy enough to *have* the *label* if you *like*?/	
	71	Or would you prefer that *you didn't,* that you didn't need it?	helps me understand who I am
E	72	Erm (.) I don't know, I *think* if I *have* the *label* then (.) it *will* account for *why* I am, *like* I am, with the (???) so *I'd* be *happy* to put labels on groups, (???) so..	
C	73	Because I *was* erm (.) er there was a *psychiatrist* c-er/ I'm doing part of the research at *university*/ and a psychiatrist came in to talk about *diagnosis* and she *explained* that (1 sec)/ *for* some young adults that, (.) who'd had a diagnosis fo-when they were *children*/ that they-were no longer *needed* it as they got *older, and* started *to*,	(Trying to open up another possibility)

C		*you know*, they were coping really *well*/	
	74	and she would say that they didn't *need* to have, that you could *have* it and *then* not *need it* any more, (2 secs) thats…	
E	75	I don't think *that's, quite* logical/ but I *don't* (.) think you can *really*, like, *grow out* of autism, I think it's still going to be *a part* of you, *so…*	Not logical, cannot grow out of it – part of you
C	76	Yeah (.) so *whether you* need it as er (1 sec) you *know*, when they say ASD and Autistic Spectrum *Disorder*	(Disorder? My agenda)
E	77	Yeah	
C	78	Do you feel *that's* an appropriate (.) *term*, for *you*?	Do not want to think of it?
E	79	Er I *don't* think about it *that* much.	
C	80	So it doesn't pop into your *life* that much *really*.	
E	81	No	
C	82	I think what you've *said* is that it helps you have an understanding of some of the things- the *way* you *think* (1 sec)	
E	83	Yeah	
C	84	*so* it's whether you *need* to have *a name* for the *way you* think *or not* isn't it, I suppose, because *everyone* thinks (.) differently.	(do you need a name for it?)
E	85	Yeah, I *think it's*, like what I said earlier, about *people's* different minds needing different *types* of computers, *every* computer has a *brand*, so	
C	86	Yeah but *some* are, maybe some are [*nameless*	
E	87	[Yeah	
C	88	But yours has got a *name*, so, you're like an *Amstrad* or do you pre-*prefer* to be something *else*?	Tolerating my persistence – not E's logic
	89	(.) *Erm,* 'cos *I* was going to ask you how you *understand,* how you *understood* it/ you talked about personality and computers/ and do you *see* it as, as a type of a *personality*, [then, is *that how you see* it, or is it *different* to that?	
E	90	[Yeah (.) I-I *don't* think it's (.) *quite* that cos *just as* we have different personalities, depending on *what's in* us, so do *computers./ I'm a* (.) *computer* geek *so what./*	
	91	*Erm,* yes 'cos *I've* (.) built my *computer*, *and* (.) there *are* some (???) [laughing] does it	Defends stake – able to persist

E		really matter that much?/ *It does,* if you want a decent computer you're going to *have* to have the *decent parts*.	
C	92	mmm	
E	93	*But* (.) *in my* (.) computer at the moment I've got a er (.) *cheap* mother board, but it's a *really* good one *still*.	
C	94	Right	
E	95	*Like* a (.) *budget* mother board, I *mean* I haven't got enough money *but* it is *still really good/ although* the parts are *different* they *still work* practically the *same*.	Metaphor to explain to me – make logic clear and resisting my attempts (asserting power of argument)
C	96	And is *that* sort of an analogy to *people* and, and *autism*?	
E	97	Yeah	
C	98	I think that's a *really good*./ (.) I'll probably *use that*, cos, if *that's* all right with [you?	
E	99	[Yeah fine	
C	100	Yeah./ (2 secs) *Erm* do you think as an *adult*,/ cos you talked about living, as you got *older*/ do you think it will become *less* important?	(Back to my agenda on labels?)
E	101	Erm, (2 secs) I (.) I think it *will* become slightly less important *but*, er I don't have so many (???) ideas *really*, *no*, just if I *work hard* and (.) see if *I get* a *good* qualifications and yeah.	Does not seem to feature in plans
C	102	And set your [*business* up.	
E	103	[Yeah	
C	104	Although it *sounds* as though you've got a lot of skills with *computers.*	
E	105	I've got *quite a few* skills with *computers*, yeah.	
C	106	*So*, (.) lots of options	
E	107	Yeah	
C	108	*Erm* (.) you *mentioned* about *bullying* and *peer pressure* (1 sec) er last time/ I wondered if you could er just talk a bit more *about that*.	
E	109	Erm, well (1 sec) *bullying* because (.)/ you *know*, I'm like a (.) *'mosher'*, type of thing./ *I like* rock music *and* (.) I *dress* in dark clothing and *stuff*, *erm* (.)	(Bullying?) Moshers
C	110	*How* do you *spell* '*mosher*' by the way because I know I'm going to have to *transcribe* this?	(I am separate from these social discourses)
E	111	(???) m, o, s, h (.) e, r	

C	112	Mosher, [*nice*	
E	113	[Yes, *erm*	
C	114	[Yeah, so you were saying about wearing (.) [*dark clothes*	
E	115	[Dark clothes *but*, *I'm* still really (.) *up* beat about everything and (.) you know, yeah/ and *I'm*, *I'm* a *Christian* as *well* so I just love *life*/	To show I am not wholly part of that social discourse
	116	*but* people that don't *know* me (.) just (.) class me as (.) some sort of person that wants to sit in a (.) *dark corner*/ and so *they*, they like *'Ah mosher, Ah'*/	
	117	*that's*(.) like messes my head up really *because*/ (.) if *that's all* they can come up with *really*, and, you know there's *no point*.	The frustration is not what they say but they do not understand my world view?
C	118	mmm	
E	119	*But, like,* my brother gets bullied quite *a lot* because/ (.) they don't know *what* he*'s got*, its like a concoction of *lots of* different *bits* of everything, *dyslexia*, *autism*, *ADHD* and *all that*.	
	120	*He's quite* a violent person well, I said *violent he's*,/ if you *provoke* him then *he'll* like *outburst* and *that's what* other people try and get *out* of him.	My brother, concoction of things, quite a violent person
C	121	Mmm	
E	122	*So,* I *think* that's really *big* for, for *him*.	
C	123	So *how old* is he?	
E	124	*He's* twelve.	Detached but empathy
C	125	So is he in *Year Seven*?	
E	126	Yeah	
C	127	*Right*./ What's his *name*?	
E	128	*M* SC	
C	129	Right, oh, I *don't know of* him (.) I might do *maybe* later [laughing]	
E	130	Yeah	
C	131	*Right* (.) *so* (.) but he *hasn't got* any kind of *diagnosis* of anything?	
E	132	Not *yet*./ *He* goes to *C and* (.) doctors have *tried* to *see* what he *has* and they say he's *got* a *little bit* of *asperger's,*	
C	133	Mmm	
E	134	*But* (.) that's not *all* he's got, they're just trying to find out *what* (.) *everything* he *has* is.	
C	135	*Right*./ Do you think it will be *important* to have *names* for everything?	What people need to help

E	136	Well (.), I *think* in his case it *will* be because like/ with people with ADHD and stuff there *is* the medication they need like *ritolin* or *whatever* and (.) that should help *calm you* down, if you've got *ADHD*/ (???) unless I *get* you some.	
C	137	[*Laughs*]	Making a joke – don't want it to be serious (normalise?)
E	138	But *I think* (.) *it is* important *sometimes* because with the different *things* you kinda need *different types* of medication, *so*	
C	139	And you've said that it bothers *him*, [bull] does he *get* bullied then?	
E	140	Yes.	
C	141	Is *he* a mosher?	
E	142	Er (1 sec) not *really*, he's *sort* of.	
C	143	So, er so it's *not that* he would get bullied for?	
E	144	No *erm*, (.) I don't know why *he gets bullied* mainly, I think its *just* because the *outbursts*,/ every time someone says something *he* doesn't like *erm*/	Interpretive repertoire
	145	*that* and I think people know *he's* (.) *homosexual* [so	Don't know why but it is outbursts and being homosexual – he does this but why should he be bullied??
C	146	[Right	
E	147	[I think people try and bully him *for that* as well.	
C	148	Right (.) he's *only twelve though*, does he *know* he's (???)[*that*?	
E	149	[*What*?/ He tells you he's *bi-sexual* and he's *just*, *like*, split up with his *boyfriend*	
C	150	Does he *need* to be, *what*, does he need to *have* er a label for *that* (.) *yet*?	(I am not convinced) (Is the label needed?)
E	151	I don't *know*/ I just *try* (.) to leave him to one side.	Dis-association
C	152	[*Laughs*] You've got *some*, erm (1 sec) you've got [some understand], some *empathy* for him if as his big *brother*.	Not social repertoire to be totally empathetic towards brother – feelings about him
E	153	Yeah a *little* bit.	
C	154	[*Laughing]* But then you've *got* to be the big brother [haven't you?	
E	155	[Yeah	
C	156	*Erm* (2 secs) it's *interesting* because [the] when you were talking about [peer *pressure*] and *pressure* and *bullies* erm/ (.) there was *nothing* to *do* with the diagnos/ you know, *nothing* to *do with* the aspergers it's more	Things other than autism

C		about being a *mosher*	
E	157	Yeah	
C	158	and what people *might* (.) *think* about (.) *that*, using *that* as a reason./	
C	159	Do you *think* people *want to* put other people *in* categories?	(Categories?)
E	160	*Yeah,* (.) I think they *do*, *I think* pretty much *everyone else* in school erm *have a set group*/ which are like all *goths* and *emo's* and everything and *then* the (.) what's called *chavs* with all like gold *chains* and [(???)	
C	161	[Do they *still* have those?	
E	162	Yeah, er	
C		[*Laughs*]	
E	163	and (.) they just *don't like* each other/ *but I* get *along* with pretty much *everybody* like/ (.) some of the *chavs* I'm *friends with*, some of the *goths* and *moshers* I'm sort of *friends with*,/ so I'm just an *individual* person	I am an individual (person) and I am friends with everybody
C	164	Are there *some people* who *don't*, don't *want to* belong to (.) *any* of them?	
E	165	Oh *loads*, *we hate* being put into *groups* but (.) *because* one side doesn't want to (.) *converse* with the other and says if (1 sec) you don't *like* it	We hate being put into groups
C	166	Yeah	
E	167	It just keep *going,* (.) so	
C	168	Right./ Do you think that's (.) a bit *similar to* (1 sec) putting people in*to* (.) categories of asperger's, dyslexia, ADHD - *that's* similar?	(Similar to diagnoses?)
E	168	I think its *slightly* similar, yeah	
C	170	Or is that just *me*? (.) I'm just thinking, I *know* that this is *my* interpretation of things.	(at last I check this out)
E	171	Yes, but I *think* some people *really don't like having* (2 secs) the *diagnosis* of what they've *got* because it really does put them in a *group*/ and *think* (.) *I'm different* (.) *nobody's* going to, (.) like, (.) *see* that I'm different and they're *going to judge* me for it without actually getting to *know* me, so	People may not like the diagnosis because it puts them in a group and they want people to get to know them
C	172	*Nobody* I've spoken to/ *I thought that*/ but nobody I've *spoken* to has *said* that to me./	
	173	So have you, do you *know of people* that, that *feel* that way? (3 secs) Actually? (1 sec)	(Admit my assumption might be wrong)
E	174	Not *really*/ I *think* (.) *one* person I can think of he's called *D A*/ *he* also sees Mr S/ *and* (.)	

E		*he's* not really *confident* about what people *think* about him.	Anchoring
C	175	Mmm	
E E	176	And (.) like *he does* get bullied a tiny bit I *think/* I don't know I don't *see* him that much around *school/ but* he *doesn't* like it *when (.)* like, people *say* stuff to him like that.	It is about self-confidence
C	177	Yeah	
E	178	But, *then* he does get upset.	
C	179	So he doesn't *like* somebody saying you've *got asperger's syndrome*, he doesn't like *that*?	
E	180	I *think* it's more *like* [*???hesitation*] like '*why* aren't you doing this?' It's not *normal* to be doing this', sort of stuff./	It is not about the asperger's it is when people say it is not **normal** (makes point – triggers, technolig-ization)
	181	Just like (.) by *saying* stuff like *that* and (.) *it* just (.) *triggers* something. And *he, he does* get really *upset* about it.	
C	182	So by saying that he's not *normal*, that he's, he's not the same as anyone *else*?	
E	183	Yes. (3 secs)	
C	184	Can *I*, I mean *I*, from, from what you have been *saying* I get the impression that you quite *like* not being quite the same as everyone else.	
E	185	No (.) I I-like being *unique*, [laughter] because if *everybody* was the *same* then the world would be *grey* and we would just think *grey thoughts* (.) *working* and *working* until we get old and *I*, I (.) don't *like* that (.) idea.	You can choose who you are
C	186	So (.) you must *have* quite a lot of *confidence*	(You like being not the same?)
E	187	Yeah	
C	188	to *feel* that way (???). Did you-have you *always* felt like that or has it been *different*?	
E	189	*I think* I've (1 sec) *felt* like that for (.) quite a *while*, I can't *remember* /(.) a time that I *haven't./*	Being different is part of repertoire
	190	I *honestly* don't like (.) believe in *fate* because I *don't* want, I don't like the idea that *my* life is being *controlled, every step* that I make is *being controlled* and *put down* on paper before I've *made* it,	I do not want to be grey Always been like that
C	191	Yeah.	
E	192	so	Do not want to be controlled, predicted
C	193	So it's about having a *possibility*-having *all* the possibilities open to you aren't they	

C		*without* (.)/ you can *choose*	
E	194	Yeah	
C	195	where it *goes*./	
C	196	I *asked* about (.) when you got the *diagnosis*, did you get *that* choice?/ Were you able *to choose* whether you had it or not	
E		Erm	
C	198	And I *think* y-you were trying *to remember* (.) what *happened*.	
E	199	I *don't* (.) *actually* remember *I*-I *think* my mum just *took* me (.) and, I *don't* even know what I was *doing*./ I don't *even* remember having the *tests*. (.)/ I *must* have been *half asleep* or something, I don't know.	(Choices, back to diagnosis)
C	200	You must have been really *little*, maybe?	
E	201	It was *only* in 2002 [I think.	I must have been half asleep – not that long ago though (mysterious)
C	202	[*Was* it?	
E	03	Yeah	
C	204	*Right*, erm, can you remember getting *told*?	
E	205	Erm (1 sec), *yes*./ *When* I found *out* it was (.) sort of, *just* as (.) my parents were *splitting up*	
C	206	Right	Tied up with other things (family)
E	207	and (.) my *dad* er took me *downstairs* and he's like, to show *me the* (1 sec)/ now *what's* it called [*quiet*]/ *the* er D (.) t-*DLA* forms.	
C	208	Oh *right* [laughs]	
E	209	*And*, he's like *erm* (.) ' Look at *this*, this is what your mum's trying to *do* she's trying to *get* money by saying you're *stupid*'/ and *all* this, and I'm like (.) '*that's* not true at *all*'/ and so I got *really* upset about that *and*/	
	210	it turned *out* that *he* actually might *have* autism (.) *himself* according *to* (.) *people*, so (.) yeah.	It is not true that I am stupid
C	211	Do you *see* your dad?	
E	212	Erm *not* at the moment, (1 sec) I haven't seen him *for* (2 secs) about *three* years.	
C	213	Right	Explanation for dad
E	214	Yeah, so	
C	215	So, you *know*, that's (.) *stuff* that's happening as *well*, yeah.	
E	216	Well, I *don't really* want to see him if he doesn't want to see *us*/ and if-if he's not *even* going to *try* making *contact*, then, (.) you know.	Strong emotions and big decisions, control, hurt

C	217	The, [breaths audibly] (2 secs) has anyone *else* ever said *that* as *well*/ sort of equated it with (.) being *stupid* or?	
E	218	No	
C	219	or is that just from your *dad*?	
E	220	Yeah	
C	221	'Cos erm (.) I've said- I *think* I've said that my *son's* got a diagnosis of asperger's syndrome but his younger *brother* (.) *doesn't quite* get it	(What E said touched me, introducing my issue)
E	222	Yeah	
C	223	And I think *he* will say things like *that* sometimes, 'Oh it *just* means he's *a bit something*' and *I* have to really *explain*/ I think it's quite *hard* sometimes. [laughs]	
E	224	[Laughs] *That's* what my *brother's* like	
C	225	[laughs] It's *hard* isn't it when there (2 secs) it, it a *younger* person to, to *explain,* 'it's not as, no that's not, it's not *like that* it's like *this*' and	
E	226	Yeah (.) er I *know* what you *mean*, because my *bother* (.) *he's, like*/ I can't remember *anything* he says now/ but erm (.) *if* we're having an *argument* or something then (.) *he'll* just *s-start* *o-on* at me saying '*ah* go back to school and *see* Mr S' and stuff, *you* know./	Connection, how what brother says can hurt (Theory of mind)
	227	I don't think he *fully* understands so, (.) *he's* not (2 secs) I don't know (.) *yeah*.	
C	228	Is it *hard* do, you think, for him to *understand*,/ he's not at a *level*, he's not at *a* (.) *time* when he *can* understand it *yet*?	Repair, trying not to categorise
E	229	Yes I think that's *right*	(friends?)
C	230	Do you your *friends* understand it?	
E	231	Erm (.) not *really* I've tried to *explain* but I'm not (.) the *best* person of all / don't think because I *don't know* anything *about* it.	I don't know anything about it – tried to explain to friends
C	232	Do you *think* they *ever would*, though?/ Do you *think* (.) *anyone* can really understand it?	
E	233	(4 secs) Mm erm (2 secs) I *know* there is a lot about it on the *internet* and stuff and so people *have* (.) *gone* in depth, *really hard* to try and (.) understand and *explain* (.) what they *find* (.)/ erm (.) and I know *people* will *always* be finding new things about (.) *everything*, so I don't think *anybody*'s every going to (.) be able to (.) *fully* understand	Lot on internet but people always finding out new things – nobody understands anything about

E		*anything* really.	anything (world view)
C	234	And it sounds as though *you haven't* (.) *bothered* really to *do that* much.	
E	235	I'm not bothered *really*.	I am not bothered about researching
C	236	(2 secs) It's *interesting*, because it's (.) really different to *J*, who *has* done *loads* an- *you know very* different approaches.	
E	237	Yeah	
C	238	*to* it./ D-d'you *think* erm, (.) do *you* have a sort *of empathy* for *others* that have got the *diagnosis*, *sort of* (.) *when*, (.)/ maybe, when they get into *situations* do *you*/ (.) how do you feel about *that*?/	
	239	'Cos I know *you don't*, *that* much I don't *think*, [but	
E	240	[No I *don't* tend to./ I *do feel* (.) *really* (.) *sorry* for people and stuff *when* they *are* in bad situations *and*/ (.)	Understand empathy and that others get into situations
	241	I *don't* think he's got autism but there was this *lad* (.) who (.) my *brother* (.) *beat up*, for *no* reason and he's been excluded for about *three* days for it.	
C	242	Your *brother* has?	
E	243	Yeah	
C	244	*Has* he?	
E	245	He's back in *school* [now	
C	246	[Right	
E	247	[but erm (.) I felt really *sorry* for him because people *were (.)* just going *up* to him and (.) *like*, trying to carry it *on*, after my brother had been *excluded* (.)/ *and* I *just* don't think it's right (.) there's (.) *everyones* got a lot on [their plate (???)	Can see what others do to hurt others and what happens to brother (analysis of situations)
C	248	[Mmm	
E	249	There's *no need* for stuff like that at *all*.	
C	250	So they'd (.) carry it on with *you* about your *brother* or they'd carry on with your *brother*?/ Or carry on with the person who got *beaten up*?	
E	251	Carry on with the person who got *beat up*./ You know like *try* and like (4 secs) make him (2 secs) make him really *upset* and stuff and it's like '*ah* you got *beat up*'	
C	252	[Right	
E	253	[and *just* being really horrible.	
C	254	Yeah, yeah (.)./ Do you *think* (.) you've said	

C		people *provoke* your brother/ do you think he gets *led into* these kinds of situations, people like it [for entertainment?	
E	255	[Yeah./	
	256	I think *people* (.) *do* think it's quite funny when he goes on *outbursts*, *like/* I can't remember what *happened* now, *but* (.) a	Narrative anchoring
	257	couple of *months* back erm (1 sec) he went on a *real* outburst *and* he went-and-went and he *got his* bag and he tried to walk out of *school/ and* I (.) *had* to make a decision *between* (1 sec) er *patching* things up (.) with my *girlfriend* at that time *and* going and helping *him* and *stopping* him from going out of school/ because he would (.) get into a lot of trouble *for it* (.)/ *and* I ended *up* (.) making that *split* decision and (.) going and *stopping him* from (.) *going* out of school *and/*	
	258	that, *that* didn't go down very well with the other *half* [laughs] but *erm* (2 secs)	Humour about his choice
	259	I *think* people do *dislike* it when he gets *angry*	
C	260	Mmm	
E	261	but *some* things *he* (.) *just* does by himself/ like when he beat *up* this *kid* it was because my brother went *out* with this person called *Sophie* and (.) er *he* dumped *her* and (.) then *she* went out with this person who he beat *up* [and	Analysing why people do things and their motivation
C	262	[So	
E	263	[so my brother had just started going out with this *lad* so he was trying to *act* big and hard in front of *him* and *then* (.) *also* (.) *try and*, like (.) *hurt* Sophie, so [laughs]	
C	264	[Laughing] *Right*, it all sounds pretty *complicated* to *me*, your brother's *world*, sounds pretty complicated.	
	265	*Erm* (2 secs) I – I'd just got *down*, *teachers* again (.) because I'm *thinking* that sometimes you *do* get into bother, *yourself,* occasionally.	(Back to school)
E	266	Yeah	
C	267	Is that *anything* do you *think* to *do* with the (.) *asperger's* or not?	Most things are not to do with asperger's – part of social repertoire
E	268	Erm, (.) *don't think* it is/ it, I *mainly* get in *trouble for* er (.) *like* (.) *having* my *phone* on in lessons or something/ (.) *erm* [laughs]/ but	

E		*some* things I think are *slightly* reli-related to *autism* (.) *like* being *late* and (.) *disorganised* so.	Other things are (a reason) slightly
C	269	Tell me what *happens* (.) how does it *work* then, *that*, be-because you're kind of *aware* of it as *well*	
E	270	*Erm* (.) I don't *know*, *I (.)* I'm *just* not a *very*	
	271	organised *person/* so I end *up* (.) *not* having anything ready in the *morning* (.) which means I have to do it *all* in the morning in the *short* space of time that I've *got* (.)/ *erm* (.) yeah*, so* I mean *woolly*. [laughs]	Woolly – endearing term
C	272	Right./ *Some* (.) [p-er I was] a-a group of *parents* were talking yesterday (.)/ I think *I-I* your *mum* knew about it but I don't think she could *make* it (.)/ *erm* (1 sec) a-and they were saying that *some* people would *say* (.) '*well*, they are using it as an *excuse'* / to explain (.) *why* cer-certain-you know, why they're *naughty*, that when they're younger kids for w-*why* things *go wrong*.	
	273	So, *you've* sort of got an [a], it's *interesting, I* think/ you've got an *awareness* of the fact that you can be *disorganised*, so *it's hard* to be *organised* (.) but and y-you *tend* to leave things til *morning* to get *sorted*, but then you *know that*, but you	(I am questioning)
E	274	Yeah [laughs]./ But at *nights* and stuff I usually have a *lot on*, so I usually just go to *straight to bed* afterwards/ *'cos* erm I *have* Explorers *on Tuesdays*, actually I've got *band* on a Monday, Explorers on *Tuesday*, Wednesday is actually a *free night*, and (.) on *Thursday* I have a *church youth group*	Reasons why I can't change, (anchoring)
C	275	Right	
E	276	Er *Fridays I* dog-sit er and that *basically means* I sit (.) and *watch TV* and (???) *erm* so you *know*, its *pretty* (.) disorganised.	
C	277	*Yeah*, er it *sounds* as though *you know* what you are doing on *each night*	
E	278	Oh *yeah*	
C	279	*but* you *could* make a *change* don't you *think?/ Yourself*, because you're *aware*, it's not *like* y-you don't *realise* that you're being disorganised. (.)/ Do you quite *like* having that approach?	

E	280	Erm (.) er I *think* I would like things to be *more organised* but I *don't* have time to (.) put *plan* into *action.*	Resists me saying he likes being disorganised
C	281	Right erm	
E	282	You know	
C	283	So (.) y-i-its *about* (.) being able to do something *about* it that you're finding (.) *hard* , you *know* it's happening./	
	284	(.) If somebody came *along* and, and sat *down* with you and sorted a (.) *plan* of how to be more *organised*, though, how would *you* feel about it?	(Accepting help?)
E	285	Erm (.) I don't *know* I *think* (.) that it would (.) *sort of* (.) work but (.) it *wouldn't,* in the end/ because (.) it would be changing my *routine* which I've now got *into, and,* so.	wouldn't work because my routine would change (moulded) – is this a choice? Self-justifies
C	286	Ah, so *that's why*, *yeah*, that's *interesting* though, isn't it/ so y-you *yeah, know* it's happening but you like the routine [you've *got*	
E	287	[Actually it's *moulded* into me.	
C	288	Yeah./ So, do you *like* things to be the *same*?	
E	289	Yes	
C	290	Pretty *much.*	
E	291	I mean I don't *mind* (.) small *amounts* of *change* but (.) if it's a *big thing* like *getting up* an hour earlier *or*	
C	292	To *help you* be more [organised?	
E	293	[Yeah	
C	294	But it could become a new routine *eventually* but you'd not *like it*?	
E	295	Yeah	
C	295	(.) Yeah, (.)/ *and*, and I *wonder how* different that *is* really from *most* of us (.) you *know*/ ah I *know* that *I* (.) *like* my morning routine and I quite like it to be *as it is*/ and I get quite (.) *anxious* and *worked up* if somebody said 'no you've got to *do it'* [intake of breath] 'you've got to get dressed before you have your *breakfast*' 'cos [laughing] I like to have my *breakfast* before I get *dressed*, you *know*	(Normalise?)
E	296	Yeah	
C	297	I wonder *how* different that *is* to most *people?*	
E	298	(3 secs) I don't know *really*, I just think its (???) [*quietly*]	Wants it to be different?
C	299	It *could do*, do you think [y] (.) because your *mum* will have *her routine* as well, won't she/	

C		what *she does*, do you think she'd *get*, how, *how* do you think she'd *react* if somebody said she'd got to do it differently?	
E	300	Erm (3 secs) [sigh] I don't *know* (.) *erm/* well, if any one *dared* walk into our house in a morning and said that *she'd* (.) *like* (2 secs) erm I don't know, *have* to go to *work* an hour *earlier* or something/ (.) *then* that would cause *absolute chaos* (.) *because* (.) erm my sister that's in the *wheelchair*	
C	301	Right, [I didn't *realise* that E	Why family routine is important
E	302	*She has* to be put on (.) the *bus* at nine o *clock* (.)/ so *she has* to *get* (.) to *work* an hour *earlier* then *she'd* have to go at nine o'clock as *well*, as well as getting all *her business* stuff ready (.) for *straight after* work	
C	303	*and*, so (.)	
E	304	*No* (.) yeah/ I *wouldn't* (.) mess with her in a *morning,* so [laughs]	
C	305	[laughs] Yes (.) so erm I was just *thinking*, you know/ it (.) *maybe*, *you* like your *routine*, that maybe that's what *most* people like their routines *as well*, and/ and *tinkering about* with *routines* to get (.) to address something *else* is not easy for *anyone*, I don't think	
E	306	Yeah	
C	307	but you *do* know that you're a bit *disorganised* s-so th- the *thing* that you're putting down to the *asperger's*, is (.) its *hard* to *separate it* from what *anyone* would find *difficult*.	(I find it hard to separate from non-asd issues)
	308	*Erm* (.) do you *think teachers* (.) *understand* (.) about it?	(do teachers understand?)
E	309	I don't know whether *they* (.) *understand* or not but (.)/ only a *couple* of teachers actually *know* I have autism (.) er (.) at the *moment* / *but I'm* (.) being *put on the* SEN register, you know what that is?	wanting teachers to know (didn't before) – SEN register – to help me be more organised
C	310	The S-E-N, r yeah	
E	311	Yeah er so, I *think* (.) they'll *then* know and (.) like try and *help* me to be more *organised, like/* if I *had* (.) er *Food Technology* (.) they *would make* sure that I *have* it *written* down in my planner that I need to *bring* in food and stuff (.)/ *and* (.) *they'll, like,* make a *point* of	

E		mm(.) like making *sure* that (.) the *day* before that I'd *remembered*, so.	
C	312	So we-were you *not on* the SEN register, have you just been put *on* it [or have you	
E	313	[No I-Ive *not* actually been put on *yet*, but that's one of the things I'm doing with Mr *Swain*	
C	314	[Right	
E	315	[*filling* out the (.) *details*	
C	316	[So that you can go *on*to it/ are *you* happy about that *happening*?	need teachers to know so they can give help
E	316	Erm, yes(.) I think it should help be more *organised* for (.) *lessons.*	
C	317	Is *that* why you've got into trouble quite a *lot* because you've *forgotten* [things?	
E	318	[Yes [*quiet*]	
C	319	[*Punctuality* and th-th-*things* around *that*?/	
	320	In terms of erm *learning*, have you found it's affected (.) [t] erm [n] your u-*understanding* of (.) in any *way* (2 secs) in different *subjects*?	
E	321	Erm (.) er I *don't,* (1 sec) I think I *cope* the same as *anybody* would (.) in the *lessons*, so/ *erm* (.) I've been told that I *am* quiet *bright*, and I *do* (.) *contribute* to lessons, so	Same as anybody Have been told I am bright
C	322	*I* would say that you *see-* (.) *just* (.) *just through* conversation with you I would [see] (.) think that you seem *very bright,* (.) *you* know/ er so I think that's probably a *good* assessment./	
	323	What about *relationships* with teachers?/ I was just *thinking* about (.) this little *glimpse* of *you* that I *saw* when you, you were in that, in that *office* over *there*, erm you know the as you come *in*, the one with the *glass*?/ I don't know what you were doing in *there*, with Mrs *D.*	
E	324	(2 secs) Don't know. [quiet]	
C	325	But she *seemed* [laughing] as though she was really *cross* with you and I thought, *'ooh'* (.) I was really *surprised.*	
E	325	Erm (2 secs) I *don't think* Mrs D likes me that *much* 'cos (1 sec) I *have* got *in* (.) like (.) a *lot* of *bother* (.) with (.) my *girlfriend* (.)/ cos like if *she* (.) has an *argument* with someone *I-I'll* get dragged *into* it,	Normalising – more about my girlfriend
C	326	[*Ah*	

E	327	[and so, *yes*	
C	328	Right, so, *that* sort of thing happening which has got (.) *nothing* at *all* to do *with* (.) asperger's, *has* it? [Laughing]	(I concur)
E	329	[Laughing] No	
C C	330	[Sigh] Well, (.) is there *anything else* you can think of around *school* or *as-perger's syndrome* or the *fact* that I'm doing this *research* and (.)/ that you think (.) is *important*? [*quiet*]	
E	331	(2 secs) Erm (.) I don't know [*quiet*] *er* [2 secs]	
C	332	Or any *questions* you've got.	
E	333	(5 secs) Er (6 secs) I don't think there *is*.	
C	334	I'm going to turn the (.) *tape* off I think *erm*./ You've been *great,* E because it's a very different *perspective* to *some* in *fact*/ the *three* of *you* (.) that I've interviewed *here* (.) just *really, really* different and I think these *differences* are, *might* be *bigger*, but there *are* the similarities as *well* (.)/ but maybe that's *us* as human beings *too*./	(My view but I do try to justify)
	335	(.) *Erm,* (.) what I'll *do* is *my interpretation*, (.) I'll put it *together*, (.) look at my *interpretation* of it/ (.) let *you* and *J* and *B* have a sort of *summary* I think just, I think the *whole thing*, it's up to *you* it's *available* for you (.) *erm*, but I'll do a sort of *summary*/ and you can *disagree* with me and then I'll *change* it (.) if you think that I've got it *wrong* or you disagree with the *way* that *I've* seen things/ *erm* and then that'll, that'll become a *thesis*./	(My interpretation) (Giving choices)
	336	It's *possible* that (.) w-what *will* happen is that your, sort of I'll take *quotes,* (.) *things* that *you* and *J* and *B* have *said* (.)/ that'll go *also* t-towards a *paper* that might be in a *book* (2 secs)/ and *that's* when you'll *need* to think *as well* about whether you want, do you *want* your *name*, do you want to be *acknowledged* as or-or *not*, do you want to be *anonymous* and, and/ that's *fine* 'cos *I* (.) we'll *have* that conversation next *year* some time (.) when it gets to that *stage*./ Is that *alright*? And then you've got time, you'll have *time* to *think* about it./	
	337	It's *not* as *though* all your *friends* are going to	(Patronising?)

		read [laughing] *my thesis* or an academic *paper/* but it's whether you *want* to have your *name* associated with it or *not* or for *it* to go in anonymously (.)/ so you *don't* need to (.) say *now* (.) you can be *thinking* about it.	(Don't want you to say now?)