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THE EXPERIENCE of SCHOOL BELONGING: AN

INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

By

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Vincent and my daughter Cheri for their constant support and understanding, patience and love throughout this doctorate. The 'extra presence' of the research in our marriage may not be sadly missed!

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Abstract

This thesis explored the lived experience of 'belongingness' with three boys identified with persistent literacy difficulties in mainstream education. Belongingness has been described as a fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and this research takes a multiple perspective on the construct. Belongingness in school has been linked to many positive psychological and academic outcomes (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Osterman, 2000), and also to many negative psychological, academic, and behavioural outcomes (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Lee & Breen, 2007; Sargent *et al.* 2002). Thus a strong sense of belongingness may be especially important for pupils with literacy difficulties (Solomon *et al.* 1997). This study addressed the gap in the empirical research field, seeking to understand the 'lived experience' of belongingness in school.

Data was collected from three semi-structured interviews and discussion during the drawing tasks, and the findings were analysed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996) Five super-ordinate themes were identified along with accompanying sub-themes; 1. 'interpersonal relationships', 2. 'teacher practices', 3. 'emotional equilibrium', 4. 'physical illness', and 5. 'self-exclusion and disengagement'. Descriptions are presented with corresponding subordinate themes. Physical illness emerged as an unexpected master theme, and the 'importance of personal leisure time' as a sub-theme to the 'emotional equilibrium' master theme, both as yet unexplored in the belongingness domain.

Although the boys' experiences of belongingness had similarities, there were also very clear differences in their accounts. These results are discussed with relevance to previous literature, and the epistemological stance of the study. The implications are discussed and recommendations for researchers and professionals in the education field are outlined. An action plan for the site school is provided. The study provided a valuable insight into the personal experience of belonging, and makes an original contribution to the body of knowledge in this area.

You will be walking some night . . .

It will be clear to you suddenly

that you were about to escape,

and that you are guilty: you misread

the complex instructions, you are not

a member, you lost your card

or never had one . . .

(Berry, 1999)

1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

Children spend a significant amount of their time in school, and their experiences in school may impact on their social and academic development, and their psychological well being (Gutman & Feinstein, 2008). Are children happy in a school where they do not feel they belong? Is this powerful psychological concept important in school? School belongingness has become a focus for researchers and educators as studies show its critical importance in pupils' lives. Current research indicates that a sense of belonging (SOB) at school can have multiple effects on pupil development, including physical and emotional well-being, attitude to self, school and others, engagement, drop out and participation, and academic achievement (Osterman, 2000).

Researchers have studied the concept of school belongingness (Goodenow, 1992; Ma, 2003; Osterman, 2000) under a variety of terms such as school relatedness, school connectedness (McGraw *et al.* 2008; Rowe & Stewart, 2011), engagement (Fredericks *et al*. 2004; MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001; Taylor & Nelms, 2006), school attachment, school bonding (Catalano *et al.* 2004), and teacher support (Klem & Connell, 2004; Ma, 2003, Reddy *et al.* 2003). Some are sharing constructs or part of a construct.

Much of the literature reviewed is framed using a deficit lens, as many of the studies to date embrace the term 'at risk' for students' academic, social, emotional, and psychological outcomes. Belongingness has been described as a basic human need (Adler, 1939; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ferguson, 1989; Maslow, 1962), although the need may vary in form and intensity. A sense of belonging was thought to be one of five very important needs in Maslow's (1962) 'hierarchy of needs'. According to Maslow (1943), the extent one feels accepted, respected, included, and supported (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) is considered important throughout the lifespan. Empirical research supports the importance of social relationships, suggesting that infants are driven by a need to communicate from an early age (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001). Brain imaging studies suggest that we are 'hardwired' to connect with others; belongingness experiences stimulating the reward mechanisms in the brain (Crowley *et al.* in press). We may experience physical pain through rejection and ostracism (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Being accepted and included can lead to positive emotions such as 'happiness, elation, contentment, and calm' (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009, p.1).

The concept has been defined and described in a variety of ways in the literature; all aiming to encapsulate children's feelings about belonging to their school. Belonging is a broad concept and has been defined as: 'a pervasive drive to form and maintain a minimum quantity of lasting, positive and significant interpersonal relationships' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.497); being included, accepted, and supported by other persons in the school environment (Goodenow, 1993); identification, representing attachments and bonding between an individual and an institution (Voelkl, 1997); 'an internal sense of importance to the school' (Finn, 1989, p.49), and is unique to each individual and deeply personal. The term belongingness is used interchangeably in the present research with a variety of terms, including connectedness, relatedness, and sense of belonging. The position maintained in this dissertation sees the experience of belongingness as unique to each individual, deeply personal and dependent on the context within which the experience occurs.

A sense of belonging (SOB) may be particularly relevant to children with special educational needs (SEN) because although they are included in mainstream classrooms, these children are reported to lack integration in class with their peers (Chamberlain *et al.* 2007; Hall & McGregor, 2000; Hoza *et al*. 2005; Kuhne & Wiener, 2000). In conducting the literature search for this study no research was identified investigating sense of belongingness with children with specific literacy difficulties, but many studies link dyslexia to negative social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Riddick, 1996; Thomson, 1990). Riddick (1996) provided evidence that children with dyslexic difficulties had low self-esteem. Some empirical studies note correlations between low self-esteem and academic failure (Humphrey & Mullins, 2002). Of particular importance to this study are the findings of Thomson (1990) in which the mainstream environment was cited as a contributory factor to low self-esteem and sense of failure in children with literacy difficulties.

Boys are the focus for this study. Research reported boys were less likely to experience a positive SOB in schools than girls (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). In their study 37% of 212 and 28% of 404 pupils reported a lack of any reciprocated friendships. For boys, reciprocated friendship was related negatively to antisocial behaviour, and also predicted academic achievement (GPA scores). In the same study, girls had higher peer acceptance ratings, and significantly more and better friends. Damon and Phelps (1989) provided further evidence of the importance of belongingness for boys, reporting

significantly more negative relationships with classmates. It has also been reported by several researchers that boys often have less satisfying relationships, more conflict, and less closeness with their teachers (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Goodenow, 1993; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Silver *et al.* 2005), and lower levels of identification with school (Voelkl, 1995).

Boys are more likely to be diagnosed with dyslexia than girls (Rutter *et al.* 2004), and there is also evidence of association with other developmental disorders (Dirks *et al.* 2008; Haslum & Miles, 2007; Pennington & Bishop, 2009); placing these learners at risk of negative social, emotional and academic outcomes (Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Riddick, 1996).

1.1   Context of research

Special Educational Needs (SEN) has been highlighted in British education policy since the early 1970s (Alcott, 2004). Children in the UK have the right to be educated in special or mainstream schools at present (Coates & Vickerman, 2008). Since 1997 the Labour Government has promoted inclusive education, and it has continued to be on the political agenda. This is currently being reviewed under the new Liberal-Conservative coalition government.

Since 2001 the UK government has recognised schools' responsibility in promoting mental health and well being through the Green paper, 'Every Child Matters; Change for Children' (DfES, 2004), and initiatives such as: 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL) programme (DfES, 2007); 'Developing emotional health and wellbeing; a whole-school approach to improving behaviour and attendance' (DfES,2005), and the 'National Healthy Schools Programme' (DoH & DfES, 2005). The Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TAMHS; DCSF, 2008), a three-year programme that supports the development of innovative models of mental health support in schools also highlights positive pupil relationships.

School belongingness is one of the stated aims of SEAL (DfES, 2007). Ofsted (2005) also produced a report called 'Healthy Minds; 'Promoting emotional health and well-being in schools', in which they expressed concerns about staff training and how effective schools were in this area. The Future of Mental Health: a Vision for 2015 (*SCMH*, 2006),

states that mental wellbeing should be promoted in all schools by 2015, highlighting the emphasis on pupil mental health wellbeing.

Although government legislation on inclusion may be changing, school belongingness is a useful tool to enhance inclusion, community cohesion, and wellbeing of all in the community (DCSF, 2008; DfES, 2001; DfES, 2004). Current research indicates that the experience of belongingness in school could be one of the most important factors influencing school related outcomes (Anderman, 2003; Bond *et al.* 2007; McGraw *et al.* 2008). Theoretically, belongingness has been associated with both positive and negative outcomes. School belongingness is often highlighted in the literature as a protective factor that promotes mental health wellbeing and educational outcomes (Pittman & Richmond, 2007; Shochet *et al.* 2006), whilst a lack of belongingness can result in negative academic, social and emotional outcomes (Appleton *et al.* 2006; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Eccles *et al.* 1993).

1.2   Statement of the Problem

Existing research suggests belongingness is a key factor in academic, psychological, behavioural, and social outcomes, (Bond *et al.* 2007; Goodenow, 1993; McGraw *et al.* 2008; Voelkl, 1997).

A vast amount of quantitative research has been conducted on pupils' sense of belonging related to academic outcomes in America (Goodenow, 1993, Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Voelkl, 1997), however very little has been explored in regard to schools in the United Kingdom apart from some recent quantitative studies by Frederickson & Petrides, (in press), and McLellan and Morgan (2008). The research to date does not examine the lived experience of belongingness, and specifically none relating to boys. I feel there has been little opportunity for children to express their experience, understandings, perceptions and views, although there is a range of qualitative studies (Barber & Olsen, 2004; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005; Rowe & Stewart, 2011; Wentzel & Looney, 2006), these studies use scales and factor analysis rather than eliciting experiential stories from the pupils. The meanings co-constructed will increase our understanding of the belongingness construct.

1.3   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research project sought to explore and understand the lived experience of belonging or not belonging for three boys with literacy difficulties (aged eight to ten) at their mainstream school. Implications for the school will be inferred from the analysis of data, and an action plan will be formulated from this and shared with the school. It was agreed with the site school head teacher prior to the study that the action plan would be discussed in a staff meeting and added to the School Development Plan, if after discussion and adaptation, staff agreed.

1.4   Research Question

As a result of the review of the literature and the rationale, the following research question is proposed:

1. How do these three boys with literacy difficulties experience belonging or not belonging at their school?

1.5   Operational Definitions

Belongingness: A pervasive drive to form and maintain a minimum quantity of lasting, positive and significant interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.497), being 'included, accepted, and supported by other persons in the school environment' (Goodenow, 1993, p.80), identification, representing 'attachments and bonding between an individual and an institution' (Voelkl, 1995, p.49), and 'an internal sense of importance to the school' (Finn, 1989, p.49) described as 'indiscernibly part of the school environment' .

Mental Health/Mental Well-Being: Commonly defined as 'the ability to develop psychologically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually' as well as the ability to, 'initiate, develop and sustain mutually satisfying relationships, use and enjoy solitude, become aware of others and empathise with them, play and learn, develop a sense of right and wrong and to face and resolve problems and setbacks satisfactorily and learn from them' (Edwards 2003, p.5).

SpLD, literacy/dyslexic type difficulties: For this study the following definition will be used: prolonged difficulties with reading and/or writing, designated SpLD on the school SEN register, accessing one to two hours or more per week of group and/or individual interventions.

1.6   Organisation of Study

The study is presented in four chapters. Chapter one and two contain an introduction to the study whereby the reader is provided with the context, remit, and rationale behind the research. A critical review of the pertinent literature is also presented. This includes a discussion of how 'belongingness' has been conceptualised in the literature, its theoretical background, and examines recent studies in the field.

Chapter three describes the methodology used, including an overview of IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008), moving the reader very quickly on from the proliferation of quantitative studies published in this field to a qualitative consideration of 'lived experience' of school belongingness for three boys with literacy difficulties. Chapter 4 presents the results and analysis written firstly in a descriptive format moving towards the researcher's interpretations in the analysis. The analysis and discussion is presented in tandem for coherence for the reader. The final chapter discusses the limitations, recommendations, and presents the action plan and suggestions for topics for future research. Final reflections on the project are also included.

1.7   Significance of Study

This study contributes to the literature that exists concerning belongingness in our schools, in particular with respect to the lack of qualitative literature that exists regarding UK mainstream junior schools. The belongingness of boys with literacy difficulties is a phenomenon that is to date unexplored qualitatively, and a preliminary review of the literature suggests the voice of the pupil in this area is almost silent. Most studies to date are quantitative in nature and measure belongingness and related factors that are considered contributory. This study opens the door to scholarly discussion of pupil perceptions, and the increasingly important role that schools have to play in facilitating and promoting belongingness.

This study has attempted to explore the lived experience of belonging or not belonging at school for three boys with literacy difficulties, and aims to infer implications for the site school that enhance belongingness. The study also contributes to the site school's interpretation of inclusion, and may impact on their policies and practice regarding these three individual children, and possibly other children with similar difficulties in the site school.

The contribution has great relevance for educators as belongingness is linked to many positive psychological and academic outcomes (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Osterman, 2000), and a sense of not belonging has been linked to many negative psychological, academic, and behavioural outcomes (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bond *et al.* 2007; Lee & Breen, 2007; Resnick *et al.* 1997; Sargent *et al.* 2002).

2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: SCHOOL BELONGING

Defining 'belonging'

> *From everything that has been said, it can be seen how important it is to help children build their individual identities and, at the same time to find a sense of belonging. To be and to belong: these become one in defining growth (Galardini & Giovannini, 2001, p. 105).*

Belonging has been described a fundamental human need (Adler, 1939; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ferguson, 1989; Libbey, 2004; Maslow, 1970). It has been defined in a variety of ways in the literature, all aiming to capture children's feelings about sense of belonging in school. Sense of Belonging (SOB) is a broad concept and has been defined as 'a pervasive drive to form and maintain a minimum quantity of lasting, positive and significant interpersonal relationships' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.497), 'being included, accepted, and supported by other persons in the school environment' (Goodenow, 1993, p.80), identification, 'representing attachments and bonding between an individual and an institution' (Voelkl, 1995, p.49), and 'an internal sense of importance to the school' (Finn, 1989, p.49).

Belonging has also been described as 'representing active engagement and an internal experience of a strong psychological connection to a group' (Baskin *et al.* 2010, p.629). Various terms are used in the literature: 'belongingness, relatedness, connectedness, sense of community, classroom membership, and support and acceptance' (Osterman, 2000, p.343). Belonging is the most commonly used term (Anderman, 2003).

2.1 Theoretical frameworks

The concept of belongingness operates across several different theoretical paradigms and as such, requires the integration of a range of theoretical frameworks. The most influential theories in the belongingness field are the 'belongingness hypothesis' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), 'attachment theory' (Bowlby, 1969, 1973), and 'self determination theory' (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Similarities exist between these theories; they propose that satisfaction in belongingness may result in positive social, behavioural, and psychological outcomes, and is a fundamental need.

2.1.1 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is particularly pertinent to this study (Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1980). Bowlby noted the applicability of attachment theory to the school setting, as other caregivers such as teachers can impact on a child's ability to establish healthy connections with adults. Supportive relationships are key to belonging, as attachment theory suggests that we all need social interaction from individuals in which an attachment based on trust has formed (Bowlby, 1969, 1988). Belongingness research draws from attachment theory to define the process of bonding between a child and important others; in this research, between a pupil and adult staff and peers in school.

Attachment theory provides a model for how children form social relationships with others (Ainsworth *et al.* 1978, Bowlby, 1973) and as such, is a very useful model to apply to relationships in school. The affective relationship a teacher may have with a pupil, as well as relationship quality, depend on individual (attachment style, cognition, attention, personality, motivation, attribution style, self esteem) of both the teacher and pupil, and contextual factors such as emotional climate, teaching resources, school ethos etc, which then influence the pupil–teacher relationship (Pianta, 1999). The relationship between a pupil and teacher can be considered *in loco parentis* (Ainsworth, 1989; Watson & Ecken, 2003), and is therefore a good framework to apply in schools.

Research on pupil-teacher attachment has highlighted the importance of adult relationships as an important contributor to school belonging that enhances pupils' school experiences (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; LaRusso *et al.* 2008; McNeely, 2005; Ozer *et al.* 2008; Roeser *et al.* 1996). Positive relationships with teachers have been associated with a greater SOB (Furrer & Skinner, 2003) improved peer relationships (Liew *et al.* 2010), and higher academic achievement (Crosnoe *et al.* 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Ladd *et al.* 1999; Skinner *et al.* 1998). These studies all point to the relevance of attachment theory when exploring belonging in schools.

Attachment literature has suggested that regardless of a child's attachment experiences at home, positive relationships can be fostered through staff and peer relationships in a school setting (Siegel & Hartzell, 2004). Many studies have highlighted the significance of attachments in school for positive child development (Bombèr, 2008; Geddes, 2006). Attachment theory suggests that in psychological distress (i.e. sadness, frustration, anxiety) individuals may seek support through an attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969;

Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). School can be a stressful environment for many pupils in which a 'significant' adult may have a very important emotional role. Watson and Ecken (2003) proposed pupil-teacher relationships act as a positive attachment model for peer relationships. Attachment theory differs from the 'belongingness hypothesis' in that it emphasises emotional needs within the relationships.

2.1.2 The Belongingness Hypothesis

The belongingness theory purports that human beings possess a drive to 'form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting positive and significant interpersonal relationships' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.497). The difference to attachment theory is marked by the 'focus on a commonality of overarching need to belong' (ibid, p.500). These overarching needs may differ in degree and how they are met, but to satisfy these needs positive relationships with others are needed.

The theory proposes not belonging may result in a sense of deprivation that may manifest in poor affective outcomes, as well as negative behaviours. The implication here is that 'real, potential, or imagined change in one's belongingness status will produce emotional responses' (ibid, 1995, p.505) This hypothesis is supported by more recent neurological evidence (Eisenberger *et al.* 2007; Crowley *et al.* in press), and will be explored in more depth in the section 'neurological response to rejection or ostracism'.

2.1.3 Self Determination Theory-the importance of motivation

> *…an approach to human motivation and personality that uses traditional empirical methods while employing an organismic metatheory that highlights the importance of humans' evolved inner sources for personality development and behavioral self-regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68)*

Cognitive psychologists look at belonging from a motivational perspective. Self Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory of human motivation and personality in which Ryan and Deci (2000) define the psychological need to belong. This theory identifies three psychological needs: relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Relatedness is described as 'to feel securely connected with others in the environment and to experience oneself as worthy of love and respect' (Osterman, 2000, p.325). Competence has been defined as self-efficacy, and autonomy refers to 'the feeling of volition that can accompany any act' (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.74).

SDT states getting these needs met supports an individual's psychological development, and if needs are unmet, then defence mechanisms such as isolation, denial, and repression, come into play. Baumeister and Leary's (1995) and Ryan and Deci's (2000) theory of belonging suggest that individuals have a need to belong, and that optimal health and wellbeing is achieved through those needs being met; unmet needs being harmful to mental health. SDT recognises the need to foster all three needs (competence, autonomy, relatedness) within an environment (i.e. a school/classroom). All these theories agree that the need to belong is ongoing, and needs reciprocated relationships maintained over time to achieve optimal benefits.

2.2 Is a sense of belonging important?

Further research suggests that fulfilment of the need to belong brings positive psychological, social, emotional, and academic benefits, whilst a lack of belongingness can result in negative psychological, academic, social and emotional outcomes (Appleton *et al*. 2006; Baumeister & Leary, 1995;).

2.2.1 Social-emotional outcomes

Many studies have reported significant associations between school belonging and many social-emotional outcomes (Anderman, 2002; Hagborg, 1998). Baumeister and Leary (1995) demonstrated children with a positive SOB have higher levels of positive emotions such as happiness, elation, and tranquillity. Being accepted and included can lead to positive emotions such as 'happiness, elation, contentment, and calm' (Frederickson & Baxter, 2009, p.2).

Sargent *et al*. (2002) reported higher levels of loneliness and emotional distress in pupils with a lack of belongingness. Other supportive studies relate a lack of belongingness to negative feelings such as depression and low mood, behavioural problems, low motivation, anxiety (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Blackhart *et el*. 2007; Resnick *et al*. 1997; Shochet *et al*. 2006), school drop out, poor school engagement, poor interpersonal relationships (Lee & Breen, 2007), and mental and physical illness (Resnick *et al*. 1997). Research on emotions linked to rejection has mixed findings; anger and retaliation emerging as a response to a threat to belonging (Dreikurs *et al*. 2004; Leary *et al*. 2006; Twenge *et al*. 2001). These studies do not just factor in rejection, provocation was also

included, but the recent studies seem to suggest that rejection may result in hostile and negative behaviours. In these experiments in a laboratory situation, alternative responses to rejection through attachment to individuals were not an option. In a real world situation the attachment drive may be preferred, and participants may have behaved in a more prosocial manner.

2.2.2 Cognitive and academic outcomes

Positive feelings of belonging have also been associated with higher academic achievement (Anderman 2002; Goodenow, 1992; Wentzel *et al.* 2004), engagement (Skinner *et al.* 1990 Ryan & Deci, 2000) and higher levels of optimism (Anderman, 2003). Studies suggest that the SOB 'influences achievement through its effects on engagement' (Osterman, 2000, p.341). A lack of belongingness has also been associated with negative academic outcomes (Anderman & Freeman, 2004; Osterman, 2000).

Levels of motivation emerged as a key outcome of belongingness in the literature (Battistich *et al*. 1996; Battistich & Hom, 1997; Goodenow, 1993; Wentzel, 1998). Osterman (2000, p.359) carried out an in depth literature review in which she argued that pupils have a psychological need to belong, and those that experience a SOB are 'more motivated to learn' and are 'more engaged in learning'. Further evidence of the link between belonging and motivation is provided by Furrer and Skinner (2003). This study reported higher levels of academic motivation, and a willingness to engage in tasks when positive feelings of belonging were felt. Osterman's (2000) study also linked a child's SOB to a more positive attitude to learning, and higher levels of school engagement. Low levels of belonging and poor teacher relationships are both linked to school drop out (Murray & Naranjo, 2008)

Research has also demonstrated that cognitive processing may suffer when the need to belong is thwarted (Baumeister *et al.* 2002). In this study participants who received false feedback on future loneliness performed worse on answering analytical questions and on recall of text. Chen *et al.* (2008) suggest that after an act of betrayal, participants performed worse on complex cognitive tests. Although these studies are with adults, the findings seem to suggest that cognitive processing is affected when we perceive a threat to belonging. The research on social exclusion threats is inconclusive at present, however, Baumeister *et al.* (2002) and DeWall *et al.* (2008) argue that a person's

capacity to self regulate decreases after a threat to belongingness is experienced. This dampening of emotional responses may hamper a child's capacity to build a positive relationship soon after a threat to belongingness is experienced.

2.2.3   Neurological response to rejection or ostracism

Some researchers have reported a link between physical pain affect and the regulation of threats to belonging (Eisenberger *et al.* 2007). Physical pain affect refers to the sense of emotional unpleasantness that accompanies physical injury (MacDonald & Leery, 2005). This could be seen as having an evolutionary basis with a biological mechanism to regulate social behaviours (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Researchers have also examined brain responses to rejection and have reported the experience of physical pain through rejection and ostracism (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Studies have reported greater activity in the dorsal anterior cingulated cortex (ACC) (processes the affective component of pain response) related to greater self reported distress through social exclusion (Burklund *et al.* 2007; Eisenberger *et al.* 2007). Although not conclusive at present, and only explored with adults to date, the studies indicate that the brain area used to process the SOB is the same as for that of processing physical pain.

Various studies have also shown that cortisol is released in response to a perceived social threat of not belonging (Blackhart *et al.* 2007; Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004). These studies were carried out with adult participants. Ethically it would be difficult to justify this type of research with children. An interesting study by Eisenberger *et al.* (2007) has linked the genetic marker MAOA-L (related to heightened aggression) to greater levels of activity in the dorsal ACC in response to exclusion from a game. This type of research is in its infancy at present.

To summarise, pupils who perceive a positive SOB demonstrate positive academic, social, emotional, and psychological outcomes (Anderman, 2002; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Osterman, 2000; Wentzel, 1998). Baumeister and Leary (1995, p.522) stated that the 'weight of evidence suggests that lack of belongingness is a primary cause of a wide range of psychological and behavioural problems'. Pupils who do not perceive a positive SOB may be at risk from decreased motivation and engagement, and poorer mental

health outcomes (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Buhs & Ladd, 2001: Lee & Breen, 2007; Resnick *et al*. 1997; Sargent *et al.* 2002).

2.3   Interpersonal relationships in school

Are interpersonal relationships at school important? For this review, interpersonal relationships will include relationships with teachers, teaching assistants (TAs), other adults in school, peers, and friends. The application of the adult attachment principles to relationships at school reframes how relationships are viewed (Pianta *et al.* 2003).

Children spend on average 33 hours a week in school, interacting with both school staff and peers. Interpersonal relationships with teachers, other adults in school, peers, and friends have an important role in fostering a child's SOB (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Ryan *et al.* 1994; Nichols, 2006, 2008). Garmezy (1991) reported students' perceptions of supportive relationships act as protective factors in schools and the wider community. Garmezy (1983) defined a protective factor as one that can mediate or suppress negative effects associated with at risk students. Pupils with dyslexic difficulties could be described as 'students at risk'. Pavri and Monda-Amaya (2000) reported children aged nine to eleven years old with learning difficulties did not feel a SOB in school. They reported a lack of perceived help and support from both peers and teachers.

2.3.1   Discourse of 'at risk'

The use of the term 'at risk' pervades most of the quantitative literature explored for this literature review. The problems associated with this label are many, but the thesis word limitation dictates a brief introduction. 'At risk' is a deficit discourse that locates failure in the pupils. According to the deficit model, the child is viewed as having a set of traits that predispose them to failure in school. This discourse can further reinforce the status quo and marginalisation. Although my initial reading was influenced by the proliferation of studies using the 'at risk' label, the present study does not aim to view pupils using the deficit model.

2.3.2 Teacher relationships

> *…perhaps there is no other nonfamilial adult that is more significant in a child's life than his or her teacher… (Kesner, 2000, p. 134)*

In this quotation Kesner (2000) citied Bowlby's (1988) research where children formed attachments to significant adults other than parents. The process of teaching and learning is fundamentally 'relational'. Teachers play a very important role in fostering a child's SOB (Nichols, 2006, 2008; Solomon *et al.* 1996). Many studies report an association between children who are more connected to teachers, and positive outcomes in social, emotional, and academic domains (Baker, 2006; Crosnoe *et al.* 2003; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Maddox & Prinz, 2003; O'Connor & McCartney, 2006; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009; Silver *et al.* 2005). Relationships full of conflict with the teacher have been linked to cognitive, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Doumen *et al.* 2008; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Teachers are also role models portraying messages regarding personal worth of pupils (Sapon-Shevin, 1990). Chadsey and Han (2005) found students with a disability were more likely to be viewed as part of a group when the teacher treated them with respect.

Professor Robert Pianta is a leading researcher in teacher-student relationships. He identified three dimensions of relationship: conflict, closeness, and dependency (Pianta *et al.* 1995; Saft & Pianta, 2001).

> *Relationships with teachers are an essential part of the classroom experience for all children and a potential resource for improving developmental outcomes (Pianta, 1999, p. 21).*

Solomon *et al.* (1997) reported indirect effects between five aspects of teacher behaviour and a feeling of what was described as 'community' in the classroom. These five factors were teacher warmth and supportiveness, emphasis on prosocial values, cooperation ethos in classroom, and elicitation of student thinking. Stuhlman and Pianta (2004) reported a link between the quality of teacher-pupil relationship and the quality of pupil behaviour toward the teacher. Supporting this earlier research, Thijs *et al.* (2008, 2010) reported supportive teacher behaviours as a defining characteristic of positive teacher-pupil relationships.

Children with learning difficulties may have cognitive, social, and behavioural risk factors; researchers have suggested these pupils may experience poorer relationships with teachers than their peers (Ladd *et al.* 1999; Murray 2002), and hence experience a lower sense of relatedness and belongingness. A study by Margalit and Levin-Ayagon (1994) demonstrated children with learning difficulties were at a greater risk of being rejected or isolated. Murray and Greenberg (2001) reported children with mild disabilities, specifically learning disabilities, experienced significantly lower connectedness to school, and also poorer relationships with teachers.

In support of the connection between learning difficulties and relationship quality, a more recent study (McIntyre *et al.* 2006) reported kindergarten children with a learning disability experienced poorer relationship quality with teachers than some of their peers. Further evidence supporting the importance of teacher-child relationships was reported by Decker *et al.* (2007). This study recruited children identified as having behaviour problems, and found that as teacher-child relationships improved, behaviour and engagement also improved. There is evidence that teachers and pupils may act coercively in a negative way towards pupils who are viewed as having behavioural difficulties (Reid & Eddy, 1997)

Another recent study by Eisenhower *et al.* (2007) examined teacher-pupil relationships with children aged six years of age. This study investigated differences in teacher-child relationship quality. Results indicated that pupils with cognitive difficulties experienced poorer relationships with teachers than their peers, marked by less closeness, and more conflict and dependency. It was also suggested that a successful teacher-pupil relationship is 'related to social-emotional adjustment for students with a disability' (Murray & Greenberg, 2006, p.224-225).

> *All the evidence that has been generated in the school effectiveness research community shows that classrooms are far more important than schools in determining how children perform at school (Muijs and Reynolds, 2001, p.7)*

Academic achievement can be negatively or positively affected by the teacher-child relationship (Fraser & Wahlberg, 2005; Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Muijis & Reynolds, 2001). In a fairly recent study Patrick *et al.* (2007) used factor analysis and found significant effects between emotional support from teachers and achievement of mastery of goals (goals adopted when faced with achievement tasks).

Goldhaber and Hannaway (2009, p3-4) reported 'teacher quality is the most important factor affecting student achievement'. In a study with boys, Trent and Slade (2001) found that the boys reported that their relationship with their teacher had adversely affected their academic achievements.

Burchinal *et al.* (2002) reported teacher-pupil relationships characterised by plenty of emotional and positive support with the teacher could predict maths and reading achievement. Academic motivation has been correlated with a positive teacher relationship in several studies (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Martin *et al.* 2007), and this motivation meant that the pupils were more willing to engage in tasks asked of them. In 2003, Furrer and Skinner used a longitudinal study design and demonstrated that as relationship quality with teacher and peers improved, so did pupils' engagement in school. This study supported the earlier work by Goodenow (1993) in which it is proposed that belongingness influences motivation and later academic achievement.

Pertinent to Trent and Slade's (2001) study and the present study is the study by Rowe (2000), in which teacher effects were reported to be greater in boys than in girls. Patterns of a teacher's interpersonal relationship with pupils have been linked directly to positive pupil achievement (Daly *et al.* 2010). Studies have linked the strong connection with one member of staff in school to a stronger feeling of connection to the school (Blum & Libbey, 2004). Teachers who foster warm relationships with pupils promote a SOB (Nichols, 2008). Gest *et al.* (2005) found that relationships with teachers were more positive at the beginning of the academic year and as the year progressed this relationship deteriorated.

2.3.3   Peer relationships

Reciprocated friendships can be defined as a dyadic relationship (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). Faircloth & Hamm (2005, p.305) reported dyadic relationships with peers provide 'a sense of companionship, emotional support, and sense of security'. This study investigated the role of friendships in belongingness at school. The students stated that they felt disconnected with the class until they had formed at least one friendship. These findings found that students were supported in difficult academic situations by supportive friendships. This may be a particularly important finding for pupils with literacy difficulties.

Current literature suggests that peer relationships are also central to a child's SOB (Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Kagan, 1990; Lubbers *et al.* 2006; Newman *et al.* 2007; Osterman, 2000; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004;). Kagan (1990) highlighted the importance of group affiliation for developing belongingness with peers. Peer acceptance has been defined as an individual's relational status within a peer group, and the extent to which they are liked or disliked (Ladd *et al.* 1997). Belongingness can be established in peer groups at school (Appleton *et al.* 2006). Wentzel *et al.* 2004 reported pupils' prosocial behaviours and academic achievement was lower when pupils did not have a dyadic friendship. Research with adolescents demonstrated an affiliation with a peer group offered interpersonal connections that supported SOB in school (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

There have been many studies worldwide researching peer relationships with pupils with mild disabilities (Chamberlain *et al.* 2007; Hall & McGregor, 2000; Hoza *et al.* 2005; Kuhne and Wiener, 2000). In peer nomination studies, students with a mild disability were less accepted than their peers (Chamberlain *et al.* 2007; Hoza *et al.* 2005; Kuhne & Wiener, 2000). 'Mild disability' is a term used much in the American literature. It refers to pupils with a cognitive impairment evidenced by an IQ score of 55-70. Researchers have noted SEN pupils' peer acceptance does not improve over time, and may actually deteriorate (Hall & McGregor, 2000; Kuhne & Winer, 2000). Researchers have also noted individual differences in peer acceptance for children with SEN, with many children not experiencing peer rejection (Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Meadan & Halle, 2004).

Closeness in peer relationships is correlated with popularity (Cauce, 1986), self-esteem (McGuire & Weisz, 1982), and psychological adjustment (Buhmester, 1990). Anderman (2003) and Solomon *et al.* (1997) suggested belonging is influenced by peer acceptance and respectful interactions. Covington and Dray (2002) in a study exploring motivation in mathematics, reported peer support fostered academic motivation in pupils. Demonstrating the importance of peer relationships, Wentzel (1998) reported absence of peer support as a significant predictor of emotional distress (i.e. anxiety, depression, frustration) linked to perception of competence, interest in school, and achievement. In a later study Wentzel *et al.* (2004) reported that the number and/or quality of friendships was linked to prosocial behaviour, school competence, involvement in class, and academic achievement.

Studies of peer acceptance and friendship show high achievement correlated with peer acceptance and/or peer interaction, and the most frequently rejected, to be low achievers (Green *et al*. 1980; Ladd, 1990; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). Ladd (1990) conducted a kindergarten study and reported peer status significantly predicting school perceptions, involvement, and performance. Baumeister and Tice (1990), and Gray and McNaughton (2000) stated that unwanted social exclusion, that is, less social interaction than desired, is a correlate of anxiety and depression. Newman *et al.* (2007) investigated peer group membership in the 11-18 age range and found a correlation between SOB and positive mental health, and negative behaviours. In Holland a longitudinal study (Lubbers *et al*. 2006) found that low peer acceptance and friendlessness had a negative impact on academic progress and school belonging. The researchers interpreted their findings in terms of lack of friendship and feelings of rejection reducing a SOB in school.

2.4   Gender

Boys have been chosen as the participants for this study. The role of gender in school SOB has been explored by several researchers (Anderman, 2002, 2003; Nicholls, 2006; Rueger *et al.* 2010; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). There is a continued argument amongst researchers, some presenting findings where girls reported a higher SOB (Osterman, 2000; Rueger *et al.* 2010; Rumberger & Thomas, 2000; Ryzin *et al.* 2009; Wentzell & Caldwell, 1997), and others who find no evidence of difference (Anderman, 2002, 2003; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Nichols, 2006). Many of these studies demonstrate discrepant results for example measuring mean level differences and/or patterns of relationships.

Wentzell and Caldwell's (1997) study linking peer relationships to academic achievement reported adolescent boys less likely than girls to experience a SOB in schools than girls. In the same study, girls had higher peer acceptance ratings, and significantly more and better friends. This study also reported boys developing significantly more negative relationships with classmates. In the recent Rueger *et al.* (2010) longitudinal study, investigating perceived support from parents, teacher and peers in adolescence, there were significant differences in gender. Supportive classmates predicted lower depressive symptoms for boys, and overall boys perceived support from all as more important than girls (ibid). Goodenow and Grady (1993) demonstrated the strength of the relationship between peer acceptance and various outcomes was stronger for boys.

It has also been reported by several researchers that boys often have less satisfying relationships, more conflict, and less closeness with their teachers (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Goodenow, 1993; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Silver *et al*. 2005), and lower levels of identification with school (Voelkl, 1995).

2.5   Loneliness

> *We know all too well that children who are feeling alienated or threatened have no emotional or cognitive energy for learning (Ramsey, 1991, p. 9)*

Although loneliness is a normative experience, some children may suffer chronic loneliness at school. Children as young as five years demonstrated an understanding of feelings of loneliness in a study carried out by Cassidy & Asher (1992). Loneliness has been defined as 'awareness of a deficiency in one's social and personal relationships ... [that is accompanied by] ensuing affective reactions of sadness, emptiness, or longing' (Asher & Paquette, 2003, p.75).

Some researchers suggest that children with a learning disability may be at increased risk for loneliness and peer related difficulties in school (Avramidis, 2010; Buysse *et al*. 2002; Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Qualter & Munn, 2002). Those rejected by their peers, withdrawn, or are inhibited, are more susceptible to feelings of loneliness (Cassidy & Asher, 1992; Gest *et al*. 2005; Kingery & Erdley, 2007). In an adult study, loneliness predicted enhanced sympathetic activity in the nervous system, which may contribute to high blood pressure (Hawkley *et al*. 2003). Loneliness has been found to be stable over time (Newsom *et al*. 2008), indicating that a lonely child may be a lonely adult; this in itself is a reason to investigate and find possible ways to support children more in school.

2.6   Literacy difficulties

Dyslexia has been viewed as the most commonly recognised form of specific learning difficulty (SLD) (Elliot *et al*. 2007). In the UK, researchers have reported percentages as high as 20% in the school population (Feeg, 2003; Grigorenko, 2001; Shaywitz, 2003) The participants for this study all have literacy difficulties recognised as SpLD, and requiring support at SA+, but do not have a diagnosis of dyslexia.

The literature search did not reveal any studies investigating belongingness with children with specific literacy difficulties, but many studies linked dyslexia to negative social, emotional, and academic outcomes. Riddick (1996) provided evidence that children with dyslexic difficulties have low self-esteem. Some empirical studies note correlations between low self-esteem and academic failure (Hales, 2004; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Polychroni *et al*. 2006). Many studies have reported a link between low self-esteem and children with SEN (Bear *et al.* 2002; Gurney, 1988; Zeleke, 2004). In a more recent study carried out in the north of England with pupils in year 5 and 6, pupils with SEN were found to have a lower perception of global self worth when compared to their non-SEN peers (Avramidis, 2010).

Of particular importance to this study are the findings of Thomson (1990). Dr Thomson reported the mainstream environment as a contributory factor to low self-esteem and sense of failure in children with literacy difficulties. This study compared children with dyslexia in a specialist setting to a mainstream setting over a period of 18 months. Later research by Humphrey and Mullins (2002) in the United Kingdom (UK) supported these findings, demonstrating that pupils with dyslexia had lower self-concept and self-esteem than controls, and felt isolated and excluded. Humphrey's (2003, p.130) study demonstrated the 'presence of dyslexia produced marked effects on the self-concept and self-esteem of the children', clearly linking dyslexia with low self-esteem. The pupils also reported regular teasing and bullying. In a study carried out by Snowling *et al.* (2007) researchers found higher levels of internalising symptoms such as anxiety and depression, and lower levels of academic self-esteem in groups of secondary aged pupils with dyslexia.

In addition, there is also evidence of association with developmental disorders (Haslum & Miles, 2007; Pennington & Bishop, 2009), and a higher risk of loneliness and peer related difficulties (Margalit & Levin-Alyagon, 1994). Secondary emotional problems due to peer bullying were reported in a study by Ingesson (2006). This study suggested that the bullying was a direct result of literacy difficulties. In a UK study (Carroll & Iles, 2006) reported a direct link between specific literacy difficulties and clinically significant levels of anxiety.

> *...we as educationalists, are presented with our greatest challenge: to teach our children not only to succeed, but also to value themselves. (Humphrey, 2003, p. 135)*

2.7 Literature review summary

This literature review has considered research into experience of belongingness in school, with particular relevance to boys with literacy difficulties. In addition, the literature involving theoretical paradigms applied to the concept of belongingness have been explored to provide further context for the current research.

Whilst a range of frameworks and definitions of belongingness exist in the literature, belongingness has been described as a fundamental human need (Adler, 1939; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ferguson, 1989; Libbey, 2004; Maslow, 1970) and operates across several theoretical paradigms, the most influential being the 'belongingness hypothesis' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), 'attachment theory' (Bowlby, 1969, 1973), and the 'self determination theory' (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). All three theories propose that experiencing satisfaction regarding belongingness may result in positive social, behavioural, and psychological outcomes.

The review of the current literature suggest that a positive sense of belongingness in school may bring about positive psychological, social, emotional, and academic benefits, and a low sense of belongingness may result in negative psychological, academic, social and emotional outcomes (Anderman, 2002; Appleton *et al*. 2006; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Goodenow, 1992; Osterman, 2000). Research has also demonstrated that cognitive processing suffers when the need to belong is thwarted (Baumeister *et al*. 2002), and a neurological pain response may be triggered, resulting in physical pain (MacDonald & Leary, 2005).

The literature also suggests that teachers play a very important role in fostering a child's SOB (Nichols, 2006, 2008, Solomon *et al*, 1996), in particular, this involves teacher behaviours (Solomon *et al*, 1997), and relationship quality (Eisenhower *et al*. 2007). Teacher effects have been reported as greater for boys (Rowe, 2000). Current literature also point to the importance of peer relationships and friendships as central to a child's SOB (Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Lubbers *et al*. 2006). The strength of the relationship between peer acceptance and various outcomes has been reported as stronger for boys (Goodenow & Grady, 1993). Particularly pertinent to this study are the findings of Hall & McGregor (2000) in which SEN pupil's peer acceptance was lower than their peers, and actually deteriorated over time (Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Meadan & Halle, 2004).

A small number of studies have looked at the role of belongingness with boys (Anderman, 2002, 2003; Nichols, 2006; Rueger *et al*. 2010). Such studies suggest that a SOB is lower for boys in school. The literature search did not reveal any specific studies investigating belongingness with pupils with specific literacy difficulties, although many studies provide evidence which links

literacy difficulties with low self-esteem and self-concept (Avramidis, 2010; Humphrey, 2003; Riddick, 1996; Thomson, 1990), and higher levels of anxiety and depression (Carroll & Iles, 2006; Snowling *et al*, 2007), providing evidence for the researcher's choice of participant gender.

School belongingness is one of the stated aims of SEAL (DfES, 2007) and within education it is a useful tool to aid inclusion, community cohesion, and well-being of all in the community (DCFS, 2008; DfES, 2001; DfES, 2004). There is growing interest within the UK, albeit quantitative research interest to date.

2.8 Rationale for current research

As stated previously, there is a paucity of studies exploring the school belongingness experiences of boys with literacy difficulties in the UK. As shown above, a significant amount of relevant research has been carried out in Australia and America, but has not specifically focused on lived experience. The literature tends to be correlational and relates little to the actual belongingness experience of individual pupils.

Belongingness is an important and developing field of research in psychology and the current study aims to advance research in this area by employing a rigorous qualitative design that gives voice to pupils, gaining rich description in the context in which belongingness experiences occur. This study opens the door to scholarly discussion of pupil perceptions, and the increasingly important role that schools have to play in facilitating and promoting belongingness. It will also contribute to the limited research evidence base in this area.

2.9 Key research question

As a result of the review of the literature and the rationale, the following research question is proposed for study:

1. How do these three boys with literacy difficulties experience belonging or not belonging at their school?

Recommendations will be inferred and drawn from the analysis of data, and an action plan formulated from this. An action plan will be shared with the school. It was agreed with the site school head teacher prior to the study that the action plan would be discussed in a staff meeting and added to the School Development Plan, if after discussion and adaptation, staff agreed.

3 CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL STUDY: THE EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL BELONGING: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Methodology - Introduction

> *[Alice went on], "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"*
> *"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the cat.*
> *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Carroll, 1962, p.82)*

The methodological choices and the techniques used in this study to explore experiences of belongingness will be discussed in this chapter. Firstly, I will outline the philosophical and conceptual approaches informing the research, and will then highlight the ways in which these influenced the design and methods of the belongingness study.

This chapter clarifies the research aim and sets the research question in the context of the literature reviewed in the previous chapters. The chosen research approach will be justified in respect of the range of paradigms and approaches considered and their relevance to the focus of this study. It is also argued that qualitative research approaches are the most appropriate and this chapter therefore explores the major qualitative research methodologies of discourse analysis, narrative, grounded theory, and phenomenology, in relation to this investigation. The decision making process is made evident through discussion of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological stances taken in this study.

Chapter 3 also presents an argument that phenomenology is the most appropriate approach to explore lived experience in participants' own terms. The discussion will then continue with a brief overview of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996) as the most appropriate theoretical approach to explore the phenomenon of belongingness in the school setting. This chapter also describes participant selection, ethical issues considered throughout the research process, data collection method, data analysis, pilot study findings, and quality concerns. The chapter finishes with a section on keeping a reflexive journal and self-reflexivity, in which I make my positioning clear, thereby 'owning one's perspective' (Elliot *et el*. 1999).

It is essential that thought is given to 'the philosophical base of the chosen research to ensure coherence of the study design in terms of both its ontological, epistemological,

and methodological levels of enquiry' (Proctor, 1998, p.74). In order to carry out effective research and to be able to justify the research, it is essential to understand our own epistemological and ontological stance. We all hold beliefs around which we define the nature of reality (ontological beliefs) and the way in which the world is known (epistemological beliefs). Understanding what is meant by ontology was challenging due to the abstract nature of belonging, and the divergence of definitions in the research field.

The researcher decided after much contemplation that a 'critical realist' epistemological framework (Madill *et al*. 2000) was the most appropriate for this study, although the reflexivity and co-construction of data could be seen as being placed within a 'contextual constructionist where participants are described in context' (Madill *et al*. 2000, p.9), or within a 'relativist' position as described by (Willig, 2008, p.13).

This chapter presents an argument that phenomenology is the most appropriate approach to explore lived experience, in this case, the lived experience of belongingness. Through reading I realised there was no one right way to approach my research, and drew on aspects on ontology, epistemology and methodology, using a deductive process to help me make a clear rationale for my actions throughout the research process. I am aware that there are many approaches available that may have been chosen for this research (Starks & Trinidad *et al*. 2007). The specific phenomenological methodology of IPA (Smith, 1996) was chosen and will be described in detail.

Through my time as a teacher and a youth worker I was particularly drawn to and influenced by papers by researchers who described disability in an inspiring and respectful style. During my time as an ethnographic researcher I was greatly inspired by Professor Jackson's book that proposed using an interpretive approach to study religious communities (Jackson, 1997). This earlier reading, as well as later inspiration through consideration of social constructions of childhood proposed by James and Prout (1990) and the social constructionist writings of McNamee and Gergen (1992), have all had a role in forming my philosophical thinking prior to the study.

> *Each person is to have multiple inner lenses that remain fluid and are produced in a collaborative dialogue that generates meaning (Gergen 1992, p.181)*

3.2 Research Paradigms

The following definition was used to inform decision-making in terms of the most appropriate paradigm to underpin this thesis:

> *A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the 'world' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.107).*

The process of determining my point of view did not lead itself to a linear approach, although the description in the thesis is written in a somewhat linear description. The process did not emerge in a specified order.

3.2.1 Post-positivist critical realism as a framework

Post-positivist critical realism was chosen as the most appropriate epistemological framework for this study, as the researcher wanted a position that accepts the idea of personal truth, whilst 'differences in meanings attributed to experiences are considered possible', because participants 'experience different parts of reality'. (Fade, 2004, p. 647). Critical realism can be seen in IPA's epistemological underpinnings in which Smith *et al*. (2009) stated, no one single 'true' reality exists, but it is possible to access an individual's inner world. The assumption within this position is that 'the transcript tells us something about a participants' inner world (Willig, 2008), but at the same time acknowledges that 'the data gathered may not provide direct access to this reality' (Willig, 2008, p.13). The data gathered is not seen as a factual verifiable record, but as time and context bound and a 'joint product of both the participant and researcher' (Smith *et al*. 1997, p.68), where the researcher interprets that reflection. The quote below sums this up aptly:

> *…between these two positions, one may consider that what respondents say does have some significance and reality for them beyond the bounds of this particular occasion, that is part of their ongoing self-story and represents a manifestation of their psychological worlds, and it is this psychological reality that one is interested in…(Smith, 1995, p10).*

The researcher aims to produce an interpretative account of the participants' interpretations of their belongingness experience at school. Verbal accounts are linked to, and indicative of cognitions, therefore a participant's experience can be understood by

exploring their cognitions (Smith & Osborn, 2003, 2008). Reality is subjective with multiple versions of existing reality (Cresswell, 2007). Knowledge produced will be dependent on the researchers own assumptions and conceptions. Critical realism recognises the fallibility of observation, and questions our ability to know reality with certainty. This has resonance for me, for example, recognising teachers' differing responses to similar situations, and children's individual responses to peer rejection. I believe there are multiple 'truths' because of different perceptions, interpretations, and reactions to a phenomenon.

The researcher is located in the research dialogue so that an 'insiders' perspective may be taken. It is acknowledged that this is only partial and influenced by the researcher's own assumptions and conceptions. This has been said to be a more relativist position (Willig, 2008). The accounts are co-constructed and shaped by the researcher-participant relationship (Larkin *et al*. 2006). The researcher's role is to make sense of the participant making sense of their experiences by exploring their cognitions, described as a 'double hermeneutic' (Smith & Osborn, 2008) and a 'diversity of interpretations can be applied to it' (Willig, 2008, p.13).

3.2.2   Interpretivism

Interpretivism takes an anti-positivist position. The interpretivist view is interested in individuals experience in their environment, the perspective of an 'insider'. The process itself is iterative with steps of the process informing one another in a recursive, ever changing way. A lovely phrase captures the coherence in the interpretative process as follows:

> *…like a bowl of spaghetti-tangled and holistic*
> *(Grau & Walsh, 1998, p.159)*

Research on belongingness under the interpretative paradigm aims to draw out individual experience. To do this, I have to acknowledge the co-construction of meaning between the participants and myself. Ironically, my inspiration for direction in this study has come mainly from the nursing field rather than education (for example, Castle *et al.* 2007) rather than in education. The use of hermeneutic phenomenology is far wider in nursing than in education, in which children are directly asked about their views.

In summary, qualitative research using the interpretative approach provides an appropriate framework from which to explore the lived experience of belongingness at school.

3.2.3   Qualitative approaches

A qualitative design was identified as the most appropriate to meet the research aim of exploring the meaning inherent in the experience of belongingness for three boys with literacy difficulties, as the inquiry is situated within an interpretivist paradigm and the epistemological stance is critical realism.

Two broad methodological options are available to a researcher: quantitative and qualitative. As highlighted in the literature review, quantitative approaches dominate the field of belongingness research. Qualitative methods have been chosen for this study as they are based on a recognition of the importance of the subjective, experiential 'lifeworld' of people, describing the experiences in depth (Patton, 1980), and will uncover a wealth of rich information on a phenomena that has had little exploration

qualitatively. The approach is inductive (ibid) in that the researcher tries to make sense of the data, thus, in keeping with the aims of this study.

Qualitative methods are commonly used in educational research. Glesne (1999, p.1) states that 'qualitative research seeks to make a sense of personal stories and the way they intersect'. The qualitative approaches considered were narrative, discourse, grounded theory, and phenomenology; each will be briefly outlined. Of these, I chose the phenomenological approach. I also chose a particular approach of phenomenology, namely, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, Smith, 1996)

3.3   The Discourse approach

> *DA regards verbal reports as behaviours in their own right which should be the focus of functional analyses (Murray and Chamberlain, 1999, p 219)*

Discourse analysis (DA) rejects cognitions' central role and emphasises the importance of language in the construction of social reality (Willig, 2008). I view cognition as important, seeing meanings 'as constructed by individuals in a social and personal world' (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p.54). A discourse analyst would argue that language is 'engaged actively in meaning making' (Wetherell, 2001, p.3). Discourse analysis was rejected as I felt it did not allow the reader to gain an insider view of what the individual thinks and feels about their belongingness experience.

3.4   Grounded theory as an approach

Grounded theory was considered initially as a research option as it offers both flexibility and interpretation. Grounded theory is a method founded by Glaser and Strauss (1967), in which theories are grounded in data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It focuses on social processes, taking a view 'from the outside in' (Willig, 2008, p.45). Grounded theory acknowledges the researcher's prior knowledge and develops a theory that will account for a particular phenomenon (Cresswell, 2007). Although considered similar to IPA, there are clear distinctions between the grounded theory and IPA (Willig, 2008).

Grounded theory assumes that the literature review is completed post analysis, so that developing theory is not influenced by prior knowledge. My prior extensive reading in the belongingness domain excluded this method. Grounded theory was also deemed unsuitable due to several methodological reasons. Its goal of inductive theory development (Charmaz, 2006) does not fit the research questions, and the logistical difficulties of needing sufficient numbers of participants to reach saturation would also not be appropriate due to the small numbers of boys with literacy difficulties identified through their PLASC descriptors in the volunteering school. I was also keen to focus 'from the inside out' (Willig, 2008, p.45).

3.5   Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis can be described as a way of making sense of the world in 'storied lives' (Riessman, 1993). The approach has also been carefully considered due to its epistemological similarities, and a crossover with my chosen methods of IPA (Smith *et al.* 2009). Narrative analysis encourages the telling of one's story rather than using questions as prompts, I felt that this age group might struggle to articulate their experiences without some prompts and structure such as offered by IPA.

3.6   The final leg of the journey-Phenomenology

The final approach considered was phenomenological research. Phenomenology is a philosophy as well as a research methodology. Phenomenology encompasses both a philosophical movement and a range of research approaches. Applied to research, the term refers to the study of phenomena, their nature, and meanings. The perceptions, explanations and analysis of the explored experiences all depend on which phenomenological approach is used. A phenomenological approach seeks a thick description of the story from the participants (van Manen, 1990).

> *The purpose of phenomenology is to describe and understand the essence of lived experiences of individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon (Lichtman, 2006, p.27).*

This study aimed to describe the lived experience of belongingness, and to understand and interpret that experience and the condition of such experience and as such is both phenomenological and hermeneutic. This dual approach has been called 'hermeneutic phenomenology', defined by van Manen as the following;

> *…a descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena (van Manen, 1990, p. 180).*

This methodology aims to produce 'rich textual descriptions of the experiencing of selected phenomena in the lifeworld of individuals that are able to connect with the experience of all of us collectively' (Smith, 1997, p. 80). Dahlberg *et al.* (2008, p.37) describes the task of the researcher 'to describe and elucidate the lived world in a way that expands our understanding of human being and human experience'.

3.7   Rationale and justification supporting the Methodological choice

In this study how boys with literacy difficulties experienced belongingness in their mainstream school, and their feelings concerning this were essential to the chosen method. I felt this could only be achieved through a phenomenological perspective.

> *Researching pupil perceptions is a potent way of challenging assumptions made about marginalised groups within education. (Lloyd-Smith and Torr, in Lewis and Lindsay, 2000, p.60)*

In general then, the phenomenological approach seeks to discover the structure and form of a phenomenon, to understand the experience. This is an important distinction with regard to the method's applicability to the present study. Firstly, as already mentioned, there is very little knowledge about the structure and meaning of the phenomenon of belongingness; secondly, in his or her being-in-the-world, the research participant is inextricably linked to the world (i.e. to a family, a sibling group, an extended family, a school, a class, and a community).

> *We are to a great extent what we do (Kenkmann, 2005, p.480)*

Heidegger was interested in what it means 'to be' a human person. This is particularly relevant for this study. In this respect, the phenomenological method is most suited to addressing the questions, 'What is a pupil's experience of belongingness?' (i.e. the structure on the individual and general level); and 'How is it experienced?; this indicates the course/progression of the belongingness experience and that the experience may change over time and/or in different contexts.

3.8   Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

A methodology of Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA, Smith, 1996) has been chosen for this study. Phenomenology is a useful approach to adopt in educational research because it addressed the participants' world as lived and as experienced. As a researcher I sought to be attentive to how things appeared, to understand the essences of the experience of belongingness for these pupils, and to describe the themes that characterise this phenomenon. IPA was initially used within the health domain (Flowers *et al.* 1997; Osborn & Smith, 1998; Senior *et al.* 2002) but is now widely adopted in psychology (Thompson *et al.* 2002).

IPA has its theoretical foundations in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith & Eatough, 2007) and is a relatively new methodology developed in the 1990s (Smith, 1996). It has its foundations in social constructionism and has been described as taking a 'light constructionist' stance' (Eatough & Smith, 2006, p.485). IPA aims to understand, as closely as possible what a chosen group of participants think or believe about a given topic through the analysis of texts, and its 'currency' is first person viewpoint and participants as experiential experts.

Recently IPA has been used to analyse data from studies using three or less participants (Shinebourne & Smith, 2009; Shinebourne & Smith, 2010; Wilde & Murray, 2009); chosen as a methodology ideally suited to exploring individual experience. A small sample size is common in IPA when 'depth rather than breadth is required' (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p.55). Reid *et al*. (2005) recommends a small sample size as the researcher is not seeking to generalise findings or reach a data saturation point, but to explore a participants' unique experience.

IPA has been described as 'having a broadly realist ontology' (Reid *et al.* 2005, p.21). IPA's realist ontology assumes that a participants' account can inform us of their thoughts and feelings, these are assumed to capture their experience of the phenomenon under exploration Smith & Osborn, 2008. Willig (2001, p.16) states 'IPA could be said to take a realist approach to knowledge production'. IPA is not concerned with 'objective truth, only the subjectively experienced world' (Smith, 1996, p.264). IPA fits well with my epistemological stance of critical realism.

Epistemologically, IPA takes the stance that the nature of reality is dependent upon our view of it, involvement and engagement. This takes IPA more towards the relativist spectrum. IPA makes sense of how participants make sense of an experience or experiences, it recognises the realty for the person, and how they come to make sense of the world. IPA acknowledges that their inner world cannot be accessed directly, only various versions of it.

IPA merges both phenomenological and hermeneutical tradition, the latter in regards the researcher's interpretative stance. IPA is hermeneutical and assumes qualitative research should go 'beyond description of this experience' (Larkin *et al.* 2006, p.113) with an interpretative element that 'contextualises' and makes sense of the participants' experiences (Smith, 1996, p.40). IPA uses a 'double hermeneutic', the researcher interprets the participant interpreting their world. Smith and Osborn (2003) purport IPA employs two interpretative stances, empathic hermeneutics, and questioning hermeneutics. Empathic hermeneutics is the gaining of the participants' views of their experiences. Questioning hermeneutics involves the researcher's critical questioning of the accounts, aimed at gaining additional information on the phenomenon being explored (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

IPA may incorporate a variety of research designs. Data collection usually involves semi structured interviews, focus groups, diaries, and reflexive journals. Semi structured interviews as used in this study, are considered 'the exemplary method of conducting IPA' (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.53). Smith *et al.* (2009) developed specific guidance to aid development of an IPA interview schedule. The interview schedule acts as a prompt for the participants to 'tell their story' (ibid). In keeping with the principles of IPA, minimal

probing is recommended, and interviewee verbal and non-verbal responses noted, for example, repetition and silences.

Only one phenomenological study was found in the literature search (Clegg, 2006) that focussed on the belongingness experience of adults. No other phenomenological studies exploring belongingness were identified.

3.8.1 Philosophical assumptions of IPA

Smith (1996) notes two very important concepts in IPA, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. Both these concepts stem from beliefs that people are not bystanders in objective reality but are actually formulating their own interpretations and understandings (Brocki & Wearden, 2006); broadly a realist ontology.

IPA has been influenced by symbolic interactionism as well as phenomenology. Symbolic interactionism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.9) believes the' meanings people ascribe to events' is of central importance to the researcher, and that these meanings can only be obtained through a process of interpretation. Meanings are said to occur as a result of social interaction. We all 'interpret each other's actions' instead of just reacting to them' (Blumer, 1969, p.79) and response is based on 'the meaning attached to the actions' (ibid). Described simply, interaction is mediated by interpretation. The meaning of reality is the meaning each individual gives to it (Mead, 1934)

IPA 'assumes an existing, universal inclination towards self-reflection and focuses on an exploration of experiences, understandings, perceptions and views' (Brocki & Wearden, 2006, p.88). IPA acknowledges that direct and complete access to participants' inner worlds is impossible because the researcher's understanding of the participants' accounts are influenced by the researcher's own world view (Smith, 2004) as well as the 'relationship established between the researcher and the participant' (Willig, 2008, p.67). IPA does not 'claim access to another person's experience', but accesses an account of their experiences described by them (Larkin *et al*. 2006, p.111).

IPA solves this by involving a two-stage interpretation that is called 'double hermeneutics' (Smith & Eatough, 2006, p.324). This is an understanding that interpretation is required on the part of both the researcher and the participant, and the

researcher's own thinking and understanding is necessary in order to make sense of someone else making sense of their experience. Osborn and Smith (1998) purport the interpretation occurs at two levels. The first level is where the participant relates their interpretation and associated cognitions and meanings through language. The second level occurs when the researcher interprets, and makes sense of their story. The production of the final account is iterative.

3.8.2   The goals of IPA

IPA 'does not seek to give generalisations' (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.51). There are many limitations to 'generalisability' in IPA such as sample size, homogeneity of the sample, and purposive sampling technique. Although generalisations cannot be made, insights gained with one group may be applied to another group (ibid). The goal is to build a rich picture of the explored phenomenon, in this case belongingness, using a case-by-case or idiographic approach and 'to step into the participants shoes' (Smith & Eatough, 2006, p.322). Ideography refers to the process of working case by case for understanding, then moving on for cross case analysis for convergence and divergence.

In this study the pupil sample is three. Various levels of analysis to gain rich accounts will be applied to the data mitigating against any negative impact of sample size. IPA is inductive, in that its techniques allow for unanticipated themes to emerge in the analysis process (Shaw, 2001). In this way IPA is data driven rather than theory driven. IPA's additional strength is that it is interrogative; one of its main aims is to contribute to the existing body of literature so that discussion can occur in relation to broader psychological literature.

IPA is appropriate for the research questions I want to address in this thesis for the following reasons. IPA aims to study experience from the perspective of the participant offering a strong focus on how they experience a phenomenon (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), suiting the goal of this study by exploring what is meaningful for these boys.

IPA assumes that texts (in this study texts relates to the interview transcripts) represent some of the participant's thoughts, beliefs, and experiences (Smith, 1996). In this study IPA will analyse the texts that emerge out of the 'lived experience' of the participants and their attempts to make sense of their own unique experiences providing a rich understanding of their experience. IPA may also be able to enrich an area previously only studied through quantitative measures as 'its method is concerned with novelty, complexity and process' (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.55).

3.8.3   Strengths and limitations of IPA

Larkin *et al*. (2006, p.118) described one of IPA's most fundamental benefits as the 'returning of participants' experiences to the forefront of a study'. This fits the child centred perspective taken daily by an educational psychologist, also acknowledging the voice of the child. IPA's appeal for myself as a novice qualitative researcher is its clear guidelines regarding application (Smith & Osborn, 2003, 2008). One of the biggest advantages embraced by the researcher in this study is IPA's inductive nature, which allows unanticipated themes to emerge (Smith, 2004). It is ideal for 'exploring complexity in participant's experiences' (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p.51) and 'does not limit the focus on just existing knowledge' (Ibid, p.53).

IPA has been criticised for lack of clarity about the interpretation level required. 'First order analysis could be seen as just summarising rather than developing the data through interpretation' (Larkin *et al.* 2006, p. 103. Another criticism of IPA has been around guidance on reflexivity, with researcher subjectivity being 'highlighted as a weakness' (Willig, 2001, p.66). In defence, IPA can be argued as 'an approach rather than a rigid method, making its flexibility an advantage' (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.53).

A criticism very pertinent to this study is the method's reliance on a participant's ability to articulate their experiences (Willig, 2001). This 'reliance on language' to communicate the 'subtleties of experience' could be seen as limiting (Ibid, p.63), but I believe this could be said about qualitative methods generally. It was argued by Smith & Osborn (2008) the researcher's job is to interpret participants' internal states from what is said and to ask critical questions about what goes unsaid, reflexively in analysis.

Social constructionists argue language constructs rather than describes reality. It could then be argued that Interviews only tell you how someone talks about a phenomena rather than the experience itself (Willig, 2001). I struggled with this limitation but came to the conclusion that this is inherent in all qualitative research, and IPA acknowledges the role of social constructionism and 'the action oriented nature of language' (Eatough & Smith, 2006, p.485).

3.8.4   Reflexivity in IPA

Research could be defined 'as a central component of being human (the capacity to position the self) and also the ability to reflect on and think about the Intersubjective dynamics between research and data' (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p.8). There is a paradox created in IPA as although the participant is at the centre of the study, there is no such thing as a 'view from nowhere' (Nagel, 1974) as the researcher is also significant in the research process. IPA acknowledges and explores the researcher's role. Reflexivity is seen as vital in aiding transparency.

Finlay & Gough (2003) describe a process of self-awareness that underlies the 'reflexivity' process. IPA incorporates reflexivity into each stage (Skultans, 1998). My grounding as an educational psychologist using reflexivity through the doctorate will enable me to demonstrate and develop reflexivity during the research phase. This is discussed further in the 'self reflexivity' section.

3.9   Summary

I conclude that phenomenological research is itself a 'lived experience' (Giles, 2007). The researcher is intertwined with the text of others' experiences of a phenomenon and that as a researcher my own past experiences, preconceptions, and assumptions, will affect my analysis and interpretation.

As previously stated, there is a range of distinct research approaches associated with qualitative research. Grounded theory, narrative, discourse analysis, and phenomenology are examples of qualitative research approaches which are exploratory in nature and were therefore considered during the decision making process of this research. Phenomenology was chosen as most appropriate for this research. IPA

(Smith, 1996) was chosen as the most appropriate methodology within phenomenology, as the aim is to study lived experience from the perspective of the participant.

IPA also allows for an exploration of both the subjective unshared aspect of experience as well as the shared aspects of the phenomena (Shaw, 2001); this will allow for the telling of individual, unique experience as well as shared. IPA is 'still being developed' and reviewed (Larkin *et al.* 2006, p.104), and as such gives freedom for a researcher to be creative (Willig, 2001). This is especially important in the 'belongingness' field, which is dominated at present by quantitative studies.

3.10 Research Design

> *An emergent design is especially appropriate for naturalistic or „real world‟ research, that which seeks to say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally "messy" situation‟ (Robson, 2002, p 4).*

This study used three case studies from one urban mainstream school in a city of high deprivation. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain the perspectives of three pupils with literacy difficulties. There was also discussion in the interviews based around pupil drawings. The interviews were developed from the following themes identified in the literature review:

- experience of belongingness;
- support and caring;
- inclusion and acknowledgement; and
- attitudes to learning.

'Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem' (Creswell, 1998, p.15). A qualitative, phenomenological research design was chosen to describe the experiences of belongingness with three boys in a mainstream school. The intention of this study was to explore the understanding and experience of belongingness at school of three boys on the SEN register, all with a PLASC (national pupil census) descriptor of SpLD, for literacy difficulties.

3.10.1 Case Studies

A multiple case study approach was chosen for this study. The case study is suitable for these research questions as it enables a focus on particular systems of interest (Stake, 1995). Case study is considered appropriate as a strategy when the research focus is on 'how' and 'why' questions (Yin, 2003). Yin (1994, p.14) also asserts case study as ideal 'when the intent is to contribute unique knowledge about an individual as it allows the source of investigation to 'maintain its characteristics in the original context'.

For the purpose of this thesis, I consider the individual pupil a case with both intrinsic and instrumental interest (Stake, 1994, 1995, 2000). The intrinsic interest relates to each pupil's unique contribution to the study. The instrumental interest relates to each participant's role in contributing to a deeper understanding of the research question by comparison across the participants.

According to Edwards (2004, p.126) cases are often referred to as 'bounded systems' in which we explore our study. This particular case study looks intensely at a small purposive sample, drawing conclusions only about this group, and only in this specific context.

3.11 Meet the participants

Smith & Osborn (2008) recommended the recruitment of a homogenous sample in order to find a similar group for whom the research question will be significant. To this end, the following inclusion criteria were utilised:

- eight to ten years of age;
- each from a different class;
- male;
- be at school action plus (SA+) and have (only) a PLASC descriptor of Specific Learning Disability (SpLD) for literacy difficulties;
- to have been at SA+ for at least a year prior to the study; and
- accessing one to two hours per week of interventions for literacy difficulties.

Selection for potential participants for the study was 'purposive and criterion based' (Merriam, 1998, p.612). In purposeful sampling the appropriateness of the sample should be judged on how well the selected sample would be able to answer the research question. A multiple case study of three was chosen for this study. This is consistent with IPA's ideographic approach in which, 'small sample sizes are recommended for IPA studies' (Smith *et al*. 2009, p.79-80).

Several head teachers in a large urban patch were approached and asked if they would like to participate in this study. One school expressed a desire to be the site school. The special educational needs coordinator (Senco) used the criteria to select potential participants. Background information about the three participants is provided in Table 1 below. All participants were given a pseudonym to protect their identity, and these will be used throughout this thesis.

Table 1. Background information about the participants

Participant pseudonym	Age	Ethnic origin
Ben	8	White British
Alex	9	White British
Luke	10	White British

3.12 Research with Children – Ethical issues

> *Article 12 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) clearly identifies the right of children to express their views on matters that impact on them. (Dockett & Perry, 2007, p.53)*

There has been a paradigm shift placing children in research 'as the subjects rather than passive objects of research' (Christensen & James, 2008, p.5). Drawing on research carried out in schools, I adopted the position that children are active and competent participants in research. This section discusses the rationale behind listening to children and considers the reliability of research in this field. Issues pertinent to child participants are outlined with particular emphasis on pupils with specific literacy difficulties. Ethical issues exist that need to be part of the study's methodology and design.

Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict (Stake, 2000, p.447)

3.12.1 Children's voice in research

The first question I asked was 'why involve children in the research?' I view children as 'valuable social actors and competent in their own right' and that their 'voices should be heard in research' (Thomas, 2005, p.80). Listening to children is seen as a key principle in the process of inclusion in school (Gersch, 1996), and is very important to me as a researcher. In hindsight I would liked to have engaged children in the construction of the study and interview schedules, this may have required a longer time frame than my research allowed.

The nature of the participants (children aged 8-11 with SEN) and the sensitivity of the topic (belongingness and relationships between pupils and teachers) posed important ethical issues. This study followed the research ethics protocol developed by the Ethics Committee at the University of Sheffield. This required full consideration of ethical principles including recruitment, consent, withdrawal, confidentiality, and psychological harm and distress. See Appendix 2 for a copy of submitted ethics form, which details the actions taken to demonstrate their consideration. The flyer (Appendix 3), participant information sheet (Appendix 4), and consent form (Appendix 5) are also included.

3.12.2 Power imbalance

Alldred and Burman (2005, p.188) claim that 'participants have the least power in the analysis and presentation of data'. They call this 'editorial authority'. To retain children's voices in the phases of data analysis I have incorporated reflexivity into the research, in keeping with the IPA process (Smith *et al*. 2009).

There were five optional drawing tasks in the interviews (for example see Appendix 6). Drawing has often been referred to as the universal language of childhood (Rubin, 1984). The use of drawings in research is reported to empower the participants, and enable the researcher to obtain child-led data (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Studies have shown that children can use drawings to define reality for the artist (Coates, 2002).

Children were given blank A4 paper and a choice of felt tip pens, crayons and pencils for the drawing tasks. The discussion around the drawings was gathered to supplement evidence from the interviews (Glesne, 1999; Yin, 2003)

3.13 Data Collection

The purpose of this research was to explore the experience of belongingness among three boys (aged 8-10 years old) with literacy difficulties. Combining the aim of this thesis with my ontological standpoint and the context of the study, I chose a method that facilitated description and understanding of these three boys' experiences (Kvale, 1997).

> *If you want to know how human beings understand their world and their life, why not talk to them? (Kvale, 1997, p.9)*

Observations were discarded as a research method because it was felt that an observation would only provide evidence of behaviours rather than thoughts and opinions about a phenomenon. A diary may have been a useful method of researching alternative truths, but was again discarded due to the literacy difficulties experienced by the participants.

Interviews are 'one of the most common and powerful methods that researchers use to capture and understand human experience' (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p.361). Interviews can help the researcher to 'gather complementary and contrasting perspectives', and this in turn 'leads to a depth in understanding of the issue under investigation' (Rapley, 2004, p.18).

3.13.1 Semi-structured interviews

In an attempt to understand this experience of belongingness, a semi-structured interview (see Appendix 1) was chosen as the research method. This enables the collection of detailed information that directly relates to a 'young person's construction of their social world' (Miller & Glassner, 1997, p.100), and is considered the ideal method for IPA studies (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The researcher considered the needs of the pupil participants. Semi structured interviews offer flexibility to 'introduce themes out of a prescribed order' (Neuman, 2006, p.287) and the scope to modify questions according to the needs of the interviewee (Robson, 1993). It also allows researchers to adjust pace and length of interviews to individual needs or concentration levels. I also gathered complimentary data in the form of a reflective researcher diary, and discussion during the optional drawing tasks. The drawings were originally intended to be analysed using Rosés' critical visual methodology framework (2001), but after engaging with empirical literature which questioned the reliability and validity of these methods (Bekhit *et al.* 2005; Malchiodi, 1998). I decided to use the tasks as a way of engaging with the children as a relaxation tool, and as an extra method to gain information on belongingness. I did not use the drawings to gauge the participants' feelings around a theme, or as symbolic projections of the unconscious.

The questions were based on a review of literature and provided a framework to structure the interview schedules. The format involved a range of questions clustered around themes considered relevant from the literature review on 'belongingness at school'. Using the two research questions I developed open-ended questions that also provided a structure that would hopefully elicit in depth data (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002). Questions were included such as 'How did you feel then?' 'What happened then?' to support the boys in relaying their experiences (cf Lippitz, 1983), and allowing them to talk about their experiences.

The 'quality of the interview setting' can be as 'crucial to the data gathering process' (Wragg, 1984, p.181). All settings will carry with them some form of value and this in turn could alter responses. The school offices initially offered as a venue may have had negative associations for some of the participants. An alternate setting was identified as familiar and secure, and had previously been used for after school clubs.

The 'quality of the data collection process may also be affected by the selected time of the interview', for example, tiredness last lesson on a Friday (Wragg, 1984, p.181). The researcher avoided the end period of each day. The collection of data was carried out in the summer term in an attempt to gain the fullest responses from nearly a year in a

classroom, with one consistent teacher. The interview responses will undoubtedly be influenced by immediacy of experience.

So that myth of right or wrong answers was dispensed with, the participants were assured at the beginning of the interview that their opinion was valuable and useful. Active listening was used during the interview (Radnor, 2001). Participants were given the opportunity to add whatever they wished at the end of the interview (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002), and were given time to finish the drawings if they wished. The interviews, with consent, were recorded as audio files. Patton (1990, 348) states that 'a tape recorder is indispensable'.

3.13.2 Reflections on the interviews

> *The interview is a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening. It is not an extra tool, for at least two people create the reality of the interview situation. In this situation answers are given. Thus the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes. This method is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including race, class, ethnicity, and gender. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.48)*

I decided to resolve my feelings by examining them and writing up initial thoughts after each interview in a journal. I also used supervision within my service to discuss this with the educational psychologist for the school. I was able to discuss my concerns openly with a very experienced psychologist who had also recently completed doctoral research. This session brought to mind how the participant is the 'expert' not the interviewer, and reminded me of my responsibility as a researcher to embrace new insights from the participants, and not to worry about keeping to the 'agenda'. The journal notes helped me to reflect on my interview style. In retrospect a better spacing between participants would have optimised these reflections. These notes also reminded me to ensure that each interview was participant led, the schedules acting only as a mechanism through which to gain lived experience.

> *... the perceptions people have of you, the researcher all feed into the data and alter it (Walmsley, 1993, p.44)*

Drawing on my own experience with children as a trainee educational psychologist and teacher helped me prepare for the interviews. The use of informal chat and a card game seemed to help anxieties disappear. In the very first interview I felt overwhelmed with information and strong emotions from the participant. I worried that given the intensity of emotion and rapidity of content, that I would not be able to think quick enough to add in prompts and additional questions where needed. I also felt a renewed energy for the project illustrated in the excerpt overleaf:

> *…listening to the accounts of these children was a humbling experience, highlighting the importance of every interaction in school that may stay with a child forever. I felt a renewed confidence during the interviews. I was much inspired by each interviewee's enthusiasm and willingness to discuss personal stories. I became more and more aware of the subtle differences between individual experiences that had appeared similar at the beginning, each interview appearing to have a strong theme of its own. The children spoke with confidence and honesty. This fuelled great excitement for myself in the chosen research area. (Research journal, 15th June, 2010)*

Interviewer effects with children who may be prone to suggestion need to be taken into account when collecting the data. I had concerns about this several times and noted this in my reflective journal. For example on the 13th July 2010 I noted the following:

> *Rushing the responses- worried about timings so rushing on with questions-must allow thinking time for participants. Are they giving me desirable answers-some answers given rather quickly' are they trying to please me, their teachers? (Research Journal, July13th, 2010)*

3.14 Transcription of data

To create transcripts suitable for analysis the researcher carried out some initial transcription of pilot data as well as the final transcriptions. Transcriptions were verbatim. Transcription can only be a 'representation of speech' (Riessman, 1994, p.11). The transcripts were refined by replaying the audio files, and by attending to verbatim content, silences and non-lexical sounds. Pauses, hesitations, sighs, yawns, interruptions and laughter were noted in brackets. Emphasised speech is written in bold print. Unclear speech was placed in brackets with the words unclear plus the elapsed

time (unclear 5 secs). Any potentially identifying information (i.e. school name, place) was removed or altered.

3.14.1 Reflections on transcription phase

As I transcribed Luke's interview I continued to reflect on his experience and felt emotionally involved with the data. His account was so emotionally laden that I found it difficult to approach the other transcripts with objectivity.

> *...listening to his account a few times contributed to my feelings of anger, sadness and excitement with the material; all conflicting emotions. It was actually very distressing listening to his account. (Journal Extract 17/08/10)*

3.15 The pilot study

A pilot study was carried out in March 2010 with 3 children of varying ages, all at junior school. I considered the pilot study as 'a dress rehearsal' in which I could identify potential difficulties and shortcomings. Strydom and Delport (2002, p.331) state additional benefits include the 'honing of communication skills needed for quality interviewing'. The main objectives of the pilot study were as follows:

- to develop my experience as a researcher in a school setting;
- to determine if the proposed semi structured interview would elicit rich data
- to thematically analyse some portions of data from the pilot interviews;
- to check language levels, difficulty and understanding of questions, timings, and recording equipment, and
- to assess the benefits and drawbacks of the optional drawing tasks.

During the pilot study question and answer data were closely analysed and instances of prompting, questioning, agreeing and disagreeing were noted. The interviewees were encouraged to interject with suggestions for improvement and enlightenment on problematic questions, wording etc. This information was used to inform the refined schedules.

The researcher made a decision to eliminate ambiguous and repetitive questions from the schedule. The interviews flowed better when a good rapport had been established and when confidence increased through the interviews. The first interview was carried out in a deputy head teacher's office and was very cramped and formal. The interview setting was value laden negatively for the participants. After the interviews had taken place, adjustment was made to the pupil schedule. The adapted interview schedule is in Appendix 1.

Five optional drawing tasks were trialled, spaced throughout the interview as an activity to help relax the children and introduce a fun element to the interview. The drawings provided an additional focus for discussion and were welcomed by two of the participants. The task seemed to create a relaxed atmosphere. One child got very absorbed in the task and the continuance of interview questions felt like an intrusion.

This was rectified by adding a time limit where needed, and participants were offered the opportunity to finish the drawings at the end of the interview. This potential need for extra time at the end was added to the interview planning.

3.15.1 A summary of key findings from the pilot study

The main findings of the pilot were as follows:

- pupils demonstrated keenness to be involved and a willingness to discuss sensitive issues;
- all the interviews were informative and yielded a considerable amount of data;
- questions for the pupils needed to be less open and ambiguous;
- pupils had an understanding of the term 'belongingness'; and
- using optional drawings to analyse feelings and behaviours was not strongly supported by empirical evidence, but was a useful tool for engagement, relaxation, and as a fun activity.

3.16 Data analysis

The researcher started by reading over transcript one (Luke), taking an ideographic perspective, looking to identify the meaning units and themes (Smith *et al*, 1999). This is a very time consuming process, but allowed for 'engagement' with the data. Bias was monitored in interpretation by returning constantly to the original accounts to ensure they were they were grounded in the text. This is a dialectical process 'called an abductive research strategy', associated with 'moving between everyday concepts and meanings, participants' accounts, and psychological explanations' (Blaikie, 2000, p.25).

Notes of any thoughts observations and reflections that occur during this process were made. The notes included 'similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications and contradictions' in what a participant is saying (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.67). These were noted in the right hand margin of the transcript. Smith & Osborn (2008) recommend notes to be written in the left hand margin, but I found that counter intuitive. A reflexive diary was kept to record the details of the nature and origin of any emergent interpretations. This was used during the analysis and interpretation phase. Word limits restricted the placement of excerpts within the thesis.

The next stage involved the re-reading of the text and making notes of observations in the data and identification of themes that best capture the 'essential quality of what was found in the text' (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.68). This part of the process involved the use of psychological concepts and terms (Willig, 2001) 'to make maximum psychological sense of the data' (Storey, 2007, p.55). Smith and Osborn (2004, p.71) described this process beautifully by asking the researcher to 'imagine a magnet with some of the themes pulling others in and helping to make sense of them'.

Connections were sought between themes, developing clusters or concepts, with the aim of identifying a group of themes and super-ordinate categories to give it a hierarchical structure. All the time I engaged in an iterative process repeatedly returning to the text. An initial list of themes was produced listing super-ordinate themes. These themes were used to 'orient the subsequent analysis' for the next two transcripts (ibid, p.73). Care was taken to ensure repeating themes were identified and new themes allowed to emerge. Similarities as well as differences were noted. A final reading of original transcripts was carried out to ensure the interpretations were grounded in participants' accounts. A list of super-ordinate themes was constructed and the process of prioritising and reduction began (ibid).

A fellow researcher experienced in using IPA, and with my research supervisor discussed transcript one to check the analysis data was derived from the transcripts and followed IPA principles. The researchers also determined if the themes were to be considered based on the quotations marked as evidence, whilst considering the transcript as a whole, 'checking the analysis for coherence' (Angen, 2000). The aim of the audit was not to reach agreement over the 'truest' account of participants' understanding and experiences of belongingness, because IPA is subjective and other researchers working with the same data may produce different analyses. The researchers provided insight into my thinking and approach and acted as a 'critical voice'.

The recurrence of a theme does not necessarily mean it should be selected as super-ordinate to, or more important than other themes. The emphasis placed by the participant, richness and eloquence of the selected also needs consideration. The themes provided the topic and focus for the write up (Reid *et al.* 2005).

Feedback from the participants regarding the themes was not sought as Smith (2004) does not feel this is necessary due to the double hermeneutic within IPA. Seeking participant validation is not compatible with phenomenological methods (Webb & Kevern, 2001), and quality control is achieved through the audit trail rather than an external member check. However, I am interested in feedback and the studies results are being presented to all the participants, families, and interested school staff in a presentation, with a take-away booklet. Time will also be allowed for discussion after the session. During the interpretation links were made from the research between literacy difficulties and other factors such as loneliness, isolation. This study did not seek to find causal explanations for events, or determine causal direction.

3.17 Quality concerns

> *…the key factors in determining the quality of the research will be*
> *the skill and creativity with which they apply the principles of the*
> *various methods. (Lyons & Coyle, 2007,p.28)*

Qualitative research presents different challenges to quantitative research with its positivist epistemology when establishing quality and rigour (Yardley, 2008). This has been acknowledged by several authors who have offered guidance on quality concerns in qualitative research (Elliot *et al*. 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spencer *et al*. 2003; Yardley, 2008). The researcher has adopted Spencer *et al.'s* (2003) guiding principles to assess the quality and vigour of this study, and describes below the steps taken to meet them.

3.17.1 Impact and importance

One of the most important principles outlined by Spencer *et al.* (2003) is that all research should contribute to and advance existing knowledge in the area investigated. This has been achieved by setting the aim and design of this study in the context of existing knowledge, and the findings are discussed alongside limitations of their applicability. The relevance and need for this study was outlined in the introduction and literature review in Chapter one, and was set in the context of a wide range of existing knowledge from a variety of disciplines. Particular attention was also given on its applicability to the field of child and educational psychology. A consideration of the relevance of findings to educational research is included in Chapter 4.

3.17.2 Defensible in design

Spencer *et al.* (2003) defines a defensible design as one that was designed to address the research question. This refers to the chosen methodology, discussed in detail in the methodology section.

3.17.3 Credibility in claim

Credibility or verification refers to the truth-value of the findings (Meadow & Morse, 2001). Spencer *et al.* (2003) suggested using a principle called 'credible in claim', in which the findings are supported by well-founded and plausible arguments. Credibility was addressed within the design of this study in the following ways:

- themes were developed independently, then checked with another psychologist and research supervisor for coherence, comprehensibility, and that they were grounded in the text;
- narrative description of themes, verbatim extracts have been included to illustrate the points being made; and
- participant feedback was sought at the end of each interview, and supervisor and peer feedback was also sought.

Credibility and transferability is established through the use of triangulation, as recommended by Smith and Osborn (2003). Triangulation in the present study refers to the fellow researchers being invited to comment on the coherence of the analysis, and the extent to which the quotes supported the theme development (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

3.17.4 Rigorous in conduct

Rigour refers to data collection, and depth and breadth of analysis (Yardley, 2000). This study contains a case study database as advised by Yin (2003) to facilitate an audit trail that will enable the reader to assess the validity or credibility of the work. The database will contain the following audit trail notes recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.319-320):

- raw data transcript one (Luke) as an example of analysis and interpretation;
- data reduction and analysis products;
- extracts from the reflexive journal and self reflexivity throughout the thesis has been included where word limit allowed; and
- instrument development information (mind maps, schedule)

Peer review was used to ensure rigour, transcript one being shared with two fellow researchers, one who had extensive experience of using IPA. Both agreed with the themes produced and verified the quotes supported the themes. The three mind maps charting some of the decision-making in the theme reduction process can be seen in Appendix 8. An annotated transcript is provided in Appendix 9, demonstrating an audit trail for the readers. I also attended an IPA workshop aiming to develop my analytic skills during the session.

3.18 Self Reflexivity

Research could be defined as a central component of being human (the capacity to position the self) and also 'the ability to reflect on and think about intersubjective dynamics between research and data' (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p.8). There is a paradox created in IPA as although the participant is at the centre of the exploration, there is no such thing as a 'view from nowhere' (Nagel, 1974), (first described in an essay titled 'what is it like to be a bat'), as the researcher is also significant in the research process. IPA acknowledges and explores the researcher's role. Reflexivity is seen as vital in aiding transparency.

In the introduction chapter I discussed how I came to be interested in this project. Further background information about my assumptions, beliefs and experiences are presented below, so that interaction with the research process can be reflected on. The first person presence 'I' is used when appropriate, making it easier to locate my position in relation to my research and my voice in my writing.

My prior recent grounding in positivist approaches during the psychology degree made the initial interpretations a rather worrying process. At a theoretical level I was grappling with the dilemma of subjective and objective experience. Discussion with peers involved

in research was used to share thinking and generate ideas as to how emergent themes might be interpreted. These worries eased during the analysis process.

So why am I seriously interested in boys with literacy difficulties and their experience of belongingness? At the beginning of this research journey I realised that I have been deeply engaged with this question for thirty years. My earlier experiences working with homeless adolescents started this journey of thought, where each day I was confronted by individuals who appeared to have lost a sense of belonging to families and communities, and in society.

> *'Many times during teaching I have been moved by individual children's apparent solitude within a classroom, and within school. Sometimes these divides were mirrored at home. These are the pupils I was drawn to work with, to integrate and include them in a way that would lessen their seeming isolation. Did I ask them if they felt isolated? Did I ask them if they wanted some resolution? At times I would seek answers but often I ploughed in with my own interpretations and answers'.* (*Extract from retrospective reflective journal, July 15th 2010)*

This extract demonstrates how my prior experiences and thoughts over many years have fuelled my motivation to study the concept of belonging. I am also attracted to a methodology approach that is rigorous in its approach, allowing me to ask these sorts of questions and approach them scientifically. I am also committed to working with children who appear to be marginalised in the classroom, for whatever reason.

I am a white British female, aged 51, who spent the first seven years of life in the countryside and then moved to a middle class suburb of Coventry. I am a final year educational psychologist in training and am undertaking this research as part of a Doctoral programme. My previous jobs have included working in the mental health sector with alcoholic and homeless males, project work on a long term psychiatric ward in a hospital, youth work and outreach work with permanently excluded teenagers, teaching at primary level, special needs teaching, and teaching in a Pupil Referral Unit at Key Stage (KS) 3 and 4. As a child I experienced moving house at seven years old and settling into a new school, a loss of a mother at seven years old, and the gaining quite quickly of a new mother with mental health difficulties. I cannot pinpoint any one experience that led to an interest in belonging, but feel that it is a culmination of many

prior experiences. Also pertinent to this study may be my feelings growing up as an adopted child, in which I was aware of the feeling of difference within my family.

At the age of eighteen I was a single parent living away from home with no contact with my family. This brought many challenges, but helped shape my empathy with young people who may be marginalised by society. I feel that this experience helped fuel my desire to advocate for the 'underdog', and culminated in early employment in project work with young homeless and alcoholic males in the city, and also in my role on a psych-geriatric ward. The hospital role brought me into contact with many young drug addicts who had overdosed and had suffered early dementia as a consequence. These roles led to a desire to work in the Youth and Outreach Service out in the community in a very deprived area locally. The outreach work was very challenging as the aim was to engage permanently excluded teenagers who were not attending a school setting.

Later I became a teacher in inner city Birmingham. One of my roles was home school liaison, and empowering parental voice in school. During this time I ran the Youth Parliament Scheme and set up a whole school anti bullying scheme. I was regularly touched by the apparent loneliness of some children in my class and the school as a whole. I was a keen advocate of peer mentoring schemes within the school.

My experiences and personal values have informed my theoretical position, I have approached this research from a 'critical realist' perspective, in which, as I understand its application, reality is engaged through shared experience (in line with IPA). I adopted this stance in an attempt to acknowledge the reality of individual lived experience, and to also help understand multiple viewpoints.

> *What can be known and the individual who comes to know it are fused into a coherent whole. (Guba, 1990. p.26)*

My subsequent training in Educational and Child Psychology has been on a course shaped by interpretivist underpinnings. This was quite different to the more positivist thread running through the psychology degree and made me question assumptions about the validity of different types of research. The training encouraged me to question all research and to look more closely at discourse and dominant narratives that may influence my practice as an educational psychologist.

From my philosophical position now, I feel that I missed an opportunity to utilise joint research with the children by engaging them in constructing the interview schedules and gathering of data. I also experienced a conflict between being a researcher rather than a psychologist, making me examine the ethics of the situation and my responsibility as a researcher. To enhance commitment I transcribed all interview content so that I could become fully immersed in the data and also to aid in reflective analysis.

My grounding as an educational psychologist using reflexivity through the doctorate has enabled me to demonstrate and develop reflexivity during the research phase. My personal experiences and reflections on these experiences, beliefs and assumptions will have influenced the interactions with each participant, the analysis procedure, and the co-construction of meaning. A different researcher may have elicited different responses and interpreted the data in a different way. The double hermeneutic nature of IPA aims to make any bias transparent and minimal, and makes me as a researcher publicly accountable for my decisions along the research journey (Finlay, 2002). The journal and personal reflections are discussed more fully in the analysis and discussion chapter. This research is an opportunity for some children to tell their stories, bringing attention to their voices, so that we might learn from them.

3.18.1 Reflective journal

Fielding (1993, p.161) emphasises the 'importance of keeping field notes' and avoiding the 'erosion of memory'. I kept a reflective journal (Smith, 1996) and after each interview I immediately documented anything I felt pertinent the analysis and interpretation, informal chat prior to the questions, mood, interruptions, impressions, and my personal thoughts and ideas. The journal was also used as a space to document decisions along the journey and the reasons for them.

Silverman (2000, p.126) asserted 'in making field notes, one is not simply recording data but also analysing them'. I am aware that all field notes may 'paint a picture of our own prejudices and biases' (de Laine, 2000, p.215) and need reading with this in mind. Extracts are used throughout the thesis where relevant (see Appendix 7 for sample extracts).

4   CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Introduction

> *…phenomenological research is expressly interested in people's experiences and particularly the experiences of those people who are usually ignored. (Levering, 2006, p.457).*

The following section will present the analysis and discussion of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of the school belongingness experiences of boys with literacy difficulties. I aim to provide the reader with a rich account of the lived experience, how they made sense of their experience of school belongingness, and link the findings to research.

The discussion follows each section making for ease of reading and coherence. The discussion in each subsection will focus on how the themes relate to existing theory and literature, enabling further understanding of the boys' experiences. Some of the themes explored in the results section have been discussed in the literature review, whereas other themes are new and/or less prominent in the existing literature (for example, long term hospitalization and illness). In keeping with qualitative research, new literature will be introduced where relevant.

Five key super-ordinate themes from all three participants will form the basis of the following account:

- interpersonal relationships;
- emotional equilibrium;
- physical illness;
- teacher practices
- self exclusion/disengagement

As discussed in the previous chapter, the themes developed are a result of a double hermeneutic (Smith, 2004), influenced by my own perspective (Elliot *et al.* 1999); emerging in the research process of me as a researcher making sense of the participants making sense of their experiences. These themes reflect aspects of the data that are relevant to the specific research questions and do not reflect all features of

the participants' experiences. Another researcher may have focused on different aspects of the experiences.

The 'keyness' of a viewpoint, concept or theme is 'not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures' i.e. repetition, but where 'prevalence has occurred in the participants' accounts; this is reported in this section (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). I have attempted to present a systematic and rigorous account with a transparent audit trail. I will use this section to discuss the participants' accounts, interspersed with my personal reflections as evidence of the personal reflexivity engaged in through the research process.

All of the participants' accounts were rich, but word limitations for the thesis limited some of the representation of text within the results chapter. Decisions about the significance and salience of similarities and difference, and overlap between accounts, were taken by the researcher (Smith, 2004). One theme in particular, 'self exclusion and disengagement' was chosen not because of commonality between the participants, but because of its richness and eloquence, and the salience in relation to the research questions, within mainly one account. To illustrate my themes, verbatim quotes from the interviewees are presented, helping the reader to trace the analytic process. The quotes are referenced in the text in the form of the pseudonym, page number and line number of the transcript in brackets at the end (e.g. Luke, Pg9, Ln31). The provisional themes from transcript 1, (Luke) are presented as follows:

- peer relations
- emotions
- importance of sport
- friendships
- empathy
- teacher preference
- acknowledgement
- communication (shouting, listening)
- illness
- pessimism and optimism
- transitional objects

- escaping/leaving school

- relationships with adults

- exclusion (self, others)

- rewards

- bullying and violence

- externalizing responsibility

- anxiety and sleep disorder

- being detained

- extended family in school

A visual presentation of how I clustered the themes for transcript 1 can be seen in figure 1. The initial annotated transcript is presented in Appendix 9, completing a rigorous audit trail for the reader.

Figure 1. Initial themes for transcript 1
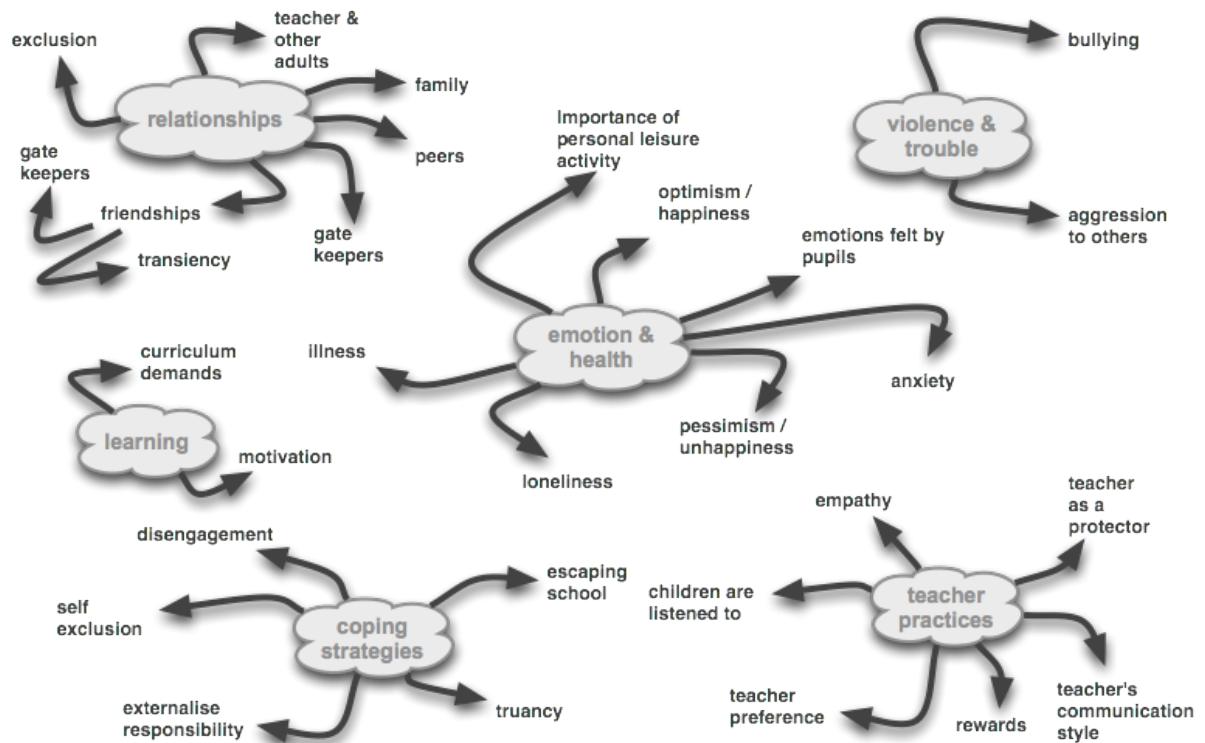
These themes were taken to transcript two and three, and the six super-ordinate themes and related subordinate themes that contributed to them, will now be explored.

Many of the themes could have been subsumed under alternative headings, and many of the themes cross and link into the other themes.

Figure 2 shows the final five themes:

- Interpersonal relationships;
- physical illness;
- emotional equilibrium;
- teacher practices; and
- self exclusion and disengagement

Appendix 10 shows the audit trail as I subsumed themes and changed categories so they flowed easier for the reader. There is a crossover between many of the themes, for example, 'dialogue and communication' emerged for peers and teachers and could have been an independent theme. After much thought the subordinate themes were placed within the 'interpersonal' relationship category. 'Externalising responsibility', 'curriculum demands', and 'transitional objects' were removed as they were considered to be poorly supported, and were represented very weakly.

Figure 2. Final themes from the three participant transcripts
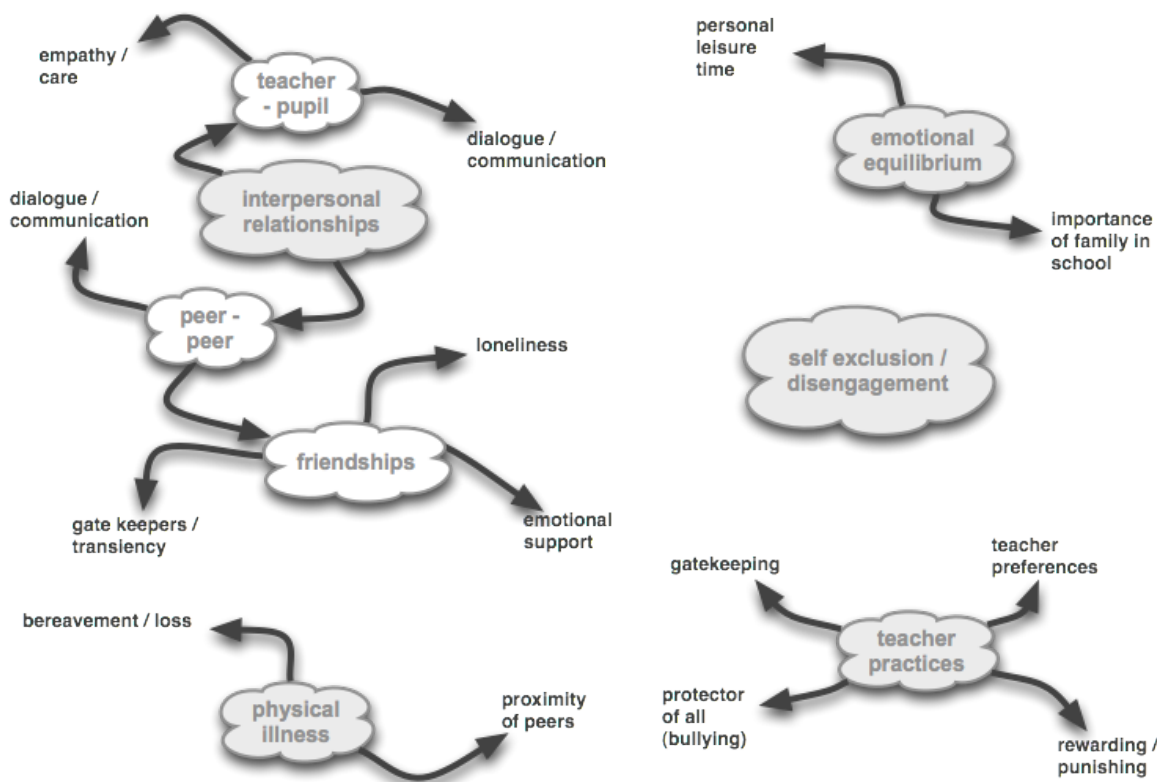
A qualitative study can, and should, be 'judged on its ability to draw the reader into the researcher's discoveries allowing the reader to see the worlds of others in new and deeper ways' (Finlay, 2006, p.322).

4.2   Interpersonal Relationships

Relationships emerged as the most powerful theme in all the accounts. 'Interpersonal relationships' was chosen as a name that represented the constant presence throughout the accounts of the importance of relationships, both adult and pupil. Interpersonal relationships have been shown to be significant in fostering belongingness in school (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Nichols, 2006, 2008; Ryan *et al.* 1994).

4.2.1   Peer–peer relationships

This sub-theme of peer-peer relationships emerged as a very powerful theme for all three participants. It featured very prominently in each participant's account, and was repeated many times throughout each participant's data. There was a danger that participants would reel off a list of socially acceptable answers with a list of acquaintances, but this not occur in the participants' more descriptive accounts. The three accounts contribute to our understanding of the importance of peer group relationships, and any correlation with pupils' sense of belonging and feelings of sadness.

The three participants' descriptions of their peers in class reflected how they later described their relationships with their peers. Ben and Alex described characteristics positively, and Luke negatively, repeating the word 'mean' three times in his account.

Noisy, all the boys are silly. All the boys get in trouble, including me and.......everyone well........ it's very, very fun.(giggle) (Alex, P5, Ln9-10)

Noisy….. busy and **cute**.
Interviewer: Cute, why are they cute?
because everybody's got a cute smile.(laugh) (Ben, Pg1, Ln16)

(Describing his class)
Mean.
Interviewer: They're mean?
All of them. I hate them! (Luke, Pg5, Ln30)

Alex talked in very positive terms about the boys in his class, but Luke repeatedly described an intense dislike of his peers in class. At this stage of social development the vast majority of friendships for both boys and girls are gender concordant. I felt overwhelmed with the sense of social isolation that Luke appeared to be experiencing. I wondered if Luke was stuck in a 'feedback loop', experiencing rejection, then socially withdrawing and becoming less assertive in seeking social relationships.

> All the boys I like and all the girls I don't, I don't like them at all (Alex, Pg21, Ln6)
>
> I don't like any of them. (Luke, Pg9, Ln15)

The participants demonstrated an awareness of the link between belongingness and poor relationships with peers in the classroom. The responses below are taken from Ben and Alex's accounts, from discussion about how a pupil might feel who had a poor SOB. This theme is explored further in the friendship section.

> …no one likes him (Alex, Pg5, Ln5)
>
> ... sad. Like G he has no friends (Ben, Pg2, Ln27)

Only one participant reported pervasive, long-term difficulties with peer relationships, but this was repeated many times throughout his account. I linked his reports to stability over time of isolation, bullying, and peer rejection. During the interview I had not thought to investigate further the 'class norms' experienced by Luke in regards to bullying, but was aware that his account may relate to wider classroom norms.

> They do because they're always being mean to me, kick me and stuff. (Luke, Pg8,Ln10)

Peer relationships were very dominant in the interviews, supporting previous studies demonstrating the centrality of positive peer relationships for happiness (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005), and for belongingness (Newman et al. 2007; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Wentzell & Caldwell, 1997). In a recent UK study, Waters *et al.* (2010) demonstrated that pupils with fewer difficulties in their peer relationships experienced a greater connectedness with school.

Positive peer relationships have been associated with academic motivation (Covington & Dray, 2002), class involvement (Wentzel *et al.* 2004), academic achievement (Ladd (1990; Wentzell, 1998), and positive mental health (Gray & McNaughton, 2005; Newman *et al.* 2007). Furrer and Skinner (2003) proposed peer acceptance promotes social inclusion, which in turn increases a sense of belongingness, thus enhancing interpersonal and academic outcomes. In a CAMHS review (DoH, 2008, p.23) pupils

were asked what made them feel good 'inside', or was 'important for their wellbeing'. One of three factors reported was 'having good support networks across family, friends, and school' (ibid, p.23).

Negative peer treatment has been related to future disengagement from school (Buhs, 2005), and decrements in classroom participation (Buhs *et al.* 2006), and is clear to see in Luke's account relating disengagement from all his peers in class. Various studies have demonstrated stability in peer acceptance, victimisation, and rejection (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2003; Walker, 2009), rejected children in particular more likely to remain victimised than better-accepted children. Chronic peer rejection, as described by Luke, has been related to poor self-perception (Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2003). Long periods of peer rejection for boys, predicts an increased risk of internalising problems (Burks *et al*. 1995).

Researchers have specifically explored peer acceptance relating to pupils with SEN (Hall & McGregor, 2000; Kuhne & Wiener, 2000). These studies found peer acceptance did not improve over time, and reported a deterioration of peer acceptance over time. It has to be noted not all pupils with SEN are rejected; there are considerable individual differences (Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Meadan & Halle, 2004), as evidenced by both Ben and Alex during their account.

4.2.2   Friendships

All of the participants' accounts placed importance on the value of friendships. This was a very powerful sub theme.

I want to stay because of my friends (Alex, Pg7, Ln17)

Both Alex and Luke reported a lack of friendships, Alex placed emphasis on the lack of a 'best mate', but Luke's account was very much in the present tense and also appeared to relate to long-term difficulties with friendships pervading over time. Alex was asked about a time when he felt he didn't belong and he instantly related this to a lack of a close emotional tie. Ben also described a similar time in which he felt he too didn't belong.

> *…I feel like I don't belong, I feel like I haven't got any best mates. (Alex, Pg34, Ln13)*
>
> *Nobody talked to me. I was always on my own for **ages** (Ben, Pg4, Ln7)*

Luke's account throughout the interview was negatively laden with an almost preoccupation with a lack of friendships. He also stated he wanted to be friends with all the class.

> *Interviewer: Why are you sad now?*
> *I have no friends (Luke, Pg, Ln9)*
>
> *I don't think I've got any friends. (Luke, Pg2, Ln22)*
>
> *I want to be friends with the whole class (Luke, Pg6, Ln1)*

Ben described a hypothetical child in his class who might feel they did not belong. He also used the word 'sad' linked to a boy he knew in class who he described as 'not belonging'.

> *….sad. Like G he has no friends (Ben, Pg2, Ln27)*

Ben felt that his feeling of not belonging was resolved when he starting building friendships in class. He made a clear link between not being alone, building relationships, and his own sense of happiness and wellbeing.

> …people were my friend a little bit. I wasn't sad no more.(Ben, Pg4, Ln9)

4.2.3 Gatekeeping and transiency

Luke described peer friendships as impacting on his leisure activity of football. He recounted being excluded from football by some of his peers. His peers seem to act as gatekeepers to playtime activities.

> … I play football but …. they won't let me play (Luke, Pg14, Ln27)

Luke's account of peers 'gate keeping' football was corroborated by Ben. Ben described how people that were liked, were allowed to play football, intimating at the immense powers of 'clique' peer groups:

> …people you like
>
> **Yeh**...they can play football (Ben, Pg16, Ln36)

All three boys talked in terms of gatekeepers to friendships. Their use of language seemed to denote that friendship was given by some, and as such could be withheld or withdrawn. Ben was asked what children might do in class for someone who felt they didn't belong.

> *… some people might come up and try and let them belong in the school, let them be friends. They might not though. (Ben, Pg 2, Ln29-30)*
>
> *People like annoy me, I get frustrated....(1 sec).they **won't** let me be friends (Alex: Page 8, Ln1)*
>
> *They tell J to not be my friend (Luke, Pg3, Ln7)*

The accounts hint at a lack of personal control over friendships. Luke's account seems to portray a group decision amongst Luke's peers on whether or not friendship will be given on that day. Luke described many occasions where his friendships were characterised by a lack of stability, and high levels of conflict and aggression. He spoke in anger when describing the 'chaos' in his friendships, and appears to have high rejection sensitivity. Although he talked of friendships, he also stated that he didn't like any of his class, contradicting his earlier accounts of friendship, however transient they may be.

> *...it's just all chaos, he'll just be real mean. Because one day he'll be nice to J, one day he'll be nice to me and all sorts. The day's he's nice to J he ignores me, the day he's nice to me he ignores J…* (Luke, Pg3, Ln4-7)
>
> *…I don't like any of them (Luke, Pg9, Ln15)*

Ben and Alex's friendships appeared more stable in their accounts. Their stories demonstrated that they were able to maintain their friendships and manage conflict in a successful manner, even though Alex's friendships were described as low in quality. Luke may feel as if he has no control over the unpredictability and fragility of his friendships, and his account seems to resonate with feelings of loneliness (addressed below).

A reciprocated friendship can be defined as a dyadic relationship (Wentzell & Caldwell, 1997), and can provide companionship, emotional support, and security (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005). Although mentioned in the peer relationships section in the literature review, friendship itself was not examined in detail. Gate-keeping was also not addressed in the literature review. Many studies provide evidence that peer relationships, in particular, friendships, play an important role in SOB (Appleton *et el*. 2006; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005; Kagan, 1990; Wentzell *et al.* 2004).

Friendships usually vary in type and quality. These participants described a variety of friendship quality. Some friendships are characterised by aggressive behaviour (e.g. Crick & Nelson, 2002; Poulin & Boivin, 2000) as described by Luke. Ben's discourse talks of positive quality friendships at present. Both Luke and Alex describe their friendships and/or relationships as low in quality, citing many fallings out, supported by research by Ladd *et al.* (1996), in which conflict in friendships for boys, predicted satisfaction with friendship and higher levels of school loneliness.

It must be noted that conflict is normative in children's friendships, but conflict resolution behaviour is positively related to boys' friendships stability (Bowker, 2004). Luke's friendships characterised by conflict also support the study findings (ibid) in which conflict also predicted school avoidance, engagement, and lower levels of school liking. Luke's impoverished relationships also appear to support evidence from Brendgen *et al.'s* (2000) and Parker & Asher's (1993) studies, in which poorly-accepted children have lower quality relationships. Luke's reported fluidity of friendships, and high levels of victimisation also corroborates findings by Wojslawowicz *et al.* (2006) in which fluidity of friendships over the school year predicted levels of victimisation.

Children who suffer from 'rejection sensitivity' (further discussed in peer-peer section) may perceive rejection in interactions with friends, and may thus compromise their friendships with aggression, withdrawal or overreaction (Zimmer-Gemeck *et al.* 2007). Luke and Alex both spoke of reacting to rejection, although Luke's withdrawal responses seem more embedded than Alex's reported responses. Luke's concern with ownership of friendship supports findings by Goldstein *et al.* (2006) in which relationally aggressive children had friendships that were high in conflict and aggression, and exclusivity demanded by one or both.

Ben's account supports research evidence in which children with friends who like school, do well in school, and have more positive mental health (Crosnoe *et al.* 2003; Jessor *et al.* 1998). Ben does not report struggling with work even though he has literacy difficulties. He has a positive view of his progress.

4.2.4   Dialogue/communication and emotional support

Peers have a supportive emotional role for the pupils. A sub theme that emerged in the peer relationships sub-theme was the importance of peer-peer communication. Alex described times when he felt he didn't belong; this was transient for Alex. He ascribed his feelings to a lack of friendship, being controlled by his peers, and the lack of interaction through talking. This lack of communication made Alex feel isolated in class.

....they won't let me be friends, then they don't talk.(Alex, Pg8, Ln1-4)

The importance of talking amongst peers was further emphasised later in Alex's account.

…when I'm feeling sad they listen to me and talk to me.(Alex, Pg35, Ln8)

Alex's friendships appear to fulfil a very vital emotional support role. His friends were described as people he could talk to. Talking to his friends seemed to be very important for Alex. Unfortunately for Luke, his account was filled with sadness at having no one to talk to, and in particular no one talking to him. He described the pupils sitting next to him

as 'hating' him and ignoring him. Luke appears to be isolated in class, his account depicting his isolation as long term and pervasive.

> Me..all my friends tell each other stuff. (Alex, Pg16, Ln20)
>
> …they don't talk to me… (Luke, Pg8, Ln15)

When Ben described a time in school in which he had felt like he didn't belong, he also related it to a lack of communication with his peers. His account was marked by a sad tone of voice and an emphasis on the word 'ages'.

> *…nobody talked to me. I was always on my own for **ages** (low tone) (Ben, Pg4, Ln7)*
>
> *…because we didn't know anybody, and we didn't talk, and I wanted to talk. (Ben, Pg4, Ln14-15)*

All the boys described the importance of communication for themselves. Ben and Alex described how they know they are liked by the incidence of peer communications in friendly dialogue. In Ben's class there appeared to be a culture amongst his friends of actually telling each other they are liked. Ben stated that if they did not tell you this, then they didn't like you. This has implications for class ethos and the emotional openness of pupils. In Alex's class just talking to him signified that his peers liked him. Luke also explained that if peers like you, they would 'talk' to you.

> *Interviewer: How do you know when someone in your class likes you?*
> *They'd say.*
> *Interviewer: Would they? What if they didn't say, would you know?*
> *That means they don't like you. (Ben, Pg15, Ln23-26)*
>
> Interviewer: How do you know when someone in your class likes you?
> They'd talk to me........be nice (Alex, Pg29, Ln7-9)
>
> …be my friend, talk to me, not bully me (Luke, Pg13, Ln36)

Positive interactions peer-peer seem to play a role of boosting or lowering self-esteem for the participants. When asked what he was good at, Ben replied 'football'. He explained that he knew he was good at it because people in the class told him he was. Perhaps this vocalisation reflects back and confirms, his success. For Luke the experience was the polar opposite. He had not experienced his peers complimenting him in any way. The term 'never' demonstrates that Luke's peers do not make him feel good about himself. He placed an emphasis on the term 'never'.

…they tell me (Ben, Pg13, Ln32)

…they **never** say I'm good at anything (Luke, Pg14, Ln4)

> *Human existence is characterized by the fact that man is alone and separated from the world; not being able to stand the separation, he is impelled to seek for relatedness and oneness (Fromm 1947, p. 96)*

4.2.5   Loneliness

'Loneliness' emerged as a powerful subordinate theme that seemed to capture the visual image that participants had of children who feel they do not belong in the classroom. This theme was captured in first hand accounts, experienced personally by two of the boys, and was also described in the third person when the participants were questioned as to how a child who did not feel they belonged would present themselves in the classroom. 'Loneliness' was interpreted as being alone when one wished to be included with others. This is contrasted with 'having lots of friends', described by all the participants.

---

my bestest mate playing, we all friends. (Alex, Pg1, Ln10)

no one likes him (Alex, Pg5, Ln5)

***Sad**, like Greg he has no friends (Ben, Pg2, Ln29)*

> *…some people might come up and try and let them belong in the school, let them be friends (Ben, Pg2, Ln31)*

Luke's account was a very poignant first hand account where he describes himself feeling as though he does not belong. He relates this to having no friends.

> *([Luke was drawing and talking about not belonging, I asked Luke if it was just the character in the picture that felt like he did not belong)]*
>
> *I am sad now and in the picture*
> *Interviewer: Why are you sad now?*
> *I have no friends (Luke, Pg2, Ln8-10)*

Ben talked about an earlier time, when he was younger and had felt he did not belong. He describes being in trouble and feeling alone:

> *Nobody talked to me. I was always on my own for ages.* (Ben, Pg4, Ln8)

Ben also describes how his situation changed when he started to make friendships:

> *Interviewer: "Oh no...and did that change?"*
> *Yeh.people were my friend a little bit, I wasn't sad no more" (Ben, Pg4, Ln7-8)*

Sadness was the emotion described by all the boys when asked to describe a pupil who feels they don't belong.

> He's just always, he's always sad (sigh) (Alex, Pg5, Ln7)

When discussing belonging at school and feeling happy, Luke described his own unhappiness at school, and related these feelings to a lack of friendships.

> *Interviewer: Why are you sad now?*
> *I have no friends (Luke, Pg2, Ln9-10)*

Luke's accounts were characterised by a pessimistic explanatory style. His dispositional pessimism may be a character trait, a result of pervasive negative experiences at school, and/or a style triggered through his early experiences with ill health. Luke was very negative on many occasions throughout the interview, especially when asked about whether he may feel he belongs more in the future.

Interviewer: Do you think you will one day though, when you've been here longer?
I've been here about five years. (Luke, Pg5, Ln14)

Interviewer: Do you think she could help you make more friends?
No, because they'll just be mean to me anyway cos they hit me. (Luke, Pg5, Ln26)

(asked about sharing good news with teacher)
No..I wouldn't she wouldn't listen (Luke, Pg7, Ln24)

The current research suggests children with a learning disability may be at an increased risk for loneliness, peer acceptance (Hall & McGregor, 2000; Kuhne & Wiener, 2000), and peer difficulties in school (Buysse *et al.* 2002; Buhs & Ladd, 2001). This marries well with Luke's present experience, Alex's past experience, but not for Ben. As in the Cassidy and Asher (1992) study, both Luke and Alex experienced loneliness after perceived rejection. Loneliness was reported by Luke as a long-term pervasive state at school, further supported by Newsom *et al.'s study* 2005) which reported loneliness stable over time.

Individual differences may occur in terms of each person's experience of loneliness. Loneliness has been shown to be a separate construct to belonging (Pretty *et al.* 1994), but correlates weakly (r = 028), suggesting that a SOB may be moderated by loneliness (Mellor *et al.* 2008). Alex's temporal experience of loneliness was linked in his own discourse to a lack of friendships with his peers. Loneliness is also known to predict problems in social relationships (Juvonen *et al.* 2000), demonstrated very aptly by Luke. Loneliness is also is associated with social avoidance (Crick & Ladd, 1993), and distancing (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Luke describes many instances of avoidance and distancing in his account. Further support for this research is also corroborated in Ben's account in which he describes popularity with peers, and reports

satisfaction with his peer relationships. In Ben's account there are no references to any social avoidance or distancing behaviours.

Luke's experience of pervasive loneliness and persistent peer victimisation resonates well with research findings (Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Juvonen *et al.* 2000). Important for future predictions for these participants are the findings of predicted higher absenteeism and lower academic achievement linked to loneliness in school (Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Juvonen *et al.* 2000) (discussed in more detail in the self-exclusion and disengagement section).

4.2.6 Relatedness to teachers

Teacher-pupil relationships play a significant role in the fostering of a SOB (Nichols, 2006, 2008; Solomon *et al.* 1996). The themes of dialogue/communication, and empathy and care are discussed together as the discussion cross-links.

Dialogue/communication, empathy and care

All three participants described a desire to talk and relate to the teaching staff, although Luke's account also describes a withdrawal of social interaction too. His account had many contradictions of on the one hand for more communication, and on the other, self-silencing and withdrawal.

…happy sometimes. I can't do it. I like it if she tells me stuff… (Ben, Pg15, Ln8)

…it's just better. It's because it's like 1:1, the teacher hasn't got like twenty other kids, so you can like talk to her.(Alex, Pg15, Ln16)

…come to me.... talk to me (Luke Pg7, Ln1)

Alex talked about moving schools so that he could have more time to talk to the teacher; this comment demonstrates the importance of a communicative relationship with the teacher for Alex. His account appears to value individual interaction, and a desire for an increase in this communication.:

> ...you've got less people in the class and can talk to the teacher (Alex, Pg7, Ln18-19)

The participants described particularly liking certain adults in school because they talked to them. Talking was described as a way to show acceptance and positive affirmation of a pupil. It may also affirm acknowledgement of pupils' emotional states.

> *Interviewer: ..and why do you like Mr Clark?*
>
> *Because he's always kind to us. He talks to us. (Ben, Pg 18, Ln18-19)*
>
> *(Describing favourite adults in school)*
>
> …because they make me happy. They nice… talk to me. (Luke, Pg16, Ln11)
>
> …like help and say hi to me. When I'm feeling sad they listen to me and talk to me. (Alex, Pg35, Ln8-9)

The participants also described times they would talk to their teacher; these descriptions may characterise their relationship with the teacher. Alex's account demonstrates that he feels able to talk to his teacher about his learning, and also about emotional issues; demonstrating evidence of both teacher care and empathy in his relationship with his teacher as well as teacher learning support.

> ...Yeh…when people are naughty, or if I'm in trouble.
>
> Interviewer: Oh...Can you think of other times?
>
> just...when people are being naughty, silly.(Ben, Pg7, Ln31-33)
>
> Interviewer: When would you think about talking to your teacher?
>
> (3 secs) like when...(2 secs)...........like studying or learning... (Alex, Pg13, Ln16-17)
>
> Like help and say hi to me. When I'm feeling sad they listen to me and talk to me. (Alex, Pg35, Ln8)

These accounts of teacher-listening and empathic talking with Alex highlight secure, positive attachments with adults in school. Ben also related a time he felt he didn't belong as when he was 'in trouble' with the teacher. He ascribed not belonging and the

feeling of sadness to 'being told off'. This comment demonstrates that the teacher-pupil relationship is very important to Ben.

…I was being told off, I felt in trouble and unhappy and I didn't feel I belonged in the class. (Ben Pg4, Ln4-5)

Ben's account also demonstrated empathic communications, and positive attachments to adults in school at present. For Luke, the desire for a caring relationship with his teacher echoes through his account as seen below:

Interviewer: If somebody in your class has good news to tell, who do they go and tell? Miss R. Well I would anyway. (Ben, Pg9, Ln32)

… Come to me.... talk to me. (Luke Pg7, Ln1)

Be nice…not shout at me if I was crying in the corner… (Luke, Pg7, Ln8)

He also reported a time when he felt aggrieved because staff showed a lack of understanding when he and another pupil were ill. This clearly demonstrated that Luke felt a lack of empathy and understanding from staff.

...when I was ill, when me and Victoria were ill, she shouted….(Luke, Pg9, Ln33-34)

Luke's relationship with adults in school shows a history of difficulties going back to his previous school:

…one of the teachers at my old school was really mean, and she kept poking me in the back and stuff. (Luke, Pg4, Ln10-11)

His present relationship with his class teacher is described by Luke as very poor, and characterised by punitive interactions and negative discourse. This may signify a lack of attachment between Luke and his teacher. Luke jumped to the conclusion that his teacher does not like him and voiced this twice in his account. He ascribed his knowledge of teacher-dislike to her 'shouting' communication style he had experienced.

> *She just yells a lot, always yelling at me, all the time.*
>
> *Interviewer: Does she, does she shout at other children though?*
>
> *…Sometimes., not everyone though (Luke Pg6, Ln20-23)*
>
>
> *…shout maybe..she doesn't like me…(Luke, Pg13, Ln17)*
>
>
> …I hate the teachers (Luke, P10, Ln18)

When the pupils talked about teachers showing care, Ben described a very simple act by the teacher that for him summed up being cared about. His description is of a much more personal emotional act, not related to learning.

> *…because every time you look at her she always smiles back at you. (Ben, Pg5, Ln19-20)*

All the participants doubted if the teacher knew when they were upset, and again agreed that the teacher would not always act when they knew someone was upset. This may be due to lesson pressures. One participant stated that the only way the teacher would know would be visually, by walking around the room.

> *Interviewer: Does she know when you're upset?*
> *No..(Luke, Pg6, Ln25)*
>
> *Interviewer: What about when they're upset, what does she do?*
> *....(5 secs) Nothing (Alex, Pg10, Ln1-3)*
>
> *Interviewer: If she sees you having a sulk or looking sad? Would she come over and help you?*
> *No. When she was doing the register, she just stood there doing the register when I was crying in the corner (Luke, Pg6, Ln30-33)*
>
> *Interviewer: What if they are just really upset, and they're crying?*
> *Still go on the thinking chair.*
> *Interviewer: Does the teacher talk to them first?*

> *No, She goes to the thinking chair, and some of them just keep crying.(Ben, Pg5, Ln24-28)*

Luke stated that being upset demanded respect. He equated respect with not being shouted at, and adults being 'nice'. Alex was able to describe a caring action by the teacher as one of sitting next to, and talking to the pupil.

> *….I think teachers should have more **respect,** if I was sad. (emphasis/anger)*
> *Interviewer: More respect, how could they show you respect?*
> *Be nice…not shout at me if I was crying in the corner, (Luke, Page, 7, Ln5-8)*
>
> *… I don't know, just sit at the table with someone really, maybe talk to them (Alex, Pg 10, Ln6)*

Ben described the thinking chair as a place to go when you were upset, but he added that the chair meant that you were in trouble and the head teacher may come by and ask what you have done wrong. Using a thinking chair in this way, being upset or crying is equated with a fault of the pupil, and in need of punishment. The use of a 'thinking chair' may not be the appropriate response in class when someone is upset. It places a 'problem' within child, already intimating guilt for a misdemeanour, and also separates them from their peers, excluding them from a relationship at that time. There is an assumption that cognition and affect are separable, and as such the pupil will be able to rationalise their behaviour and calm down.

> …you are in trouble on that chair (Ben, Pg5, Ln35-36)
>
> ...you have to show him what you've done wrong.(Ben, Pg6, Ln2)

All three participants voiced a desire to be heard, and to be listened to. These accounts emphasise the importance of an empathic, listening teacher.

> *… well..she didn't….I was always in trouble (said angrily)she didn't listen or believe me (Alex, Pg23, Ln2)*

> *…She doesn't listen at all.(Ben, Pg8, Ln11)*
>
> *…Listening, nice like not shouting. (Luke, P17, Ln4)*

The three accounts portray differing perceptions of teacher-pupil relationship. Luke's antagonistic and withdrawn behaviours resound with the study findings of Stuhlman & Pianta (2004) in which the researchers demonstrate a link between the quality of the teacher-pupil relationship and subsequent pupil behaviour. The risk factors described by Ladd *et al.* (1999) and Murray (2002) seem relevant to both Luke and Alex, as both accounts describe relationship difficulties within the year, albeit pervading for Luke. Luke's poor SOB, and fractured relationship with his teacher clearly supports the findings of many researchers exploring teacher-pupil relationships with pupils with learning needs (Ladd *et al.* 1999; McIntyre *et al.* 2006; Murray, 2002; Murray & Greenberg, 2001).

Although pupils may perceive some teacher actions as less than caring, teachers may perceive their own actions in the classroom as caring (Garza, 2007). Luke's perception of a lack of warmth and care, with his very low motivation for work and/or school, supports findings that perception of teacher care is also related to pupil motivation (Wentzel, *et al.* 2004). Alder (2002) and Noddings, (2005) both identified listening to students as one of the tenets of a caring teacher. All the participants in this study presented similar narratives.

Luke's accounts of many instances of being shouted at, and his disengagement from class and school, support the findings from a large UK qualitative study in which pupils cited 'being shouted at by teachers' as one of their reasons for poor attendance and truanting (Sheppard, 2009). The current study results also supported researchers' findings in which the teacher punitive strategy of 'shouting' harms the teacher-pupil relationship (Deiro, 2005; Vitto, 2003). Deiro (2005) proposed if a teacher and pupil spend time together in a 'caring dialogue', a positive connection may emerge. Ben described a relationship in which he felt cared about by his teacher and also in his account described positive interactions in the classroom including a willingness to seek teacher support, thus supporting the findings of the Patrick *et al*. (2007) study in which perceived teacher support predicted if pupils were more likely to ask for help.

A teacher's individual beliefs about their role as a carer in the classroom forms part of their teacher identity (Hargreaves *et al.* 1998). 'Teacher empathy has reflected Carl Roger's approach' (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1967, p.14) and this was indicated as a desire by Luke when he used the term 'respect' in his account. Empathy is a crucial aspect of caring. Empathy refers to the ability to take the perspective or 'feel with' another person (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987). Carl Rogers believed the way for to create a successful relationship as a teacher was through being genuine and showing pupils acceptance and empathy. Carl Rogers considered empathy to be the most important concept to be established in the classroom (Rogers, 1975).

It is also important here to consider the role of emotions in the classroom, especially as emotions play a central role in social interactions, both peer-to-peer and teacher-pupil (Frenzel *et al.* 2009). There are very few studies examining the role of emotion in educational settings (see Frenzel *et al.* 2009; Meyer & Turner, 2007 for exceptions). Most current research examines anxiety in the classroom. There are no identified studies exploring how the complexity of emotional life in the classroom contribute to SOB, or more specifically how emotions shape the teacher-student relationship and thus impact on SOB.

4.3   Teacher practices

Teacher practices emerged as a central theme in all the participants' accounts. It attained a super-ordinate status as its meaning was further elucidated through the related theme of 'gatekeeping', 'teacher preference', 'protector of all', and 'rewarder and punisher'. A caring pedagogy and empathy emerged as a theme but was eventually subsumed in the teacher–pupil relationships theme as a better fit.

4.3.1   Rewarding and punishing powers, and gatekeeping

This subordinate theme emerged as a very positive theme for Ben and Alex, but as with many of the themes, Luke emerged with polar opposite experiences. All the participants' accounts talked of the teacher as a provider of rewards. The rewards were seen as only for those who are 'good'. Attaining the rewards was described in a variety of ways, and appeared to be considered worth having and important by all the

participants. When asked how a teacher would help a pupil feel like they belonged, all the boys described extrinsic rewards. Alex also added that not every pupil could attain these rewards.

…because if we do something really good, like work, we can go on the laptop, or just enjoy what everybody likes (Ben, Pg3, Ln13)

…if they're good they get like a treat, we've got like a treat bag, because if you good, we've got this magic dot chart, and if you get ten, you get a sticker, and if you get twenty you get a prize from the prize bag. If you're not good she wont be nice though, Troy's never good (Alex, Pg5, Ln19-21)

Just buys them something. Stickers, prizes… (Luke, Pg4, Ln8)

All three participants described other rewards they could obtain; these included showing your work to staff in other classrooms, showing your class your skills, going up levels on a chart, getting chocolates, being chosen for jobs, and the teacher showing your work to other pupils in your own class. All the boys enjoyed acknowledgement from the teacher and peers, this would contribute to their self-esteem and enhance peer standing in the classroom. The other benefit of rewards may be effects on extrinsic motivation, as seen in Ben's account below.

…she comes around and she gives you a sticker sometimes.(Ben, Pg8, Ln24)

we can go and show other teachers if we want (Alex, Pg26, Ln13)

…she showed some other children and told them.(Luke, Pg13, Ln1-2)

…you get to show your skills of and you get up the levels.(Ben Pg17, Ln18)

…treats. Like chocolates. (mmm sound)(Alex, Pg26, Ln13)

she keeps choosing them every day(Luke, Page12, Ln27)

What struck me when reading the transcripts was the emphasis on literacy skills, in particular, neat handwriting, to gain a reward. All three participants cited being quiet as a prerequisite for gaining teacher rewards. This implies that noisy children cannot gain access to these reward systems. When talking about these rewards, Luke often voiced distaste that he was not usually a recipient. Both Ben and Alex appeared to be satisfied that they were able to achieve some rewards, some of the time. The behaviours that gain rewards are further discussed in the teacher preference section.

…like if your work neat (Ben Pg8, Ln25)

…with my hand writing.(Ben, Pg14, Ln26)

Do neat handwriting and stuff. Sit quiet like and get on.(Ben, Pg19, Ln12)

…Well like neat writing, be good like be quiet.(Alex, Pg6, Ln6)

… if they don't be noisy, she just gives them all a treat or something.(Luke, Pg6, Ln7-8)

Luke appeared to hold great value with extrinsic rewards such as prizes, and items bought for children at a fete by an adult member of staff. He talked with resentment about the pupil who received a drink and other items at the fete. He clearly desired to be treated as 'special' and worthy of individual treatment. He remembered this gesture by a teacher, and described it as one he would like for himself. Luke had also described times in hospital when he was younger, where he had felt he had been treated as 'special', citing a visit by a famous footballer, and nurses being 'nice'.

…buys him drinks and all sorts at the fete.(Luke, Pg7, Ln2)

.... and I said when I came out of hospital that I want to play football with Gordon Banks so I did.(Luke, Pg10, Ln 10-11)

The participants' accounts of sanctions, provides an interesting insight into the common punitive strategies the participants are exposed to. Shouting was quoted many times by Luke in his account, but Ben and Alex also cited the teacher shouting, not at them but at

others in their class. Access to equipment (laptops) and banning football with peers were the other two cited punishments. Luke spoke with horror when describing how teachers kept him in and he missed football sessions with his peers. As a sanction, this may impact on peer status and the ability to maintain peer relationships at breaktime, reducing time to develop his social skills, and possibly jeopardising his social status within his friendship group.

The teacher would shout at them.(Ben, Pg3, Ln2)

…If they're noisy she yells at them (Alex, Pg6, Ln10)

…but they (laptops) got banned from us.(Alex, Pg9. Ln13)

…they shout at me…they keep me in then I can't play football.I (Luke, Pg10. Ln18-19)

…and today we got banned from football.(Alex, Pg19, Ln19)

Luke's account of being kept behind by adult staff for not finishing his work, or the work not being acceptable, was voiced as happening in the present school and also at his previous school. He cited his previous school in the present tense as with some of his hospital experiences. This gave me a sense that he is still living with some painful experiences that feel very much in the present for him. This lack of distinction between past and present emphasises the view Luke has of adults 'gatekeeping' his peer relationships through football. His choice of words also implies a 'them' and 'us' relationship between himself and school staff (further discussed in the teacher relationships section).

…they keep keeping me behind.(Luke, Pg4, Ln23-24)

Rewards and punitive strategies related to belongingness are not specifically addressed in the literature review. In fact there is very little research examining how pupils interpret and respond to rewards and sanctions in school.

Motivational climate has been linked to belongingness in school (Wright *et al.* 2007). Much of the research on academic motivation and rewards demonstrate intrinsic motivation is decreased by extrinsic rewards (Battistich & Hom, 1997; Deci *et al.* 2001; Furrer & Skinner, 2003), and that extrinsic rewards only have short-term effects. Many researchers believe extrinsic controls such as the stickers described by the participants, may negatively affect a pupils' SOB (Anderman & Anderman, 2003; Anderman & Freeman, 2004; Roesner *et al.* 1996). The current study reported contrasting accounts to this by all the participants. All the accounts seemed to highly value extrinsic rewards given by the class teacher.

Learner motivation is affected differently by the experience of failure. Caroline Mansfield presented a paper at a conference in Australia in 2007 that contradicted findings by other studies on extrinsic motivation, and also reported similar findings to the current study. The small-scale qualitative study specifically explored pupils' responses to rewards and sanctions and their influence on SOB and school affect (liking of school, happiness). This qualitative study gained views from pupils aged 11 to 12 years old.

The results demonstrated that responses were varied and individual, disciplinary actions lowered SOB when opportunities for success and reward were not perceived as attainable. As in the current study, emotional responses to punitive strategies were translated into negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and sadness, and rewarding strategies evoked positive emotions. Of particular interest to the current study was the additional finding in the Mansfield (2007) study in which individual response to rewards and sanctions varied, and prior experience did not predict interpretation and response.

4.3.2   Protector of all (bullying)

All three participants described bullying as a factor affecting either themselves or their peers, and also related it to not belonging in school. Ben was asked to draw a picture of someone who belonged in class, he proceeded to draw and talk about not belonging.

> *He would be a lot angry and a bit happy. Ben Pg2, Ln6-9*

> *Interviewer: Why would he be angry, because he would like the cutting out, wouldn't he?*
>
> *Because somebody keeps bullying him.*
>
> *Interviewer: Oh...................and is that somebody who feels like they belong?*
>
> *No. they don't belong*
>
> *(1 sec)...he feels like he doesn't belong in the school. He just goes there. (Ben, Pg2, Ln12-19)*

The participants were asked what someone would look like in their class if they did not belong:

> *the class bother you. ...keep bully (Luke, Pg2, Ln1)*
>
> *...people pick on him... (Alex, Pg5, Ln7)*

Luke and Alex both describe some of their experiences in school as one of being a 'victim'. Many of their accounts describe being a victim of peer bullying. Ben stated that he had never been bullied, but alluded to others in his class being bullied.

> *Me **Never**. lots of others though (Ben, Pg12, Ln31)*
>
> *...People pick on me all the time (Luke, Pg9, Ln3)*
>
> *I've been bullied since Year 2, because I came in Year 2 (Luke, Pg11, Ln3)*
>
> *Hit me, kick me, get me on my own (Luke, Pg11, Ln13)*
>
> *... Me...(1 sec) I get bullied loads (Alex, Pg22, Ln4)*

In both Luke and Alex's accounts, they describe themselves as a victim twice over, teachers compounding the bullying with reprimands that the boys perceived as unfair.

> *...they're always picking **on me**....(1 sec) then I get in trouble with the teacher, because **Mia** says I'm doing stuff back to her when I'm not. (Alex, Pg22, Ln7)*

> *…I went to a match, we all wanted to play in it. All the best ones played, and there was only three, one of the players was M and I don't really know who else played. I went running down the bank, to the match away from them, and I got into really serious trouble, because I ran out of school un It wasn't **my** fault (Luke, Pg11, Ln13-26)*

Although all participants talked about not belonging being related to bullying, other reasons cited were temper control in the classroom, racial differences, and not being liked:

> *…because if somebody gets angry **they punch** them. (Ben, Pg12, Ln23)*
>
> *Well . (5 secs) Justine, she's a girl, she's a different colour, so everyone calls her because she's little, she's a different colour everyone picks on her.(sigh) (Alex, Pg23, Ln1-3)*
>
> *…I got bullied by year six, they don't like me. (Luke, Pg11, Ln34)*

The participants unanimously linked not belonging with being bullied when they were asked to describe a child who did not feel they belonged in the classroom. The participants seemed to recognise the vulnerability of these pupils to bullying from their peers. The boys described not belonging as making oneself vulnerable and done to by others in a negative way.

When asked if the teacher knew about the bullying, and also how they would know, an interesting finding emerged in all the boys' accounts. All three participants talked about the teacher knowing about bullying only through pupil-teacher interaction, either first hand or through peers. None of the boys described any other ways that a teacher would know about these instances.

> *(bold font in the two sections below refer to communication-'telling'.)*
> *Interviewer: Oh..Do you think the teacher knows when other people are bullied?*
> *Yeh, if you **tell** her.*
> *Interviewer: Do most people tell her or do some leave it?*

> *Most **tell** her.*
>
> *Interviewer: What happens if no one tells her?*
>
> *Nothing, she won't know (Ben, Pg12, Ln36- Pg13, Ln4)*
>
>
> *Interviewer: Does your teacher know you're being bullied?*
>
> *No, I don't really bother…..I don't **talk** to her (Luke, Pg11, Ln21)*
>
>
> *[Alex was describing a pupil who gets bullied in his class, I asked if the teacher knew about this]*
>
> *Yeh...........we **told** Mrs Smith. (Alex, Pg23, Ln6)*

Luke described with passion in his narrative how being 'hated' led to being hurt. His experience of feeling 'hated', and of 'hating' the class, was repeated many times in his account. Some of the bullying aimed at Luke appears to come from friction with friends, hinting at conflict within friendships (discussed in friendship section). Luke may be experiencing difficulty with conflict resolution within his friendships. The quotes below evidence his reports of peer victimisation.

> *No, because they'll just be mean to me anyway cos they hit me. (Luke,Pg5, Ln26-27)*
>
>
> *No. They hate me.*
>
> *Interviewer:Aw..Hate is a strong word-I bet they don't hate*
>
> *They do because they're always being mean to me, **kick me** and stuff (Luke, Pg8, Ln10-11)*
>
>
> *[Luke was describing being kicked in the face in the classroom]*
>
> *Interviewer:And did you..had you fallen out before it happened?*
>
> *Yeh.. we was friends then not (Luke, Pg14, Ln31)*

All three participants spoke about their experiences and belief in teacher intervention following bullying, although the accounts differed as to whether the teacher was trusted as a protector or not. This subordinate theme could have been subsumed in the teacher-pupil relationship theme and/or the bullying theme, but was kept in the teacher practices theme. All three were able to either recount personal experiences of bullying,

or had witnessed it in their classroom. When Luke was recounting a bullying incident I asked if he had told his teacher:

> *No, I don't really bother…..I don't talk to her..(Luke Pg11, Ln219)*
>
> *Oh, but your teacher would do something about it, wouldn't she?*
>
> *I don't know. (Luke, Pg14, Ln35)*

Luke's poor relationship with his teacher seems to have left him vulnerable to bullying. Alex recounted an incident when he had been a victim of bullying but had been blamed for the incident. This was recalled twice in his account. As can be seen from the example below, Alex describes an event in which the teacher appears to unwittingly side with the bullies.

> *…because they're always picking on me. Then I get in trouble with the teacher, because Mia says I'm doing stuff back to her when I'm not.(Alex, Pg22, Ln10-11)*

When asked if the teacher would sort out any bullying in the classroom aimed at Alex, he was unsure if his teacher would resolve the issue in the first account, and talked with anger when recounting some recent incidents that had been ongoing with a pupil:

> *Interviewer: and what would Miss K do? How would she sort it out?*
>
> *Don't know, she doesn't always…(1 sec) I don't always tell her (Alex, Pg15, Ln7)*
>
> *Interviewer: Does she sort it out?*
>
> *Well….(1 sec) she didn't….I was **always** in trouble (Alex, Pg23, Ln1-2)*

Although two of the participants doubted if their teacher would respond protectively to them with regards to incidents of bullying, both related another adult in the school who they saw as a 'protector'. Interestingly they both cited the same adult, and voiced that she would act on the information. I wondered if the 'telling off' had increased or decreased the bullying in that instance.

> *…..all I want is to tell Miss P is that people just pick on me. **I want to tell that** to Mrs S. (said in anger) (Luke, Pg14, Ln37)*

> *Yeh...........we told Mrs S.*
>
> *Interviewer: Does Mrs S do something?*
>
> *Yeh..she tells them off (Alex, Page 23, Ln9)*

Although Ben had not been bullied at all during his school life, he had faith that his teacher would respond to his or other children's needs. This was not based on his own experience of bullying:

> *I go and tell the teacher. (Ben, Pg12, Ln31)*

There is much literature surrounding the teacher-student relationship and belongingness, and less studying the effect of bullying behaviours, teacher responses to bullying, and the correlation with feelings of belonging. Schools that promote belonging, and have high levels of staff and pupil involvement have reduced levels of bullying (Olweus, 1995; Rigby, 1996; Skues *et al*. 2005). Skues *et al*. (2005) reported the bullied have lower self-esteem and are less connected with both peers and teachers**.**

Eisenberg *et al.* (2003) also supported the findings in the current study in which they reported a relationship between peer harassment and low SOB. As in Luke's account, this study demonstrated that the more harassment the pupil perceives, the less connected they feel to peers, the class teacher, and the school. 'Highly connected students' in both positive and negative school climates are less likely to be victims of bullying (Wilson, 2004, p.296). This study implies teachers may be able to influence pupil's perceptions of school belongingness.

Researchers have long acknowledged the importance of a safe and healthy school environment for promoting academic achievement (e.g. Hymel *et al.* 2006; Luiselli *et al.* 2005). Research also suggests that school success is linked to caring, supportive, safe environments (Schaps *et al.* 2004). Bullying affects physical and mental health (Smith *et al.* 1999), and is viewed as a major threat to the creation of a caring, safe environment (Luiselli *et al*. 2005). In a recent study long-term effects of bullying have been reported

(Arseneault *et al.* 2010), with bullying contributing independently to children's mental health problems.

Children with SEN in UK studies have been shown to be less accepted and more rejected than peers (Dyson *et al.* 2004; Frederickson & Furnham, 2004; Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993), although this study has only shown one participant to be bullied over a long period of time. Similar to Luke's reported experience, children high in rejection sensitivity and related internalising difficulties such as anxiety and depression, react to teasing and bullying in a way that may perpetuate the cycle of bullying and victimisation (Coleman & Byrd, 2003). Rejection sensitivity is discussed in more depth in the peer relationships section.

As in other studies where 50% of pupils did not report bullying to their teacher (Craig & Pepler, 2000; Fekkes *et al.* 2005), two of the participants did not always report instances to their teacher. Similar to the Pepler *et al.* study (1994), the participants in he current study reported that the teachers would not necessarily intervene, or as in the Rigby and Bagshaw (2003) study, care about the bullying. Teachers do not always recognise verbal aggression, indirect aggression and social exclusion as bullying (Boulton *et al.*1997; Craig & Pepler, 2000), this may explain some lack of action and may also be a factor in how teachers respond to pupil reports of bullying.

4.3.3   Teacher preference

All three participants held a conceptualisation of 'teacher preference'. Teacher preference is the degree to which a 'teacher likes a specific pupil' (Mercer & DeRossier, 2010, p.184). Some of this theme is also covered in the teacher-pupil relationship section.

Two of the accounts described children in their own classes who would not get support for belongingness from the teacher due to their behaviour. Luke describes his perception first hand, and Alex described another pupil who he had depicted earlier as 'never being good'. Teacher preference was particularly emphasised by Luke as a reason for some of his peers not liking him. This could be Luke externalizing responsibility for his lack of friendships, but in his account his anger at this came across

in the interview. In Alex's account he stated that he did not feel that his teacher would help a child in his class to feel like they belonged, because of their perceived persistent disruptive behaviour.

…because she keeps choosing them every day, all sorts.(Luke, Pg7, Ln29)

Luke felt particularly that his teachers in the past had not liked him, and described his teacher as liking some other children. He ascribed this to the teacher choosing other children regularly for errands and tasks. His account depicts a child who has had persistent relationship difficulties with teachers.

One of the teachers at my old school was really mean, and she kept poking me in the back and stuff.
Interviewer: Aww why was that?
She didn't like me (Luke, Pg4, Ln10-13)

*. ..yes lots, **especially M** and J. (luke, Pg7, Ln27)*

When asked what the teacher could do to help him feel happier in class, Luke had no confidence that this could be done. His account is littered with his view that not only do his peers dislike him, but some adults do too. He also ascribed his peers' preferences as related to his teacher's preferences.

No. She doesn't like me, so no one does (Luke, Pg 5, Ln24)

 Both Luke and Alex described accounts where they felt the teacher did not care about certain individuals.

Interviewer: Do you think she does care about all the children in the class?
No she doesn't really..no......(3 secs)she likes some of them" (Luke, Pg6, Ln6-7)

Interviewer: Does she do something to help Troy feel like he belongs?
No he be always naughty (sigh) (Alex, page 6, Ln22)

Troy, described above, appears to be a particularly vulnerable pupil with behavioural difficulties. Alex knew that Troy might not have a positive SOB, but attributed that to his poor behaviour. There is an acceptance here that if you are 'naughty', the teacher may not facilitate your SOB. I wondered if there was an implicit knowledge in the class of belongingness being earned through 'good behaviour'. Although Ben did not describe teacher preference in a negative way, he still added many insights into what a teacher 'likes' in a pupil. All three participants described being 'quiet' as preferable. Teacher preference in these accounts seems to predict levels of teacher support. The preferred pupils appear to be easy to manage in the classroom because they demonstrate certain desired behaviours.

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*...Well like neat writing, **be good** like be quiet. (Alex. Pg6, Ln6)*

…do neat handwriting and stuff. Sit quiet like and get on.(Ben, Pg19, Ln12)

she likes some of them, If they don't be really talkative, if they don't be noisy, she just gives them all a treat or something. If they're noisy she yells at them. (Luke, Pg6, Ln6-8)

Interviewer: What was she pleased with just lately?
…with my hand writing. (Luke, Pg12, Ln34)

The participants also linked teacher liking to literacy (hand writing), all using the discourse 'neat handwriting'. A clear picture seems to emerge of teachers who prefer quiet children who have neat handwriting. Research demonstrates pupils who facilitate ease in classroom management by exhibiting certain teacher-desired behaviours, are preferred by teachers (Babad, 1993; Davis, 2006).

A relationship between a pupil and their teacher is in part determined by their preference (Hartup, 1989; Hymel, 1986). Teacher preference has been found to be stable over time (Mercer & DeRosier, 2008). This study's findings support research showing a link between low teacher preference and high levels of peer rejection and loneliness (Chang *et al.* 2004; Mercer & DeRosier, 2008). Many researchers have reported an association between teacher preference and pupil preference (Chang *et al.* 2004; Gorman *et al*, 2002). In Chang *et al.*'s (2004) study pupils' liking of a student was

correlated to teacher preference, and was not found to be based on prior experience or perception of behaviour (Chang *et al.* 2004). These results seem to match Luke's experience in class.

Interpersonal relationships are significant in fostering belongingness in school (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Ryan *et al.* 1994), and pupil perception of support acts as a protective factor (Garmezy, 1991). Teachers are very significant attachment figures in school and play an important role in fostering belonging at school (Nichols, 2006, 2008; Solomon *et al.* 1996). Sapon-Shevin (1990) demonstrated that teachers portray messages that pupils can interpret regarding personal worth. Research finds that children with learning difficulties often have poorer relationships with teachers than children without learning difficulties (Murray, 2002; Murray & Greenberg, 2001; McIntyre *et al.* 2006). Particularly pertinent to these participants' views and experiences are the findings by Rowe (2000) in which teacher effect was found to be stronger for boys.

As reported by the participants in this study, pupils are able to pick up non-verbal language (Babad, 1993). Babad (1993) reported on children's ability to pick up on non-verbal behaviour that teachers thought they could conceal from pupils. He called this 'leakage' and demonstrated teacher non-verbal behaviours conveyed teacher preference that was interpreted by the pupils in class. He stated children were good at detecting this.

Equally important to this study are the recent findings of (Mercer & DeRosier, 2010) in which the researchers reported teachers' preference if changed, would also predict the children's perception of teacher preference, suggesting that children become aware of teacher preference over time, aptly demonstrated by the participants in the current study. The Mercer and DeRosier (2010) study also demonstrated that low teacher preference also predicted low student support; seemingly hinted at by all three participants in the current study.

4.4 Emotional equilibrium

This master theme aims to capture the idea that the participants' emotional well-being has many factors that impact on it, and that they experienced a range of emotions regarding themselves and their experience of belonging. For one participant, Luke, the experience was highly negative, but all three participants described a range of emotions in different circumstances. All described access to happiness through leisure pursuits in breaktime at school. The importance of family involvement in school also emerged as a sub theme, being related to all three participants' happiness and mental well being in school.

All the participants described a recent experience of feeling a low SOB, and Luke's experience was voiced very much in the present tense. Alex talked about belonging as a changing state depending on the events on the day, whereas Luke described the feeling of not belonging as a constant pervasive state. Ben related his experience of not belonging in the past to being in trouble, and being reprimanded by the teacher.

> Some days..(1 sec).I don't belong...(Alex, Pg8, Ln1)
>
> ...I was being **told off**…(1 sec) I felt in trouble and unhappy and I didn't feel I belonged in the class. (Ben, Pg4, Ln4-5)

Luke ascribed 'feeling sad' to a child who hypothetically might feel they did not belong. He then went on to say that they may sulk like him, clearly relating not belonging to his feelings on the day of the interview.

> …they'd be sulking, like I do..(Luke, Pg2, Ln15)

Ben felt that his feeling of not belonging was resolved by the friendships he gained later in the academic year, highlighting the importance of friendships for Ben's mental health well being.
.

> …people were my friend a little bit. I wasn't sad no more (giggling)(Ben, Pg4, Ln9)

4.4.1   The importance of family in school

This theme emerged from all three participants' accounts. It was not pervasive through the accounts, but it felt worthy of discussion as the theme was represented positively in all accounts. The involvement of family in the instances described all invoked positive feelings in the participants.

Ben described a club his dad ran on Saturdays. When asked why it felt so 'great', he explained that it was because it was his dad running it. It seemed to have inspired pride.

> …because I felt happy when it happened.
> Interviewer: Why, why do you think it felt so great?
> Because it was my **dad** (Ben, Pg13, Ln18)

Ben's pleasure at his father coming into school resounds in the quote below. He used the terms 'everyone' and 'all' when describing how his peers felt about it. The impact of his father's involvement in after school clubs appears to have acted in raising Ben's self esteem, and possibly peer status.

> Interviewer: How do you feel about your dad coming into school?
> **Great** ..Yeh everyone likes it. They all **love** him. (Ben, Pg13, Ln22)

Luke's account is pervaded with a feeling of isolation. This leads me to believe the presence in school of his mother and a cousin act as acknowledgement of his worth and achievements. Luke has little faith that the class are interested in his achievements, but his family have fulfilled this role on some occasions.

> I show my mum sometimes, and at dinner times I show **my cousin**. That's good (Luke, Pg12, Ln28-29)

Alex described one incident of parental engagement in school, and the involvement of his mother alleviated some of his difficulties with bullying. His mother in this quote is seen as a protector.

> My mum came in and it got a bit better (Alex, pg23, Ln3)

Most of the literature exploring parental involvement in schools, links parental involvement to positive academic or behavioural outcomes (DCSF, 2009; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2007), rather than social or emotional outcomes. The belongingness domain has not explored any links between parental involvement in school and SOB. Harris and Goodall (2008) made a clear distinction between engaging parents and involving parents (parents working in the school voluntarily). They found that only engagement (support at home, consultation, increased communication) made a positive difference to educational outcomes.

Within the current study, Ben described feeling 'great' because his father was running an after school club. This discourse supports Goldman's (2005) finding that the quality and content of a father's involvement is significant for boys over and above quantity of time. Skaliotis (2010) also linked boys' behaviour at school with a father's changing involvement over time. Ben's account, although only one account, contradicts evidence by Edward and Alldred's (2000) study in which children actively discouraged or obstructed parental involvement, and the study by (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003) in which little or no individual (private) benefits were found for parental involvement. It must be noted that private and public benefits were discussed in terms of behavioural and academic outcomes as with other studies. It is evident from both Ben's and Alex's accounts of parental involvement that they benefited emotionally and/or socially. Costs to other pupils cannot be ascertained from their accounts.

4.4.2   The importance of personal leisure time

All the three boys interviewed spoke about their preferred leisure activity at school of football. While this is a resonant theme, there are clear associations with their friendship groups, access to peer relationships, and the importance of leisure for a SOB in school. The most positive aspect of school for all three participants emerged as football at breaktimes.

Ben and Alex emphasised the importance of football to them, and its relationship to their friendships. Ben's best day in class was the day he played football, and he related

a poor day in class to the absence of football. Alex and Ben both drew a football game with friends, and both appeared to have positive emotions around that particular leisure pursuit at school.

> *… **my bestest** mate playing football, we all friends. (Alex, Pg1, Ln10)*
>
> *Playing football. (Ben, Pg18, Ln15)*
>
> *Ehm...(1 sec)when you didn't have to have no learning or anything, you could do anything you want except learning. **Football!** (said with enthusiasm) (Alex, Pg24, Ln21)*
>
> *Let me play football (Alex, Pg29, Ln15)*
>
> *(Friends in a drawing)*
> *Yeh..football.(Ben, Pg10, Ln30)*

Luke talked about football all through his account, and the first quote was Luke's account of teacher sanctions that impacted on his desired leisure at breaktime. This sanction would have also impacted on his peer relationships, his ability to maintain his friendships, his development of social skills, and his status within his friendship group. The friendship group for all participants appeared to centre on the group football games they played in breaktimes. In Luke's account he uses the term 'all' for denoting an emphasis on the communal role of the group game. 'All' in Luke's account seems to denote a group identity through the game of football.

> *… I went to a match, we all wanted to play in it. (Luke, Pg11, Ln21-22)*
>
> *Interviewer: What do you do at breaktime?*
> *…Football sometimes. (Luke, Pg14, Ln13)*
>
> *Interviewer: What do you do on the laptop? What's your favourite?*
> *Football games.(Luke, Pg14, Ln16)*
>
> *Interviewer: What do you like about school the most?*

> *Football. (Luke, Pg15, Ln23)*

Ben's best and worst day in school were both related to football at breaktimes, and his self-esteem appeared to come from his friends telling him he is good at it

> *(Great day in class)*
>
> *... Don't know. Football (Ben, Pg14, Ln1)*
>
> *(Not so good day in class)*
>
> *…because it's year four's football, not ours.(Ben, Pg16, Ln16)*

He spoke proudly when asked what his friends in class would say he was good at.

> Football, defence. (Ben, Pg15, Ln17)

When asked what was special or good about the school, Ben replied with a list of football related items. For children with literacy difficulties, a pursuit with friends in which they experience success may be particularly important for their self-esteem.

> Tops, balls, field (stated proudly) (Ben, Pg16, Ln36)

Luke reported some difficulties with accessing breaktimes and fun with his peers. It seemed apparent from his account that breaktimes were being used as a time to catch up on his academic learning (Holmes e*t al.* 2006). Ben also reported that some of his friends had to stay in to finish work at breaktimes, thus missing the opportunity for socialisation, and developing their social skills, and conflict resolution skills. Two participants cited pupils missing playtime to catch up on work or being kept in when work isn't finished.

> *….they keep me in then I can't play football (Luke, Pg10, Ln26-27)*
>
> *…not if they don't finish their work though (Ben, Pg11, Ln16)*

For all three boys the social significance of breaktimes resounded through their accounts. The importance of 'play' at breaktimes was not predicted in the initial literature review. 'Play' for these three pupils were based around a group game of football. It is believed that play is a vital part of children's development and is fundamental for every child (Ginsberg, 2007). The importance of a leisure pursuit and the happiness it elicits in pupils is strongly supported by Frederickson and Baxter *et al.* (2009), in which being accepted and included leads to positive emotions.

In the Nuffield Breaktime Survey (Blatchford & Baines, 2006), pupils interviewed stated that the best thing about school was the chance to meet friends at breaktime. This finding has been corroborated in the current study. The researchers found that 'the relationship between breaktime activity and social relations is dynamic (Blatchford & Baines, 2006, p.231-232). The authors identified four roles for activities in social relations:

1. The game acting as a social scaffold, connecting with old and new peers;
2. The game as a consolidator and maintainer of friendships;
3. The game as a social exploration; and
4. The game as a super-ordinate goal for example, mending conflict bridges.

All of these roles are important for the pupils, Luke may be missing out on some of these positive aspects through missed playtimes, (cited by him as a regular occurrence) especially consolidating and maintaining his friendships. Pellegrini and Smith (1998) demonstrated that for primary aged pupils 93% wanted to spend breaktime with friends, and 42% desired physical exercise, much supported by the current study. The researchers also reported that primary aged boys enjoy physically vigorous activities so choose to play with other boys in those type of activities (ibid). All three participants reported football (with friends) as the best thing about school, supporting the findings by (Blatchford & Baines, 2006) in which secondary aged pupils cited meeting their friends as the best thing about going to school.

Current literature suggests peer relationships are central to a pupil's SOB (Newman *et al.* 2007; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Wentzell & Caldwell, 1997). Research also demonstrates social skills are learnt when pupils interact with peers (Pellegrini, 1995),

demonstrating the importance of breaktimes for friendship formation and condolidation. Cairns (1979) reported large groups playing games at breaktimes are fairly stable over time. This was corroborated by a later study by Baines and Blatchford (2009, p.756) in which stability was moderate for boys groups, and their network contained 'virtually all best friends and friends as well as others that are not friends, though may be friends of friends'. This has implications for breaktime being used as a vehicle to reduce conflict (MacBeath & Galton, 2004) and increase learning time.

In the present study play and free time with peers was highly valued by the participants. It appears that this time is not as valued by teaching staff, perhaps seen as an interruption rather than beneficial as in the study by Dockett (2002). No literature was identified that specifically addressed the issue of belonging and breaktime socialisation, although there is much linking peer to peer and peer group interaction with belongingness (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Newman *et al*. 2007; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Wentzell & Caldwell, 1997).

4.5   Physical illness

This theme only emerged for one participant, Luke. This theme is described in the results as it featured prominently in Luke's account. The information regarding Luke's long-term illness was not given to the researcher prior to the interview. Luke may feel abandoned by the health professionals that cared for him for three years. He is experiencing loss of relationships with staff, loss of pleasurable activities associated with hospital, lack of friendships, and a loss of proximity of communication in the hospital ward. He appears to have enjoyed the attention and care he received from staff during his illness.

I miss the hospital people, my friends, because the nurses were quite nice. (Luke, Pg1, Ln8-9)

He felt that his friendships were easier to maintain, and that they were of a much better quality than his relationships in school. When describing the difference in friendships between the two settings, Luke was unable to verbalise what it was exactly, but later in

the interview was able to ascribe it to the children being 'nice' and talking to him. Proximity in the ward may have played a big part in this.

> *… (3 secs) It's just different here.(Luke, Pg3, Ln10)*
>
> *They are all nice, not mean…….We all talk (Luke, Pg3, Ln18)*

Luke related cognitive difficulties to his illness, as well as the upheaval of changing schools. His account also speaks of a mismatch between his ability at that time and the work set, and therefore of expectations being too high.

> *... I couldn't finish my work-it was too hard, (2 secs) because I got ill, my mum brought me here, and I got really upset. (Luke, Pg4, Ln32-33)*

All the way through Luke's account he retells events at hospital as if he is still living the illness. He does not appear to have moved on, the cancer experience still ongoing for him. He talks about his time in hospital in terms of bereavement and personal loss. When talking about his lack of friendships in school, Luke talks in the present tense about his friends in the hospital from two years ago.

> *...I have lots of friends in hospital (Pg2, Ln37-Pg3, Ln1)*

Large numbers of children survive cancer, but there is very little research describing the psychological and social difficulties children may face on their return to school (Dickerman, 2007). There is no research identified examining long term hospitalisation and its impact on return to school belongingness, neither short term or long term issues. McGrath *et al.* (2005) reported that children had a lower sense of confidence. Research has also shown that some children after recovery feel 'different' from their peers (Duffey-Lind *et al.* 2006). There has been research demonstrating post-cancer distress being characterised by cognitive difficulties, anxiety, depression, and a feeling of abandonment by health professionals, as described by Luke in his account.

Children's cognitive development is affected by the cancer treatment (Wakefield *et al.* 2010) and this may impact on speed of progress at school, and in turn negatively affect self-esteem. Emotional stability was noted by Bessell (2001) as an area of difficulty for off-treatment children. In the von Essen *et al.* (2000) study, children off-treatment were reported to have a decreased positive mood and lower self-esteem, very similar to the flavour of Luke's account.

4.6   Self Exclusion and disengagement

This theme captured Luke's feelings about school, possibly predicting future self-exclusion in class and in his next school. Luke's account described many instances of self-exclusion, self-silencing, and social withdrawal, so the theme emerged as dominant in his account. Although this theme was not experienced first hand by the other two boys, Alex described another pupil's experience of not belonging, and related the behaviour to self-exclusion. Self exclusion was described as leaving the room, leaving the school, not interacting with teachers and peers, and isolating oneself in play (i.e. staying on a laptop alone).

Luke had made decisions to self-exclude talking to his peers, to his teacher, and to exclude himself from the premises (when upset after peers in a football match had bullied him). The language used by Luke suggested a strong sense of despair and isolation. He also used social avoidance and/or withdrawal, and distancing in his daily interactions with his peers.

…I don't talk to anyone……Luke, Pg2, Ln19

…If I was......I would only talk to my teacher if I had no choice. Otherwise if I could I would go to another teacher. (Luke Pg7, Ln18-19)

*…I went running down the bank, to the match away from them, and I got into really serious trouble, because I ran out of school un It wasn't **my** fault (Luke, Pg11, Ln24-26)*

Luke also showed a desire to leave the school and had discussed this with his mother. He clearly relates his desire to self-exclude to his perceived lack of friendships.

> ... I don't think I've got any friends.
> Interviewer: Aw...that's a real shame.
> That's why I keep saying to my mum can I leave this school. (Luke, Pg2, Ln22-24)

When peers annoyed him in class, Luke described them all as 'mean' and self excluded by pretending to fall asleep. Luke talked about low level bullying as 'annoying'. I would surmise he used this self-exclusion strategy as self-protection.

> …pretend to sleep.(Luke, Pg4, Ln36)

Luke even predicted that he would self-exclude in the future in Year 7. He appears to be very pessimistic about his future at secondary school, which at the time of the interview was over a year away. Staying in bed and poor sleep patterns may hint at depressive symptoms.

> *…because I'm not going to go in to year seven.*
> *Interviewer: aren't you, where will you go instead?*
> *I'll just stay in bed. (Luke, Pg 17, Ln9-11)*

Luke also described another pupil in class who he saw as a friend who had self-excluded after falling out with a peer. When Alex was asked what a pupil who he perceived to not belong did in class, he reported the child running out of class, self-excluding as one of the behaviours displayed. He implied that running out of class was a regular occurrence for this pupil.

> *…like**.....run out of** school.....Like one of my friends once ran out of school.(Luke, Pg3, Ln27-28)*
>
> *…he **runs off** out of class all the time (Alex, Pg5, Ln8)*

Although Ben did not report himself self excluding or others, when asked what makes a 'good learner' he cited staying in the room physically as a prerequisite, implying that children who take themselves out of the classroom are not 'good learners', and that he too had experienced pupils taking themselves off out the classroom.

you **have** to stay in the classroom (Ben, Pg19, Ln6)

The results of this study lend support to the findings of current literature (Malcolm *et al.* 2003; Newman *et al.* 2007) where negative peer interaction can lead to disengagement from school. The research reports a stronger link between teacher-pupil relationship and disengagement than for peer relationships. Disengagement can be active or passive; Luke's accounts portray both. Luke's absences through illness and accounts of difficult relationships with peers corroborate the findings by Malcolm *et al.* (2003) in which poor-attenders found it hard to maintain friendships and became disengaged. Luke had poor school attendance through illness only, but this has been part of his school pattern for a few years.

There is evidence that a final drop out or truancy from school is a culmination of disengagement from learning and school occurring over a long period, often starting in mid junior years (Christenson *et al.* 2001). The three accounts are also consistent with the studies of Bond *et al.* (2007), Christenson *et al.* (2001), and Klem and Connell (2004), all reporting low sense of belongingness related to school drop out.

All the accounts reported pupils leaving the classroom, and Luke described exiting the school, describing both an instance in which he exited, and an account of another pupil's exit. Many studies report disengagement when the teacher-pupil relationship has broken down (discussed further in relationships) (Maguire, 2009; Reid *et al.* 2005, Riley *et al.* 2006). An Irish study (Darmody *et al.* 2007) and the Downes *et al.* (2006) study reported children not talking to teachers or asking for help, and this then made them feel like a failure, prompting a disengagement from school. Luke's account supported the findings in both these studies. It can be seen in Luke's account that he may as seen in the OECD (2003) programme, not participate in future through absence, and is not fully participating in class at present.

Luke's account intimates his current behavioural and emotional condition (lack of participation, presence, effort and persistence) and (negative attitude to others, sadness, low sense of belonging). Luke's account is permeated with instances of social withdrawal, and frustrated attempts to meet his social goals. Research demonstrates that when children who are socially withdrawn make social requests of peers, they are more likely to be met by peer refusal and rejection (e.g. Chen *et al.* 2006; Nelson *et al.* 2005). This creates a negative feedback loop, in which withdrawn children become less and less successful in their attempts to meet their social goals (Stewart & Rubin, 1995). Social withdrawal has been shown to be stable over time, from early childhood to adolescence (e.g. Hymel *et al.* 1990). Luke account had several instances of intentional self-silencing. Self-silencing is a communication style that is characterised by an intentional silence or decision to not talk (Rubin *et al.* 2003). This is thought to be a child's defensive strategy aimed at protecting the self.

These findings may also point to children experiencing self-regulation difficulties when facing social rejection (Baumeister & DeWall, 2005). Several studies have demonstrated that concerns over exclusion from peers can have a negative impact on self-regulation (Baumeister *et al.* 2002, 2005; Baumeister & DeWall, 2005). McDowell and Parke (2000) reported children's ability to regulate their emotions appropriately are linked to the quality of friendships with peers. It needs to be noted that emotional regulation strategies may be linked also to social competence, and in turn are correlated with problem behaviour such as overreacting aggressively, withdrawal etc (Eisenberg *et al.* 1997). The current study contributes findings of rejection sensitivity in pupils with a low sense of belonging. This was not addressed in the initial literature review and will be addressed briefly here. Word limitations limit the depth of discussion.

Rejection sensitivity is a social cognitive processing style characteristic developed from repeated experiences of rejection by others (Downey & Feldman, 1996). It draws on attachment theory within an ecological framework. Children who do not feel they belong in school may experience rejection sensitivity, acting over sensitively in social situations, and perhaps compromising their friendships through aggressive or withdrawn behaviour. This may be one of the reasons Luke experiences regular conflict in his friendships and perceives a lack of peer acceptance.

4.7 Summary

The primary aim of this study was to gain an in-depth and ideographic approach to the exploration of the experience of school belongingness for three boys with literacy difficulties. The key summary findings are discussed with relevance to the research question.

How do these three boys with literacy difficulties experience belonging or not belonging at their school?

Although these participants were chosen for the shared experience of 'literacy difficulties', their accounts differed greatly, demonstrating both commonalities in experiences and differences. Luke's account presented mainly negative experiences of belonging, whereas Ben reported a range of both positive and negative experiences over time. Alex's account gave a very positive account of his experiences, and as such provided insight into how the school promotes belongingness in a positive way, as well as areas Alex would like to see improvements for himself. Although this study examined boy's experiences, no conclusions can be drawn about the experiences of girls.

This study has highlighted five main themes that emerged from the stories of the participants; Interpersonal relationships, teacher practices, emotional equilibrium, physical illness, and self-exclusion and disengagement. Within these main themes are further subordinate themes, which link to findings in both current and past literature, and further our understanding and knowledge in this field.

The most dominant theme that emerged was 'interpersonal relationships', in which the importance of teacher-pupil relationship emerged as central to the participants' narratives, second to the importance of peer-to-peer relationships and friendships. It resonated throughout the accounts, differed in perception, but demonstrated its significance for these boys in their belongingness experience at school. All participants expressed a desire for more positive personal interaction with the teacher. Participants all felt the teacher would not necessarily know or act if someone was upset. Being 'in trouble' and being 'shouted at' were both equated with not being liked by the teacher and lowered their SOB.

All three participants held 'friendships' as important for their happiness, and linked poor peer relationships to a low SOB. Negative peer treatment and rejection appeared strong in the discourses, being linked to sadness, disengagement and low SOB. Positive peer relationships were described as supportive emotionally in the classroom, and central for happiness and belongingness. Loneliness emerged as a powerful sub-theme linked to feelings of sadness and of 'not belonging'. The role of emotions in the complexity of school interactions was a thread found running through all themes during interpretation. Physical illness and personal leisure time both emerged as unexpected themes not anticipated by the researcher. Luke's prior experience of long-term illness pervaded his account, seemingly contributing to his low SOB and relationship difficulties. The hospitalisation seemed to have left Luke with a sense of loss and abandonment, losing key adult caring relationships, and the proximity of peer relationships within the ward.

Teacher practices emerged as a central theme in all the accounts, encompassing, 'rewarder and punisher', 'protector', 'gatekeeper', and 'teacher preference'. All the accounts described a teacher as a provider of rewards and sanctions, all desiring extrinsic rewards. Bullying emerged as a factor either pertinent to the participant themselves or to others in their class. All related bullying behaviours to a low SOB and all stated that a teacher would only know about bullying if someone told them. Only one participant had belief in the teacher as a protector. Poor relationship with the teacher appeared to leave pupils vulnerable to bullying and victimisation.

All participants described a conception of 'teacher preference' and linked being liked or not to a pupil's SOB. Low teacher preference was ascribed to pupils with poor behaviour and directly to low teacher preference, thus demonstrating awareness of the effect of teacher behaviours, verbal and non-verbal. All participants associated teacher preference to desired pupil behaviours such as quietness and neat handwriting.

Emotional equilibrium was expressed as having many factors that may impact on it such as being told off, peer communication, friendships, breaktime relationships and activities, and family involvement in school. Two participants had experienced a low SOB, albeit transitory for one of the participants. Family involvement for these boys appeared to involve positive emotional and social outcomes, and served the purpose of

personal acknowledgement, support with peer relationship difficulties, and contributed towards self-esteem and peer status.

Within the emotional equilibrium theme personal leisure time at breaktimes was clearly linked by all participants to their friendship groups, peer acceptance and maintenance of relationships. All equated football at breaktimes with happiness and a SOB. Missing breaktimes, cited by two participants to catch up on learning, may impact on peer integration and the development of social skills and conflict resolution. 'Play' at breaktime appears to be underestimated in its importance and usefulness by teaching staff. The relationships engaged in during these 'free' sessions clearly contribute to pupils' SOB.

Self-exclusion captured one participant's feelings about school where he frequently self silenced, and socially withdrew and excluded himself from activities and relationships in the classroom and school. All the participants had experienced self-exclusion either first or second hand and all related it to a low SOB. Social withdrawal and disengagement can be seen in this study as a response to poor relationships, contributing to low SOB. The study demonstrated that young pupils with literacy difficulties could contribute to psychological knowledge and emerging conceptualisations of school belonging, and were able to provide rich accounts of their experiences through the use of IPA.

4.8   Implications for their school that may enhance pupils' sense of belonging?

The implications for the site school are based on the findings of three participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of other boys in the school with literacy difficulties. The present findings require further confirmation before they can be generalised to other boys with literacy difficulties, and possibly to the wider group of children with special educational needs. With this in mind, the researcher tentatively suggests possible ways in which the research findings for the current study may guide the teaching staff in the site school in the promotion of school belongingness for boys with literacy difficulties.

The action plan developed from these results was presented to the school with the research, and is included in Appendix 11.

5   CONCLSIONS: CHAPTER 5

5.1   Contextualisation of findings

This section aims to consolidate and contextualise the discussion of the super-ordinate themes developed in chapter four, so that the reader is provided with an overview that sets this study within the wider field of research.

Relationships emerged as the most powerful theme in the accounts with interpersonal relationships being consistently presented in both adult and peer relationships. Other researchers have also found interpersonal relationships to be significant in fostering belongingness in school (Furrer & Skinner; Nichols, 2006, 2008; Osterman, 2000; Ryan *et al*. 1994).

The sub-theme of peer relationships emerged as a powerful theme for all three participants supporting previous studies demonstrating the centrality of positive peer relationships for happiness (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005), and belongingness (Anderman, 2002; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Goodenow, 1992; Newman *et al*. 2007; Osterman, 2000; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). The current study also supported Waters et al's (2010) findings in which connectedness in school was correlated with positive peer relationships.

Peer victimization, as described by Luke in the current study, has been associated with future academic disengagement (Buhs *et al*. 2006). This finding supports Luke's description of planned truancy in the future. The current study also supported the findings of Hall and McGregor (2000) and Kuhne and Wiener (2000) in which SEN pupils peer acceptance assessed as poor, then declined over time. The current study found that not all the participants experienced peer rejection, strongly supporting the findings of Frostad and Pijl (2007) and Meadan and Halle (2004) in which pupils reported considerable differences in peer acceptance with SEN.

Many studies provide evidence that friendships play an important role in SOB (Appleton *et al*. 2006; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005; Kagan, 1990; Wentzel *et al*. 2004). This was demonstrated in the current study by all three participants. Friendship quality as

described by Crick and Nelson (2002) and Ladd *et al*. (1996) was also found to predict satisfaction with friendship and levels of loneliness in school, and fluidity of friendships over the school year reportedly predicted victimization (Wojslawowicz *et al*. (2006). For one participant in the current study having friends appeared to be linked to his positive mental well being as found by Crosnoe *et al*. (2003) and Jessor *et al*. (1998).

Loneliness emerged as a powerful subordinate theme in the current study. This supports current research that suggests children with SEN may be at increased risk to experience loneliness (Hall & McGregor, 2000; Kuhne & Wiener, 2000), and may have peer difficulties in school (Buysse *et al*. 2002: Buhs & Ladd, 2001). As in Pretty el al.'s (1994) study, the current study also found individual differences in the loneliness experience, and a tendency for loneliness to predict difficult social relationships (Juvonen *et al*. 2000). Luke, a participant in the current study, described peer victimization and subsequent feelings of loneliness. His account resonates with the findings of Buhs and Ladd (2001) and Juvonen *et al*. (2000).

Research has highlighted the importance of the teacher-pupil relationship for the fostering a SOB (Nichols, 2006, 2008; Solomon *et al*. 1996). Two of the participants in the current study described relationship difficulties echoing findings from various researchers showing children with SEN experience poorer relationships with their teachers (Ladd *et al*. 1999; McIntyre *et al*. 2006; Murray, 2002; Murray & Greenberg, 2001). As in the Eisenhower *et al*. (2007) study, teacher behaviours appeared to be related to the quality of the relationship.

Wentzel *et al*. (2004) demonstrated perception of teacher care was clearly linked to motivation in the classroom in an interpretative study examining the meaning of care in middle schools in the USA. The findings of the current study, in which one participant described a perceived lack of warmth and care, and also described a lack of enthusiasm for class work, supports this study's findings. All three participants also described teacher listening as a tenet of a caring teacher as did the grade six pupils in a study by Noddings (2005).

The current study found that participants cited being shouted at as a negative behaviour of teachers that appeared to make them feel disliked by the teacher and lowered their

SOB. This very clearly supports a recent UK qualitative study by Sheppard (2009) in which pupils described shouting as a punitive strategy that harmed the teacher-pupil relationship.

Teacher practices emerged as a central theme in all the participant's accounts, although the participant's accounts contrast with results from motivation research such as Battistich and Hom (1997), Deci *et al*. (2001), and Furrer and Skinner (2003). The current study found that the participants highly valued tokenistic extrinsic rewards and linked the attainment of these to pupil's SOB. These findings contradict the findings of Anderman and Freeman (2004) in which extrinsic rewards negatively affected a pupil's SOB. The current study may have something in common with Caroline Mansfield's (2007) findings in Australia, which reported a correlation between the value of extrinsic motivators and previous experiences of failure.

There are few studies explicity examining teacher responses to bullying behaviours and pupil's SOB, although schools that promote belonging and have reduced levels of bullying (Olweus, 1995; Rigby, 1996; Skues *et al*. 2005). Skues *et al*. (2005) reported that bullied children in schools are less connected to their teachers. This was reported by participants in the current study. Eisenberger *et al*. (2003) supported the findings in the current study in which a relationship was found between peer harassment and low SOB. These results are also similar to the current study in which Luke appeared to have reduced SOB through continual peer harassment.

In the belongingness domain, children with SEN have been found to be less accepted and more rejected than peers (Dyson *et al*. 2004; Frederickson & Furnham, 2004). The current study found a difference in experience and supported studies by (Frostad & Pijl, 2007; Meadan & Halle, 2004) in which not all SEN pupils are poorly accepted and/or experience bullying. All three participants in the current study described teacher preference and the findings supported Chang *et al*. (2004) and Mercer & DeRosier (2008) in which a link was found between teacher preference and pupil preference. The participants all voiced a desire for a close attachment with their teacher, maybe corroborating Rowe's (2000) findings in which the teacher effect was stronger for boys. All the participants voiced knowledge of teacher preference supporting Babad (1993)

who showed children demonstrated an ability to pick up on teacher non-verbal behaviours.

All three participants spoke of their preferred leisure activity at school as football, and also linked this to their friendship groups, access to peer relationships and positive emotions. The link to happiness is strongly supported by Frederickson and Baxter *et al*. (2009) in which being accepted reportedly led to positive emotions. Other important research that has similar findings to the current study when considering the link between breaktime and social relationships are the studies by Pelligrini and Smith (1998) and Blatchford and Baines (2006).

The final unexpected theme of 'physical illness' has great relevance for educators, although at present there is a dearth of studies exploring long term hospitalisation effects for children. The participant accounts in the current study echoed Dickerman's (2007) study and Duffey-Lind *et al*. (2006) in which children post cancer treatment were reported to be low in confidence, and to feel 'different' from their peers. Especially pertinent to this study are the findings recorded by Bessell (2001) in which emotional stability was noted as an area of ongoing difficulty for children.

The results of this study lend support to the findings of current literature (Malcolm et al. 2003; Newman et al. 2007) where negative peer interaction can lead to disengagement from school. Also relevant to the issue of absence through illness are Malcolm et al's (2003) findings in which poor-attendees found it hard to maintain friendships and subsequently became disengaged. Poor sense of belonging has been clearly linked in the field to truancy and drop out (Bond *et al*. 2007; Christenson *et al*. 2001; Klem & Connell, 2004) as shown in the current study.

5.2   Limitations and strengths of the research

This study can lay claim to originality on the basis of its investigation of experiences of belongingness with boys with literacy difficulties using a phenomenological and qualitative framework. Much of the research on belongingness has been dominated by a quantitative research design, exploring the relationship between belongingness and various academic, emotional, social, and behavioural outcomes. The present study may

be seen as adding new understanding to the body of knowledge about the belongingness experience.

Qualitative research into belongingness will help educational professionals gain insight into the many ways in which belongingness exists and functions within the complex social contexts in which children operate at school.

5.3   Reflections on the study design and epistemology

Interpretative phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen for the present study in order to counter much of the dominant positivist, quantitative approaches of much of the current body of knowledge on school belongingness. IPA is suitable for exploring how participants experience and make sense of their world (Smith & Osborn, 2003). I was attracted to the IPA's transparency, embracing reflexivity and recognising researcher preconceptions and experiences that may impact on the study.

I feel very strongly that my research should reflect the voice of the child, and IPA's analysis grounded in the participant's text fitted this viewpoint, with the added acknowledgement of limitations of the researcher's interpretation. There was a danger of privileging accounts that particularly resonated emotionally with me. My direction of questioning and non-verbal communication may have encouraged and/or discouraged certain responses. For example I made a decision during Luke's interview not to ask for elaboration on some distressing events he was describing as I felt elaboration would bring back the feelings he experienced at the time and may have left him with an additional sadness after the interview had ended.

I aimed for trustworthiness and transparency throughout the analysis and interpretation, but I acknowledge that the results and interpretation are mine and other researchers may have highlighted different themes and/or included other themes. The account described is rich but is only one of many possible co-constructions. As a researcher I was extremely passionate about 'belongingness' research and its value in education. This passion was fuelled by many personal experiences in many different settings. This personal bias was inevitably mirrored in the preparation of the study, interview process,

analysis, and interpretation. It could be said that the thesis is 'coloured by the lenses' worn before, after, and during the entire research process.

I carefully considered inherent limitations within IPA itself, such as adherence to a single method, hermeneutics, theme development, and the language ability of participants. IPA guidelines can be seen as offering a 'recipe' to follow. I overcame this limitation trying to ensure single comments that were spoken with passion, or resonated particularly with me as a researcher, were also analysed. I endeavoured be not 'lose' phenomenology on the way, by not being bounded by just searching the data for 'sub'themes' and then classifying these into broader themes. Good examples of this within the thesis are found within Luke's account which contained comments about 'respect' and 'physical illness' not voiced in the other two participant's accounts.

IPA was chosen over other qualitative methods such as narrative, grounded theory, and discourse analysis. Grounded theory may be a method that could have also been used effectively. I discarded grounded theory for a variety of reasons. Firstly, I had spent many months reading the current literature on school SOB, therefore I would not be able to approach the topic without bias. Secondly, I felt that IPA would offer a richer account of the lived experience of these participants, rather than attempting to establish and make claims of generalisability based on a small sample (Smith *et al.* 2009). Grounded theory has also suffered from criticism of not addressing reflexivity fully; IPA embraces reflexivity (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

The small sample in itself may be seen as limiting but I feel that the small number adds to the study's strength. I deliberately limited the participant number to three so that I could complete an analysis in depth rather than looking for commonalities across a larger group. Time limited the opportunity to interview the same participants at different times during the school year. The recruitment strategy employed may not be truly homogenous, as the three participants may have had different types of literacy difficulties and/or differed in degree of severity. The study may also suffer from selection bias as the three participants were chosen by the head teacher and Senco, and may have been appraised for their ability to articulate their story, their willingness to participate, or for other reasons unknown to the researcher. They are unlikely to be representative of the population of boys with literacy difficulties as a whole. The aim

was to produce an in-depth analysis of the accounts of three participants, generalisability was not the aim of this study; any conclusions are specific to that group.

IPA provides a guideline for analysis, and was helpful to a researcher unfamiliar with this approach (Smith & Eatough, 2006). The guidelines felt comforting when faced with so much rich data, but still allowed for creativity when my confidence increased. I did not anticipate how time consuming and challenging the analysis process could be. I felt a difficulty maintaining the balance between evidence through quotes, and keeping the richness of the data when limited with word restrictions. I wanted the reader to be able to judge if the themes accurately represented the quotes, and to transfer enough of the participant's vibrant accounts to resonate with the reader.

If the findings are replicated in future research, then EPs may be in a position to support schools with possible strategies to improve pupils' SOB, in particular, involving the teacher as an agent of positive change. The EP for the site school volunteered to support the school with implementation of strategies from the action plan over the coming school year. The researcher also worked closely with the Senco and EP for the school to ensure that strategies were being put into place to address Luke's concerns. Subsequent checks by the EP for the school and the researcher revealed Luke is now much happier, has a good relationship with his teacher, and is integrated more socially. The EP for the school is keeping a 'watching brief' through year six, and passing any concerns to the Senco at Luke's forthcoming secondary school.

Secondly, the findings from this study have illustrated the importance of 'communication' and how language is used, with possible implications for pupils' mental health and wellbeing. EPs are in an ideal position to aid schools in creating positive experiences for all children and young people. The suggestions for school could be further developed as a tool for teachers working with pupils whose SOB is a cause for concern.

Thirdly, IPA has proved to be a very effective tool for hearing the perspectives of children about their lived experience in school. Often we collect views for reports, representing the child's voice (Harding & Atkinson, 2009), but being able to take the time using IPA has produced far richer, personal accounts of a child's experience that

may be far more useful than a one off consultation. I intend to use a shortened version of IPA within my work, where time will permit. I also feel that during this research I learned a great deal about the problems inherent in educational research and the ethical difficulties of working with vulnerable children. The skills and knowledge I have gained will provide a good grounding for my future research practice. Further reflections from the reflective journal are included (see Appendix 7).

My epistemological stance of critical realism was retained through the research process and I feel that the data derived from the participants' accounts depicted a reflection of the phenomenon that may resonate with readers. During the research process I was aware of how my reflexive position may have affected the co-construction of data (Smith, 1997) and that the participants may have chosen to voice their accounts in a certain way, and chose which experiences to share. This may compromise the data reflecting accurately the phenomenon, as suggested by Willig (2008) in which she stated the 'representational validity of language' maybe a limitation of IPA (p.66).

5.4   More suggestions for further research

One of the principle functions of an EP in the United Kingdom is carrying out research (Gersch, 2004; MacKay, 2002); this study has highlighted a need for future research on belongingness in school. Qualitative research exploring the belongingness experiences of children is in its infancy, thus further qualitative research could build on the current findings. The current study has demonstrated how effective IPA can be as a tool used flexibly with child participants.

A longitudinal study would help to overcome the problem of retrospective accounts and would illuminate further the developmental and temporal differences that may be experienced in a SOB. Particular areas of focus could include exploring the phenomenon at different developmental stages using a longitudinal study. Following participants across a school day may also provide a more thorough picture of these pupils' experiences.

Research could be narrowed to look at pupils diagnosed with dyslexia, which would ensure a more homogenous sample, and may overcome some of the selection bias

inherent in this study. As more boys are understood to experience dyslexia, and enjoyment at school appears to be derived from group sport games; dyslexia, gender and sport as play could be explored, especially in relation to social and emotional outcomes.

Luke's early childhood experience of hospitalisation appeared to underpin some of his experiences of belongingness, and the findings have implications for professionals working with children who are, or have been, hospitalised for long periods. The link between early hospitalisation and SOB has yet to be explored.

Although research has been carried out examining the role of peer relationships and friendship in belongingness, as yet no specific attention has been paid to the role of breaktime activities and preferred leisure pursuits, on peer relationships, in turn possibly impacting on SOB. On a personal level I feel that the most exciting area yet to be explored may be the role of emotional life in the classroom on SOB, and more specifically the role of emotions in shaping the teacher-pupil relationship, which in turn impacts on SOB.

5.5   Reflections on the study impact

IPA does not claim generalisability, or to achieve a representative sample in either probability or population. I would argue that literacy difficulties in their level and depth are so varied that a representative sample could not be achieved. My study attempted to produce an in-depth analysis of a small group of boys who have all experienced literacy difficulties, and are also immersed in the lived experience of belongingness at school. My conclusions are specific to this group, but I hope the study will provide valuable insights and point the way to future research.

5.6   Implications for professional practice

The study was not aimed specifically at EPs. In fact, it was carried out with the educational professionals of the school in mind. Nonetheless, this research holds much relevance for educational psychology, and for my own professional practice as an EP. My findings have already generated interest within the inclusion service in my service

authority, and I have been invited to present my work at a conference. The professionals there will be representatives from education, health care, and social care.

The research itself has already impacted on my practice as an EP, as I am now more aware of the use of language in the classroom and its potential for both positive and negative effects on pupils. Inclusion is a dominant issue for educational psychologists (Hick, 2005) and findings from this study may assist in the prevention of alienation for some pupils in school.

The results have implications for educationalists considering the importance of interventions aimed at enhancing sense of belongingness in schools. For example, all three accounts demonstrated the importance of the teacher-pupil relationship and its impact in the classroom on peer relationships. Educationalists need to be aware of the impact of the teacher as 'an agent of change' and implement an intervention that also enhances the teacher-pupil relationship alongside peer interventions.

The research results also support the idea of integrating new areas into the initial teacher-training programme such as body language awareness, positive psychology, classroom climate, and indirect aggression in bullying. When looking at pupil behaviour in the classroom the teacher-pupil relationship may be the key to behaviour changes. Interactions could be monitored by teaching staff, evaluating interaction length, type, occurrence etc. Staff behaviour could then be modified, and interactions re-evaluated alongside behavioural targets. A main finding of this study points to the importance of educationists being aware that the punitive strategy of shouting may lead a pupil to believe the adult shouting does not like them, and may thus impact on their sense of belonging in the classroom. It is equally important that educationalists are aware that pupils are able to detect teacher preference and may model their own peer preferences using teacher behaviour.

Education professionals also need to take into account any possible long-term effects of hospitalisation, especially socialisation back into school and any difficulties with peer relationships. Hospitalisation may leave pupils with a sense of abandonment, gaps in their learning, and difficulties reengaging with their peers.

Breaktime as a vehicle for socialisation, conflict resolution skill development, peer acceptance and maintenance of relationships appears to be underestimated by education professionals. It is vital its value is appreciated and capitalised on with pupils who experience peer relationship difficulties and low sense of belonging. Lastly, educational professionals need to consider pupil self-exclusion, such as leaving the classroom and self-silencing (withdrawal), to low sense of belonging and disengagement. These behaviours signify strong signals to staff of student unhappiness and low sense of belonging.

Qualitative research exploring the belongingness experiences of children is in its infancy, thus further qualitative research could build on the current findings. The current study has demonstrated how effective IPA can be as a tool used flexibly with child participants. As the current study focused on a small group, further research could examine one participant's experiences of belongingness across a range of contexts. Consideration of the possible interaction between a pupil's gender and their belongingness experience could also be a future research focus.

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5.7 Appendices

Pupil Interview Questions

Understanding and experience of Belongingness

1. We are going to talk about the word belonging. If I said I feel like I belong, tell me what you think this means.
2. Can you draw me a picture of someone in your class who feels like they belong-what will they be doing, who else will be in the picture? Can you tell me how they feel?
3. If someone in your class does not feel they belong (thumbs down) what might that look like?
4. How might they feel, behave, what might they do, how can you tell they feel they do not belong?
5. What does the teacher do to make people in your class feel like they belong?
6. When you have a new pupil in class what kind of things does the teacher do for that pupil?
7. Everyone feels like they don't belong sometimes, can you think of a time that's happened to you?
8. What does your teacher do that makes you feel like you belong?

Perceptions of Support and Caring

1. Can you describe your class? What do you like about being in your class? What don't you like?
2. How does the teacher show children in your class they care about them? How does he/she know when children need help or are upset?
3. What else could the teacher do?
4. Can you draw me a picture of you and your teacher? Explain? Can you tell me about your teacher?
5. Can you think of times you go to talk to your teacher? How often? What about? Were they helpful-why?
6. When does your teacher work with you/on your own and in a small group?
7. When you need help or are upset in class what do you do? Who helps? What do they do?
8. If you need help or are upset at breaktime or had a problem you wanted to talk about, whom would you talk to? What kind of problems? If you get angry in class what happens?
9. If someone in your class has some good news to tell who do they go to?
10. I know you go out of class sometimes to work with other adults, can you tell me about it? What happens when you go back to class in the middle of lessons?
11. Can you draw a picture of you with your friends at school. Tell me about it.
12. Tell me about the other children in your class. What do you do together?
13. Do some children in your class ever get bullied-can you tell me about it? Has it happened to you?

Feelings of inclusion and Acknowledgement

(Question 7 and 8 belonging questions fit in this category, there is also a crossover in this category with the teacher/child relationship))

1. Can you draw a picture of a day you felt great in class. Tell me about it.
2. Do you get a chance to show your class your good work some days? How, when
3. Tell me some things you have done that your teacher has been pleased with recently?

4. Sometimes teachers encourage a child when they find work difficult, has that happened to you? How did you feel?
5. What kind of activities are you involved in at school? Clubs, sports, music, monitor/jobs, plays?
6. What do your classmates think you are good at? How do you know?
7. How do you know when someone in your class likes you?
8. When you go out of class sometimes to do work, what do your classmates say?
9. Tell me about a day that was not so good for you in class.
10. Can you draw a picture of you at break time? Tell me about it.
11. If you have a new pupil coming to your school next week what would you tell them about your school?

Attitudes to Learning

1. What do you like about school? Why? Dislike-why?
2. What do you enjoy learning at school? Why?
3. What makes a lesson really enjoyable?
4. Who are your favourite adults in school? Why?
5. Would you say you worked hard in school? How do you know?
6. Can you think of anything the school could do to help you in lessons a little more? Opportunities, different ways of teaching etc
7. What makes a good teacher?
8. Is it important for you to become a good learner? Why?

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Complete this form if you are planning to carry out research in the School of Education which will <u>not</u> involve the NHS but which will involve people participating in research either directly (e.g. interviews, questionnaires) and/or indirectly (e.g. people permitting access to data).

Documents to enclose with this form, where appropriate:
This form should be accompanied, where appropriate, by an Information Sheet/Covering Letter/Written Script which informs the prospective participants about the a proposed research, and/or by a Consent Form.

Guidance on how to complete this form is at:
http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/content/1/c6/07/21/24/appguide.doc

Once you have completed this research ethics application form in full, and other documents where appropriate email it to the:

<u>**Either**</u>

Ethics Administrator if you are a member of staff.

<u>**Or**</u>

Secretary for your programme/course if you are a student.

<u>**NOTE**</u>
- Staff and Post Graduate Research (EdDII/PhD) requires 3 reviewers
- Undergraduate and Taught Post Graduate requires 1 reviewer – **low risk**
- Undergraduate and Taught Post Graduate requires 2 reviewers – **high risk**

I am a member of staff and consider this research to be (according to University definitions)

:   **low risk**   ☐

    high risk   ☐

I am a student and consider this research to be (according to University definitions):

    low risk   ☐

    high risk   **X**

Note: For the purposes of Ethical Review the University Research Ethics Committee considers all research with 'vulnerable people' to be 'high risk' (eg children under 18 years of age).

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COVER SHEET

I confirm that in my judgment, due to the project's nature, the use of a method to inform prospective participants about the project (eg 'Information Sheet'/'Covering Letter'/'Pre-Written Script'?:	
Is relevant	~~**Is not relevant**~~
See Appendix 1, 2 and 3 (participant information sheets, consent forms, flyer))	

I confirm that in my judgment, due to the project's nature, the use of a 'Consent Form':	
Is relevant	~~**Is not relevant**~~
See Appendix 2)	

Is this a 'generic "en bloc" application (ie does it cover more than one project that is sufficiently similar)	
~~**Yes**~~	**No**
	NO

I am a member of staff ☐

I am a PhD/EdD student ☒ **X**

I am a Master's student ☐

I am an Undergraduate student ☐

I am a PGCE student ☐

The submission of this ethics application has been agreed by my supervisor ☒ **X**

I have enclosed a signed copy of Part B ☒ **X**

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PART A

A1.   Title of Research Project
"DEdCPsy- The experience of 'belongingness': A case study exploration"

A2.   Applicant (normally the Principal Investigator, in the case of staff-led research projects, or the student in the case of supervised research projects):

Title: M/S   First Name/Initials: Alison   Last Name: Gardner
Post: Student   Department: DEdCPsy
Email: edp08ag@sheffield.ac.uk   Telephone: 01283-732722
                                                                07949869071

A.2.1. Is this a student project? Yes
Dr Tim Corcoran
School of Education   **Telephone: 01142228185**
388 Glossop Road   **Email**: t.d.corcoran@sheffield.ac.uk
Sheffield
S102JA

A2.2.   Other key investigators/co-applicants (within/outside University), where applicable:

Please list all (add more rows if necessary)

Title	Full Name	Post	Responsibility in project	Organisation	Department

A3.   Proposed Project Duration:
Start date:May 2010   **End date:** February 2011

A4.   Mark 'X' in one or more of the following boxes if your research:

X	Involves children or young people aged under 18 years
	Involves only identifiable personal data with no direct contact with participants
X	Involves only anonymised or aggregated data
	Involves prisoners or others in custodial care (eg young offenders)
	Involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness
X	Has the primary aim of being educational (eg student research, a project necessary for a postgraduate degree or diploma, MA, PhD or EdD)

A5.   Briefly summarise the project's aims, objectives and methodology?

The project aims to explore three boys' (aged 8-11) understanding of belonging at their school, and their lived experience of belonging or not belonging at their school. The three boys' selected will be on the SEN register for literacy/ dyslexic type difficulties, and will be accessing one to two hours individual or group support per week. Implications for the school will be inferred from the findings, and these will be submitted to the school in the form of an action report. The head teacher at the participating school has agreed to discuss the action report with staff in an allocated meeting slot. The research will use a case study approach, investigating one urban junior school, and three boy's experiences.

In order to ascertain an in depth view and access the 'lived experience' of belongingness, the views of the three children will be sought through semi-structured interviews at the site school. The children will also be asked if they would like to contribute some drawings. It is estimated from the pilot study that the interviews will take 50 minutes.

Interviews will be transcribed, and the data gathered from all sources will be analysed using thematic analysis to discover themes and patterns. The drawings will be analysed using thematic analysis and a modification of Rosés' critical visual methodology framework, analysing the pictures in detail. All data will be anonymised. Respondent validation will be sought during the interviews where possible, and during analysis and writing up of information, direct quotations; feedback and member checking will be carried out. Permission will be sought for the use of direct quotes. Unique participant numbers will be used to enable the researcher to remove data should consent be withdrawn during the study. Drawings will be photographed with permission, and returned to the participant at the end of the interview.

There is an absence of world and United Kingdom (UK) research investigating perceptions of belongingness with pupils aged eight to eleven years of age, and also of pupils with literacy/dyslexic type difficulties. Of the published literature, very few examine the rich descriptions of 'lived experiences' of belonging, but instead is quantitative in nature. The overall purpose of this study is to contribute to an understanding of how three boys with dyslexic / literacy difficulties in a mainstream primary school understand and experience belongingness. The contribution has great relevance for educators as belongingness is linked to many positive psychological and academic benefits, and a sense of not belonging has been linked to many negative psychological, academic, and behavioural outcomes. The study will also contribute to the site school's interpretation of inclusion, and may impact on their policies and practice regarding these three individual children, and possibly other children with similar difficulties in the site school.

A6.   What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

The nature of the participants (children aged 8-11 with SEN) and the sensitivity of the topic (belongingness and relationships between pupils and teachers) pose important ethical issues. For a copy of the consent form used with pupils see Appendix 2. The content of this form is closely aligned with the specification for 'fully informed consent' given by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004) and the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2006). As all of the pupils are under 18 years, parental permission will be gained via a consent form (Appendix 2), and a follow up discussion prior to the interviews. To avoid the experience seeming overly formal for the pupils, pupil consent will be gained verbally. In order to ensure that pupils are able to give their fully informed consent, prior to commencing with each pupil

interview the researcher will use the parent / pupil information sheet (Appendix 1) to explain the project and as a prompt to explain the key principles of voluntary participation, right to refuse or withdraw, and anonymity; this will be explained in an age-appropriate language friendly way. With a number of the pupils having literacy difficulties the researcher will seek guidance from the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (Senco) at the selected site prior to the pupil interviews on the following:

I. The nature of each pupil's needs and the resultant requirement to simplify the language used and questions asked;

II. Any important or sensitive issues about which the teacher felt the researcher should be aware (for example in relation to the pupil's emotional wellbeing or home and family circumstances).

It will be made explicit in the consent information that issues of concern raised during the process of the interviews will be followed up by the school Senco, and if after discussion with the Senco is deemed appropriate, the educational psychologist (EP) for that school (prearranged with the EP). This will also be made explicit verbally at the beginning of each interview. It is possible that issues may be raised regarding a child's level of happiness and inclusion within the school. Previous distress may be reawakened. The participating school have arranged for a teaching assistant to be available for the pupil participants to talk to after the interview or in the next few months if needed. If an issue presents as a problem the strategy to be pursued will be discussed with the child first.

All study material will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. The audio files will be destroyed at the end of the study; audio files will be deleted from the recorder and the researchers computer. Picture files will be deleted in the same way. With permission from the pupils, copies of the pictures will be retained in the appendix of the thesis along with transcripts of the interviews. Participants who choose to withdraw from the study will have their data deleted from the study. In the write up care will be taken to ensure that there are no quotes that may identify an individual child, parent, or teacher. A stamped addressed postcard will be given to each participant stating a request for withdrawal from the study; this will avoid embarrassment or coercion to continue. It will be made clear to all participants that they may withdraw retrospectively and the audio data and any transcripts will be deleted and destroyed. To enable child participants to feel able to stop at any point in the interviews or to indicate they do not wish to answer a question, a 'stop' card will be provided, and a practice of use will be carried out at the beginning of each interview. A quiet safe room will be provided for participants to ensure they feel valued, and not overseen or heard by school staff. There is no risk of physical harm to participants over and above that expected in the course of ordinary daily life.

A7.   Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project and, if yes, explain how these issues will be managed? (Especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises.)

Interviews on the school site have been prearranged and participants will sign in at reception; office staff will be made aware of interview timings.

A8.   How will the potential participants in the project be (i) identified, (ii) approached and (iii) recruited?

Participants will be three boys aged 8-11 years old, on the special needs register (SEN) for literacy difficulties at School Action Plus (SA+). They will be accessing 1-2 hours of individual or group support. The boys will be identified through the school Senco, and the potential of pupils meeting the criteria will be discussed with individual teachers. Flyers will be provided (Appendix 3), an information sheet (Appendix 1), and they will also have an opportunity to talk to the researcher about the proposal prior to the interviews. A stamped addressed return postcard will also be included indicating a wish to be involved in the study. If the postcard is returned a

consent form will be provided. The pupils will have an opportunity to talk to the researcher, have a verbal language friendly explanation provided, and verbal consent sought if they wish to take part. Parent signatures will not be accepted on their own as consent for the child.

A9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

Yes

No

X

If informed consent is not to be obtained please explain why. Further guidance is at http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/07/21/15/Ethics_Consent.doc
Only under exceptional circumstances are studies without informed consent permitted. Students should consult their tutors.

A.9.1 How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):

In order to secure informed consent each participant will be provided with a flyer and information about the research in general, and the specific activity in which they may agree to take part in (Appendix 2). The researcher will be on hand (either at the point of data collection or by phone prior to the activity) to discuss the process and answer any questions that the participants and/or may have. If the postcard is not returned it will be deemed as not giving permission. If the postcard is returned a consent form will then be signed and witnessed. The participant will be offered a photocopy of the signed form. To ensure informed consent is obtained, verbal consent will also be obtained at the beginning of the parent and pupil interviews, with a verbal explanation of the information sheet. Obtaining consent is a continuing process and the right to withdrawal will be reiterated during the interviews. A 'stop' card will be provided for child participants and can be used to indicate withdrawal from the interview or a wish to not answer a certain question. There will be a practice using the card at the beginning of the interviews.

A.10 How will you ensure appropriate protection and well-being of participants?

Time will be invested at the beginning of the interviews to help participants feel safe, supported and valued. The drawing activity is intended to make the research activity fun. Participants will be reminded that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. During the interviews participants will also be reminded that they do not have to answer any questions they are not comfortable answering. Pupils will be reminded that they only need to contribute a drawing if they wish to. The 'stop' card can be used for any drawing task; this will be made clear to the participants. The drawings will be treated as the property of the child, and permission will be sought to photograph it for analysis. Again the 'stop' cards can be used to indicate no and the child's wishes will be respected. Participants will be provided with contact details in case they want to discuss the research at a later date. Power imbalances will be tackled with member checking responses during the interview where appropriate, checking responses and direct quotes for use in the analysis phase by returning to the school for discussions, and by adopting a methodology that values the voices and thoughts of children. Care will be taken by the researcher to ensure own perceptions and interpretations are not imposed on the data. A pre stamped postcard will be provided to make withdrawal from the study easy. If a child decides not to participate during the interview or afterwards, they will be allowed to discuss what they want in this time slot, and gatekeepers will not be informed about the withdrawal.

It will be made explicit in the consent information that issues of concern raised during the process of the interviews will be followed up by the school Senco, and if after discussion with the Senco is deemed appropriate, the educational psychologist (EP) for that school (prearranged with the EP). This will also be made explicit verbally at the beginning of each interview. It is possible that issues may be raised regarding a child's level of happiness and

inclusion within the school. Previous distress may be reawakened. The participating school have arranged for a teaching assistant to be available for the pupil participants to talk to after the interview or in the coming week. If an issue presents as a problem the strategy to be pursued will be discussed with the child first.

A.11   What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

When participants are asked to provide their contact details these will be recorded on individual sheets to prevent other participants seeing personal details. All personal details (including consent forms) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet according to local authority data protection guidance. Once the project is completed all personal details will be destroyed or returned to participants on request. The audio files will be destroyed at the end of the study; audio files will be deleted from the recorder and the researchers computer. Picture files will be deleted in the same way. With permission from the pupils, copies of the pictures will be retained in the appendices of the thesis along with transcripts of the interviews. Participants who choose to withdraw from the study will have their data deleted from the study. Assurances about these processes will be given to the participants. All participants will have the opportunity to attend a presentation of the finished work and can have a copy of the finished work should they wish.

A.12   Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided.)

Yes	
No	**X**

A.13 Will the research involve the production of recorded or photographic media such as audio and/or video recordings or photographs?

Yes   **X**

No

A.13.1 This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded or visual media:
How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media or photographs may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?

At any point of data collection participants will be asked if they consent to being tape-recorded. If they decline they will be asked if notes may be taken. The game at the beginning of the pupil interview will not be recorded. With consent the photographs of the drawings will be retained on computer file only until the end of the study. The participants will be informed of storage and deletion procedures.

If a participant requests withdrawal during the study at any time, the audio files and photograph files of the drawings will be deleted from both the recorder and the researchers computer. Any transcripts that may exist at this point will also be destroyed and put through a paper shredder. The pupils will be asked if they would like to keep their drawings and these will be returned at the end of each interview.

Agreement will be obtained through participant's reading the information sheet (Appendix 1), and discussing this with the researcher. Once agreement is reached, the consent form will be signed by both the participant and researcher (Appendix 2).

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PART B - THE SIGNED DECLARATION

Title of Research Project: "DEdCPsy- The experience of 'belongingness': A case study exploration"

Name of Applicant: Alison Gardner

I confirm my responsibility to deliver the research project in accordance with the University of Sheffield's policies and procedures, which include the University's *'Financial Regulations', 'Good research Practice Standards'* and the *'Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue'* (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the research funder.

In signing this research ethics application I am confirming that:

1. The above-named project will abide by the University's Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue':
    http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/07/21/15/Tissue.doc

2. The above-named project will abide by the University's 'Good Research Practice Standards': www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/03/25/82/collatedGRP.pdf

3. The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

4. There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.

5. Subject to the research being approved, I undertake to adhere to the project protocol without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter from the University ethics reviewers notifying me of this.

6. I undertake to inform the ethics reviewers of significant changes to the protocol (by contacting my supervisor or the Ethics Administrator as appropriate

7. I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CICS).

8. I understand that the project, including research records and data, may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.

9. I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this form will be held by those involved in the ethics review procedure (eg the Ethics Administrator and/or ethics reviewers/supervisors) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.

10. If this is an application for a 'generic'/'en block' project all the individual projects that fit under the generic project are compatible with this application.

11.   I will inform the Chair of Ethics Review Panel if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.

Name of the Principal Investigator (or the name of the Supervisor if this is a student project:
Tim Corcoran

If this is a student project insert the student's name here:
Alison Gardner

Signature of Principal Investigator (or the Supervisor):

Signature of student:

Date:
9th May 2010

Email the completed application form and provide a signed, hard copy of 'Part B' to the course/programme secretary

For staff projects contact the Ethics Secretary, Colleen Woodward
Email: c.woodward@sheffield.ac.uk for details of how to submit

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Belongingness Research Study

❖ How do some pupils experience 'belonging' or not 'belonging' in their school?

❖ Are there any implications for the school?

Interviews with:

- Children (approximately 50-60 minutes)
- Additional voluntary fun drawing tasks for children in the interview
- All information obtained will be confidential.
- All participants have the right to withdraw at any point and the information destroyed.
- Participants and their families, and interested school staff will be invited to a presentation of the study.

Do you think a sense of belonging is important?

Please post the postcard to the researcher if you are interested in

Your View

Thank you for taking the time to read this

Pupil and Parent Information Sheet

The Experience of 'belongingness' study

Your child is being invited to take part in a research project conducted by Alison Gardner, an Educational Psychologist in Training based at Stoke on Trent's Educational Psychology Service, studying at the University of Sheffield. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Contact details are listed below if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

The study is designed to find out how pupils at School Action Plus (SA+), on the Special Needs Register experience a sense of belongingness at school. Belongingness refers to a pupil's perception of support and caring, feelings of inclusion and acknowledgement, and attitudes to school. You have been chosen because your child is currently at School Action Plus. For the study three children will be recruited.

Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time. You do not have to give a reason. The study information will be explained to your son/daughter verbally to ensure their understanding and informed consent. They are also free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Your child will be asked to participate in an interview that may last up to 50 minutes. The pupil interviews will start with a picture card game to help build a friendly informal relationship and have five optional drawing tasks. During the interviews your child does not have to answer any questions that would make him/her uncomfortable. With your permission the interviews will be recorded and transcribed for analysis, then the recording will be destroyed.

All information obtained during the study will be confidential. If serious issues of concern are raised during the interview process, this will be discussed with the school Senco, and either followed up by the Senco or the educational psychologist for the school. The school will not have access to the interview data and you will not be identified in any reports or publications.

If you would like to discuss anything further please contact Alison Gardner or my supervisor Clive Barcham at 01782-234700 or email Alison.gardner@stoke.gov.uk. For complaints contact Clive Barcham at the above number.

Yours Sincerely

Researcher: Alison Gardner

Supervisor: Clive Barcham

Pupil Participant Consent Form

Title of Project: The experience of 'belongingness'

Name of Researcher: Alison Gardner

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project dated April 26th 2010, and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. (Contact Alison Gardner 01782-234700)

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised respons

4. I agree to take part in the above research project.

5. I agree for my son/daughter _____
   to take part in the above research project (insert name please).

I

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of person taking consent Date   Signature
(if different from lead researcher)
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

_____   _____   _____
 Lead Researcher   Date   Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:

5.7.6   Appendix 6: EXAMPLE OF A DRAWING FROM THE PUPIL INTERVIEWS
(activity with my teacher)
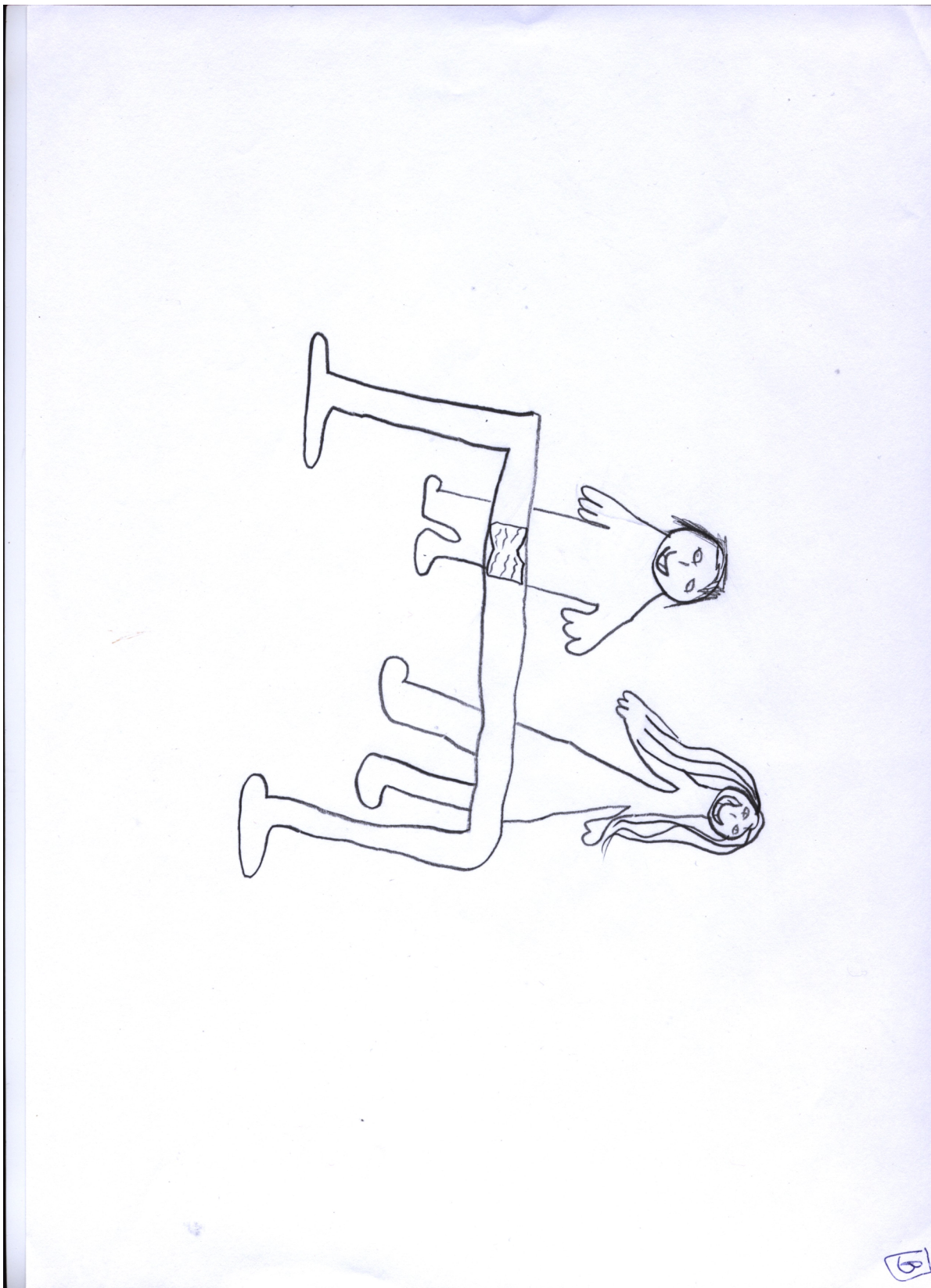
5.7.7   Appendix 7: EXAMPLE EXTRACTS FROM RESEARCH JOURNAL

I feel very enthusiastic about the analysis today after taking so long transcribing. I had failed to catch all the words of the participants and transcribing had been a very painful process. I do now feel submerged in the data though, although going over Luke's account many times has made me feel a little depressed and angry with the school. I wondered how many more children there were with illnesses that had warranted a statement, then low teacher expectations as a result. I also felt angry that the school had been aware of the bullying but had just kept removing Luke from these situations (as if it was his fault) and not tackling what was gong on. It felt as if the school had been very complacent, and because Luke had a negative outlook at times, had not taken him seriously.

Being upset after reading the transcripts was not helpful to moving on or good for my home life, but it was a constant throughout the research process. I am trying to focus on many of the positives in the other two accounts, and also spend time talking to the EP for the school regarding the bullying policy and strategies as a whole. The school is having a change of management so all work between the school and the EP had been put on hold at present….

(Research journal, 23rd August 2010)

As I began the analysis and emerging themes I am still struck by the difficulty in remaining completely distanced, not reflecting on the implication in my work as an EP, and relating the analysis to other cases. I try too keep alert and open, and remain focused when working on the thesis. I find the whole process of refining and integrating themes tiring. My lounge is covered in hundreds of paper themes and no one can walk near for fear of a gust removing my ongoing analysis. Each morning I walk in and look regarding the theme integration. I have moved them around so many times now and so many fit into more than one category it is mind boggling. I find the disorder of qualitative research disquieting, but maybe I have comfortably forgotten how frustrating quantitative research can be and my struggles with SPSS.

I still wonder how I came to this topic, was I more preoccupied with 'belonging' for myself than I thought? I have spent many a moment deliberately not belonging to groups as I had felt it wasn't important. In reality I have always had friends and a small core group within the climbing scene to 'belong to'. We convince ourselves maybe that we are all individuals doing our own thing but really we still come together quite regularly. Interestingly I started the psychology degree and decided I would just go and work hard and not worry about being part of the group as I was expecting to be so much older than the most students. In actual fact I had a great time socially and was really happy that I was integrated into the Diploma group and had friendships. I think I kid myself belonging isn't important in case it doesn't work out. How brave of the participants to open up to me about their desires for friendship.

Looking back I felt so privileged to meet those three boys and hear their stories. I think I will always be amazed looking back at how honest and direct all three were. How much more could a school gain through teachers engaging in research and asking children themselves what they think. I think encouraging the schools and teachers to engage in this role and supporting them is an important role for an EP. I have one school working with me in this way, the teacher has a psychology degree so perhaps thinks in a more 'research oriented' way? I hope I get more opportunities for this.

Research journal, 14th October 2010

relationships
- exclusion
- gate keepers
- friendships
- transiency
- gate keepers
- teacher & other adults
- family
- peers

learning
- curriculum demands
- motivation

coping strategies
- self exclusion
- externalise responsibility
- disengagement
- truancy
- escaping school

emotion & health
- illness
- loneliness
- Importance of personal leisure activity
- optimism / happiness
- pessimism / unhappiness
- emotions felt by pupils
- anxiety

teacher practices
- children are listened to
- teacher preference
- empathy
- rewards
- teacher as a protector
- teacher's communication style

violence & trouble
- aggression to others
- bullying

gate keepers

friendships

transiency

exclusion

loneliness

Relationships

importance of communication

Peers

acknowledgement

communication

communication style

teacher preference

Teacher Practices

reward / punisher

acknowledgement

empathy - listener

gatekeeper

protector

empathy

teachers / adults

externalise responsibility

I am a victim

anxiety

extended family

loneliness

emotions

Emotional & Health

Importance of sport

pessimism / optimism

illness

known / unknown

Bullying / Violence

Coping Strategies

self exclusion / escape

disengagement

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dialogue / communication

empathy / care

gate keepers / translency

bereavement / loss

peer - peer

interpersonal relationships

teacher - pupil

friendships

physical illness

dialogue / communication

loneliness

proximity of peers

emotional support

personal leisure time

protector of all (bullying)

gatekeeping

teacher practices

self exclusion / disengagement

emotional equilibrium

teacher preferences

rewarding / punishing

importance of family in school

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Developing Emergent Themes	Transcript Pupil 3 Luke –	
Literal meaning of 'belonging'	1. I am going to ask you about a word called belonging, so if I said I feel like I belong to this school, what would I mean? 2. I don't know. 1. If you belonged to this school, what would it mean? 2. I lived here, that was only a guess. 1. That's alright, that's a good answer. 2. I miss the hospital people, my friends, because the nurses were quite nice. My Nana brought me one stopover, and my mum brought me one stopover. I brought my teddy, to see what was going on, because I get really upset, I get scared of needles and stuff.. And sometimes, when I visit hospital, after my mum sometimes lets me play football	Literal meaning Unsure expectations? Aware the answer might be something else? confidence issues People nice at hospital Missing being kind Bereavement hospital and relationships Trauma-fear
Past trauma Physical illness Bereavement and loss		
Self esteem	1You were ill for a long time weren't you? Can you draw me a picture of a stick man who felt like they belonged? 2.I can't **even** draw stick men. 1.I can't draw either? Mine never look like people If you don't want to draw me any pictures you don't have to-we can put them over there… 2. I will. 1. Are you sure? You can leave the drawings-talking to you and getting your view is what I really want to do-the drawings are just for fun if you like drawing. Okay, do you want the pen, or do you want the pencil instead? 2. The pen. 1. You like the pen? So somebody who feels like they belong? What are they going to be doing? 2. A massive stomach…. 1. Who is it, who are you drawing? They have got a massive stomach haven't they	Lacking confidence 'can't even' +low self esteem
Identification with ill character-loss	2. Me. (laughed) 1. What are you doing? 2. Living here. (laughed) 1. Living here, yeh..like you did in hospital. Bet there's no beds here though, is there? 2. No. 1. If someone in your class didn't feel like they belonged…..	Identification with ill character-here in the present

Codes/Themes	Transcript	Interpretation
Bullying and victimization	2. the class bother you. ...keep bully 1.Who don't? The class, they are mean	Bother and bullying
Peer difficulties – class/school ethos Isolation	1. Hmm...what if I said like belonging means you feel happy, relaxed here............	Difficulties with peers class ethos–bullying acceptable–some children are mean Poor peer relationships
Emotions-linked to belonging	2. I think I feel like sad. 1. Hmmm, in the picture or are you sad now?	
Emotional well being	2. I am Sad now and in the picture .1. Why are you sad now?	Identification with sadness in the present/emotions Psychological well being–depression
Exclusion/peer relations	2. I have no friends 1. That would make you feel sad.......	No friends–isolation, loneliness
	So if someone in your class didn't feel like they belonged, they might feel sad? How would you know in the classroom if they felt sad?	
Identification–behavioural outcome	2. They'd be sulking, like I do..(sigh) 1. Do you sulk? Yeh, what do you do when you sulk?	Behavioural outcome–identification with not belonging
Emotions	2. I feel really upset. 1. Do you, what else do you do when you are sulking?	Upset–mental health and well being–emotions
Self eclusion/peer relations Long term peer difficulties	2. I don't talk to anyone....... I'm still not friends with most people in year five.	No friends in present class After all this time-long term difficulties and exclusion, social withdrawal-self silencing
Exclusion/pessimism	1. Oh, how come? 2. I don't think I've got any friends.	Repeat–no friends
Self exclusion/escaping leaving school	1. Aw....that's a real shame. 2. That's why I keep saying to my mum can I leave this school. 1. Yeh.. 2. She said she might think about it. I might go back to my other school she hasn't decided.	Desire to leave-self exclude-parental involvement–known unhappiness?
Loss	1. Oh .....where was your other school? 2. Just down the street from me, I can just walk there. It took two minutes to get there. It's just next to my house, and there's gates to open up so I can get into school, and after that I play on my own and play football.	Old school –loss
Peer relations	1. Why do you think you've got no friends here, why do you think that is? 2. P can't make up his mind, I am his friend and then I'm not his friend, J and C are forever and ever friends, ehmm J' not sure, M's not sure, P's not sure. So no friends......I have lots of friends in	Happy memories–on own outside of school–peer exclusion/isolation
Peer relations		Friendships-fragile, conflict

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Theme	Transcript	Codes
Peer relations Friendships	hospital 1. Why do you think they're not sure? 2. Because ehm..when (next few couple of words unclear) playing with me it's just all chaos, he'll just be real mean. Because one day he'll be nice to J, one day he'll be nice to me and all sorts. The day's he's nice to J he ignores me, the day he's nice to me he ignores J. They tell J to not be my friend.	Illness-peer relationships-proximity Chaos-no consistency-conflict in friendships No sharing of friends
Gatekeeping, conflict	1. Oh dear, but you had lots of friends in hospital, why do you think that is? 2. It's just **different** here.	Different-loss bereavement
Loss/bereavement	1. So what do you think the difference is, why do you think it's harder here? 2. Because, its......I don't have any friends (yawn).	Harder to make relationships-proximity in hospital-easier-isolation from peers-loneliness
Friendships, loneliness	1. Hmm...Why do you think it's harder here, because you made loads of friends in hospital? What do you think the difference is between school and hospital? 2. I can just see some of my friends, I can see..........I think fourteen of them. They are all nice, not mean......We all talk	Proximity lots, nice not mean All talk-communal togetherness-communication Peers at school are mean-conflict, rejection
Peer relations-loss, proximity-illness	1. You spent a lot of time in hospital, I suppose you made really good friends. Right then, if you did feel like you don't belong, how would you behave, what kind of things would you do? You said you'd look sad, is there any other things you would do... 2. be upset. 1. Yeh..you might be?	Emotion sadness
Emotions	2. Crying. 1. Yeh..	Crying-
Self exclusion/escape	2. ....(5 secs)Like......**run out of** school.....Like one of my friends once ran out of school. 1.Why did he run out of school? 2. he was angry and had fell out with his friend...the teacher was shouting	Self exclusion/escape Identification with a friend self excluding
Peer relations Friendships Communication-shouting	1. When you have a new pupil in class, what kind of things does the teacher do for the new pupil? 2. I don't know. 1. Have you not had a new pupil in your class? 2. Yeh, I had L and that was it. 1. Can you remember, did the teacher do anything special?	Anger-relationships peers, shouting teacher

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Emotions	2. Crying. 1. Yeh.. 2. ....(5 secs)Like......**run out of** school......Like one of my friends once ran out of school.	Emotion sadness Crying-
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Loss/emotions	2. I only have one thing to remind me of the other school. That's a picture, and I look upset. 1. Yeh...were you upset in the picture?. 2. Yes I hated the teachers	Loss/ bereavement/emotions Negative view of self
Emotions Adult relationships	1. everyone feels like they don't belong sometimes, like I don't belong, because I don't know anyone in this school. So do you feel like you don't belong here every day, or is it just sometimes you feel like that?	Poor relationship with teachers Hate x 2-emotion
Pessimism, long term exclusion Bullying, peer relations	2. Yeh...every day. 1. Do you? 2Yes I hate it here. No one likes me	Every day-not belonging-isolation emotions
Long term poor relationships peers	1. Yeh...you don't feel like you belong? Do you think you will one day though, when you've been here longer? 2. I've been here about five years. 1. Have you? 2. I've been here for years. 1. But you had the hospital in the middle, didn't you? So I suppose that stopped you making friends at school, didn't it? 2. Yeh..	No hope of improvement. Pessimism
Pessimism	1. Does the teacher do anything to make you feel better, or happy do you think? 2. No.	Long term rejection and loneliness
Empathy	1. No, that's a shame, isn't it? Do you think she could do anything? 2. No, she doesn't like me, so no one does	Hate-emotion-no fiends, loneliness, peer rejection
Teacher preference Peer relations, bullying, violence	1. Do you think she could help you make more friends? 2. No, because they'll just be mean to me anyway cos they hit me. 1. Do you think so? 2. Yeh..	No emotional role for teacher?
Peer relations, exclusion	1. Aw...can you describe your class then? What are they like 2. Mean. 1. They're mean? 2. All of them.	Teacher preference, sense of disempowerment, other pupils following teacher's modeled behaviour
Peer relations/bullying	1. Aw...gosh, is there no nice people in your class? 2. No. 1. You sound ever so fed up, don't you? 2. That's why when they keep annoying me, I just pretend to sleep. 1. Yeh...Would there be anybody you would like to be friends with?	Mean repeat-children are mean-poor relationships peers
Exclusion		Class=mean-totalisation. Isolation
		Collective-ALL. Sense of exclusion
		Self exclusion, coping mechanism, victimization in class

Code	Transcript	Interpretation
Exclusion, optimism	2. I want to be friends with the whole class. 1. Yeh..it would be nice, wouldn't it? How do you think the teacher shows that she care about all the children in the class?	Peer relations-hope Friends with all class-total exclusion
Empathy	2. Uhmm............I don't really know. 1. Do you think she does care about all the children in the class?	
Teacher preference Rewards and sanctions Communication style	2. No she doesn't really..no.....(3 secs)she likes some of them If they don't be really talkative, if they don't be noisy, she just gives them all a treat or something. If they're noisy she yells at them.	Equates caring with being liked-teacher preference, quiet=liked and rewards, noisy=non conforming-shouting and discipline Exclusion from rewards
	1. Does she? 2. Yeh..like my mum, she threw me out of the door. 1. Did she? 2. She threw me out of the room.	
Empathy-acknowledgement	1. Oh..I suppose mums lose their temper don't they? But I think your mum cares about you a lot, doesn't she? Do you think your teacher cares about you? 2. No..I don't know.	Teacher does not care-perhaps
Adult relationships Communication Rewards Communication	1. How would you know if she did care, what would she do? 2. Be nice, don't yell much. Give me treats....help me with my work 1.What is she like to you most of the time? 2.She just yells a lot, always yelling at me, all the time.	Caring=not yelling, rewards, help with learning, curriculum accessibility-extrinsic rewards = motivator
Teacher preference	1. Does she, does she shout at other children though? 2. ....Sometimes.., not everyone though	Communication shouting-repeated victimisation-yelling only for some children
Empathy	1. Yeh.. So what do you think, how does your teacher help children, does she know when they are upset? 2. No. 1. Does she know when you're upset? 2. No..	Teacher does not know when children upset-empathy
Empathy	1. If she sees you having a sulk or looking sad? Would she come over and help you? 2. No. When she was doing the register, she just stood there doing the register when I was crying in the corner.	Empathy lacking, emotional awareness in classroom
Adult relationships Empathy Emotions	1. Did she, aw..you must have felt really sad 2. Yeh. 1. What could the teacher do, what would you like her to do to be more caring?	Lack of empathy, feeling insignificant-emotion
Empathy/adult relationships	2. Be nice if I was crying in the corner. 1. Yeh.. What..could she do when you are crying?.	Be nice-recognise pupils emotional states-empathy

Theme/Code	Transcript	Notes
Empathy	2. Come to me.... talk to me....like Mrs D comes to H on the bench and stuff, buys him drinks and all sorts at the fete.	Come to me-acknowledgement, rewards, empathy
Importance of sport Friendships	1. Does she, that sounds very caring 2. Yeh...(a few words unclear at the beginning) J is the best goalie in the school and F's the best mid fielder and M. I think teachers should have more **respect**, if I was sad. (said with emphasis/anger)	Caring teacher=relationship and rewards Respect-empathy/acknowledgement emphasized, football important-friendships around football
Adult relationships Acknowledgement	1.More respect? How could they show you respect? 2. Be nice...not shout at me if I was crying in the corner,	Communication-shouting Respect=empathy
Empathy, communication style	1.I've got a picture for you to do, could you draw a picture of you and the teacher doing something? Anything, it could be anything, what would you do?	
Adult relationship	2. She doesn't do anything with me, so I don't know. 1. Does she not? 2. No. 1. Shall we leave that drawing?. We'll put that one in the middle. Can you think of times when you might want to talk to your teacher? When would you talk to your teacher?	Poor relationship with teacher-alienation
Exclusion Adult relationships	2. If I was......I would only talk to my teacher if I had no choice. Otherwise if I could I would go to another teacher. 1. Would you? Who would you go to first? 2. No one.	Self exclusion from teacher-alienation, no attachment to teacher, other teacher=better relationship?
Adult relationships	1. No one? But if you really had to, you would go to a teacher? You wouldn't go to her just to tell her some good news or something? 2. No..I wouldn't she wouldn't listen	Listening-lack of acknowledgement, interest in pupil-not being heard
Acknowledgement, pessimism	1. No, so it sounds like you don't get on well with your teacher. Does she get on well with some of the other children? 2. Yes lots, **especially M and J.**	
Teacher preference	1. Why do you think that is? 2. Because she keeps choosing them every day, all sorts.	Teacher preference,
Peer relations, bullying, teacher preference	1. But why do you think she gets on better with them? 2. Em..I don't know, because they're really mean to me and others. She likes them though 1.How are they mean? What do they do?	Favouritism Children are mean, resentment, victimisation not recognized by teacher
Adult relationships Rewards/sanctions	2. Because Miss P said if you move your names once, you don't play in the team, or you're not going to play football at break 1. Are they in the football team? 2. Yeh..I played once, but I didn't score. They wouldn't let me play	Loss of football, unfair treatment, breaktimes/sanctions impacting on friendships Gatekeeping football-'they'

after

Category	Conversation	Analysis
Adult relationships	1. Aw...So when you need help in class with learning, who do you go to? 2. No one. 1. You just get on with it? 2. Yeh.	Learning support-isolated
Emotions, peer relations	1. Would you ask the children next to you? 2. No. They hate me.	No peer support, hate emotion
Bullying/violence	1. Aw..Hate is a strong word-I bet they don't hate stuff. 2. They do because they're always being mean to me, **kick me** and	Mean repeat-victimisation/violence – always=pervasive
Peer relations, communication, exclusion	1. Yeh.. Some children are mean, aren't they 2. Yeh.. 1. How are they mean? 2. They won't share...they don't talk to me, they are real mean!	Sharing, talking-communication, exclusion socially
Adult relationships	1. Do you ever work with your teacher on your own? Does she ever come and sit next to you to help you with your work? 2. Sometimes. 1. Sometimes? And in little groups sometimes as well? 2. Hmm. Not often	Teacher support sometimes-learning
Adult relationships	1. What kind of lessons does she sit with you? 2. Maths, Literacy, Science and all sorts. 1. Oh So she'll come and help you with the work or is it when you are upset? 2. just work sometimes	Support in lessons
Adult relationships	1. If you were upset at break time, who would you go to? 2. None of them. I don't know the other teachers.	No emotional support, contradiction to never
Adult relationships, empathy	1. None of them? Is there any of the dinner ladies, or? 2. **No.**	Isolation from adult support
Adult relationships	1. No? What about Mrs S? 2. No (next few words unclear, tape too quiet) (2 secs)..year two and one, Nursery to year one, Mrs S was nice to me though. It's a long time ago	Relationships isolated
Adult relationships	(continued)	Relational exception Past support?
Emotions	1. If you were angry in class what would you do? Do you get angry? 2. Sometimes..............Sometimes I hit people.	Anger control-emotions, aggression=trouble
Relationship with adults	1. Do you? Does the teacher sort it out? 2. I get into trouble.	'T'=trouble

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Category	Transcript	Analysis
Peer relations Bullying	1. You get into trouble? You don't look like you've got a very bad temper? 2. I do get a bad temper sometimes. People pick on me all the time 1. Oh dear 2. Because I get like really annoyed. Like when J...he called me names I got really frustrated and I ended up hitting him on the face.	bad temper, victimization emotion frustration, bullying then aggression
Emotions/violence Communication	1. How does you teacher sort out things when you are angry 2. she shouts at me	externalizing responsibility
Adult relationships	1. Oh dear...If someone in your class had good news to tell, who would they tell? Would they tell everyone, or just the teacher?	communication, empathy strategies to resolve conflict
Exclusion	2. Everyone, but I wouldn't. 1. No, wouldn't you? 2. No, I wouldn't tell them.	assumption of guilt self excluding-alienation
Exclusion	1Why is that?. 2. I don't like any of them.	repeat exclusion
Peer relations, exclusion	1.You know when you go out to work with adults, do the other children ask where you're going? 2. No..They don't care	pervasive negativity poor peer relations (ANY)
Acknowledgement, peer relations	1. When you come back, do they say "What have you been doing?" 2. Sometimes. 1. Do you like going out to do work? 2. No.	peers not caring-lack of acknowledgement some care at times
Exclusion	1. Why not? 2. I want to stay in the classroom with everyone else .1. Who is it you go out with? Is it Mrs O you go out with? Who do you go out with? 2. Ehmm...Miss B, Miss T. 1. Do you? Is it fun work? 2. Work. Literacy, its not fun much 1. Do you not like seeing the TAs? 2. Miss Banks has got a bad temper, 1. Has she? 2. Yeh..like when I saw.........When I was ill, when me and Victoria were ill, she shouted.... then I came home (next few words unclear).(laugh).. and I went to see Gordon Banks when I was ill in hospital, because I had a wish to see Gordon Banks, so I did.	wants to stay in class contradiction with exclusion Adult relationships-unfairness-anger adults
Adult relationships, communication Empathy		Injustice being ill, empathy lacking, communication shouting
Rewards	1. Wow...But you don't think you like going out to see these people	Past memories illness-rewards and acknowledgement

Theme	Dialogue	Code
Transitional objects	to work with them? 2. I'll ask my mum, she'll find me a picture of Gordon Banks. 1. And bring it into school? That would be really nice.	Picture-transitional object
Importance of sport	2. I think I do have one but it's really, really old. I can remember playing football against him?	Importance of football
	1. Can you really? Is that because you were in hospital that he came to see you? 2. Yeh..	
Rewards	1. Gosh, that was amazing. 2. I said when I came out of hospital that I want to play football with Gordon Bank so I did.	Reward, caring during illness
Importance of sport	1. That must have been brilliant. Would you like to be a footballer? 2. Yeh.	Football dreams-mental health and well being
Peer relations Exclusion Friendships	1. Let's see, a picture of you with friends at school, would you like to draw one-you don't have to 2. No, I don't have any friends.	No friends, reports no friends but wants to stay in class-incongruence, social exclusion, friendships
Communication Adult relationships Gatekeeping Importance of sport	1. why do you want to stay in the classroom instead of going out? 2. I hate the teachers…they shout at me…they keep me in then I can't play football	Teachers shout, gatekeeping breaktime football/friendships
Peer relations	1. So what about the other children in class, those not on your desk, do you ever do any fun activities with them? 2. No. Never. 1. Not ever? Not even in art lessons, or science lessons, or? (Interrupted) 2. No.	No interaction with peers in class
Bullying	1. Do some children in your class get bullied? 2. Yeh.. 1. Who are they? 2. M, and me that's it.	
Bullying	1. Why does he get bullied, do you think? 2. Because he's mean, because if he's being mean to someone......... He beats me, Because he's bigger. He's mean so other people are mean to him	Bulling an issue in classroom
Bullying/violence	2. Once he almost broke his neck. 1. Who broke his neck? 2. Almost broke his neck. 1. Oh, almost broke his neck?	Mean repeat-classroom ethos? What goes around comes around-violence/bulling

Category	Dialogue	Notes
Bullying	1. Oh..So have you ever been bullied?	
Bullying, peer relations	2. Yeh, since year two, because I came in year two.	Pervasive bullying
	1. Yeh, who bullies you?	
	2. In year two, it was J, and in year three it was I think it was L and in year four it was D he always bullied me the most.	Long term issue
	1. Is anybody bullying you now?	
	2. I get bullied about once a week.	
	1. You're in year five now, aren't you? So who's bullied you in year five?	Once a week-incongruent with pervasive nature?
	2. N and K	
Bullying/violence	1. What do they do when they bully you?	
	2. Hit me, kick me. Get me on my own....	Violence from peers, on own-not seen by others
Violence	1. Do they? Is that in the playground or in school?	
	2.In the playground.... Yeh..because cause you know one of those bruises, it was like that because someone bit me.	Playground site of some bullying
	1. Gosh biting was that when you were younger, was it a long time ago, ?	Old issue still fresh
	2. Yeh..	
Adult relationships Communication Self exclusion	1. Does your teacher know you're being bullied? 2. No, I don't really bother....I don't **talk** to her.. I went to a match, we all wanted to play in it. All the best ones played, and there was only three, one of the players was M and I don't really know who else played. I went running down the bank, to the match away from them, and I got into really serious trouble, because I ran out of school un It wasn't **my fault**	Isolation from teacher relationship Self excluding talk Externalizing responsibility Self exclusion Victim got in trouble-incongruent
Escaping/leaving school	1. So was the bullying just in the football matches? Or is it in the classroom?	
Bullying	2. Everywhere. 1. Oh, that's shame. 2. So when I was playing cricket, someone robbed the ball off me, older.	Pervasive bullying classroom and playground
Peer relations Importance of sport	1. Did they? Is that from your class? Somebody from your class? 2. And next door, I got bullied by year six, they don't like me. 1. Do they not?	Peer relations in games –older pupils bullying?
Peer relations Bullying	2. No.. 1. That's a shame isn't it? Would it be okay if I talked to your teacher	Older pupils bullying-pervasive in school beyond own class

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Category	Dialogue	Theme
Bullying	about it? So she knows you're being bullied? 2. Yeh.	Teacher knows
Communication	1. Would that be okay? So she could like watch out for you as well. 2. I'll come with you. 1 That would be good….It would be nice if someone watches out for you, wouldn't it? What about Mrs S, Mrs Shaw's job is Senco, she looks after children with any learning needs or difficulties, or if they've been in hospital or anything like that. 2. When will you talk to her? I don't want to talk to Mrs P	Desire to sort it out-communicate with teacher-with support
Adult relationships	1.Ok, I'm seeing Mrs Shaw next week, we could talk to her then? 2. Can you get me just in case? 1. Do you want to come and talk to her with me? 2. Yeh..	Poor relationship Mrs P –teacher
Adult relationships	1. That's fine. In fact, it would be good for you to talk to her, I'll come and get you and we can go together 2. Try not to forget. 1. No I won't forget. I'm coming on Monday, I'll see Mrs S when I come in and I'll come and get you. We've got a few more questions. The next one, I don't know whether you'll want to draw this one? You can tell me! It's drawing a picture of a day where you felt really good in the class. 2. No. 1. No, that's ok.. do you get a chance to show the class any of your good work?	Desire for support No picture of good day in class Class don't like me-poor relations
Peer relations Acknowledgement	2. No. They don't like me 1. No… Ehmm….	
Extended family in school Acknowledgement	2. she keeps choosing them every day 2 I show my mum sometimes, and at dinner times I show **my cousin**. That's good 1. Is there anything your teacher has been really pleased with just lately?	Teacher preference –cannot attain rewards Extended family in school-acknowledgement/pride
Rewards/acknowledgment Acknowledgement	2. Yeh. Maths and Science. 1. Oh, and what have you done that she was really pleased with? 2. I don't know? ....with my handwriting 1. But she was pleased with your Maths and Science. 2. Yeh. (smiling) 1. Brilliant, how did you know?	Teacher pleased-learning Handwriting

Acknowledgment	2. Because she showed people things, she showed some other children and told them.	Teacher acknowledgment-how else do you know she is pleased?
Rewards	1. Does she put things on your work, like stickers and that kind of thing? 2. Yeh, stickers 1. Ok. Sometimes, you know when you find the work difficult, how does she encourage you?	Token rewards
Adult relationships	2. I don't know? 1. Encourage means to kind of cheer you along when it's getting tough...Does she encourage you? Or does she just leave you to do your best? 2. I don't know. She would leave me	Lack of encouragement?
Adult relationship/pessimism	1. If you didn't want to do something, like halfway through your lesson, and you still hadn't written anything, would your teacher come over, would she encourage you and say give you a sticker, what would she do? 2. Don't know. Shout maybe...she doesn't like me...	Leave him-no encouragement isolation, lack of teacher support
Communication Teacher preference	1. What kind of clubs are you in? Any at school or? 2. Today I have, ten...about seven clubs. 1. What are they?	Communication-shouting-teachers shout Teacher preference=no support
Importance of sport	2. Karate, Kick Boxing and Martial Arts, Football, any sports and Football again. 1. Do you do any of those clubs at school? 2. Yeh, all of them. I don't do clubs on Sunday, that's it, all the clubs are Monday to Friday. They are at school but not teachers	Importance of sport
Importance of sport	1. You're ever so busy, are you busy every night? 2. Yeh, I have football at night. 1. Oh, you've got a busy social life. 2. Yeh.	Importance of football
Peer relations	1. What would your class mates say you were good at? If somebody asked your class, what's D good at, what would they say? 2. Well I don't know, because they never say I'm good at anything.	Never acknowledge strengths-self esteem
Communication	1. How do you know when someone in your class likes you? 2. Hmm.......They'd be nice to me.	Poor peer relations Nice=communication, Relationships dichotic-no grey area
Friendship	1. How would they be nice? 2. Be my friend, talk to me, not bully me	Friendship desire, bullying in class, inclusion
Bullying	1. Yeh...Do you want to draw a picture of you at break time?	

Theme	Dialogue	Theme
Importance of sport	2. No. 1. Ok..Tell me what you do at break time? 2. Football sometimes. 1. Do you, with all the boys. 2. I go in the cage.	Importance of football at breaktime, seeing friends
Importance of sport	1. Haa.......is that Tuesday or Thursday? 2. It's meant to be Monday and Tuesday for year six. 1. So what do you do if you can't play football?	Importance of sport
Self excluding	2. I just do another sport. 1. Yeh.. 2. If we're not outside and it's really wet, I go on the laptop on my own.	
Importance of sport	1. Haa....have you all got your own laptop here? 2. Yeh. 1. What do you do on the laptop? What's your favourite? 2. Football games.	Self excluding on laptop? Importance of football
Peer relations-exclusion	1. Are you on your own some breaktimes? 2. I play football but .....they won't let me play 1. Can you tell me about a day that was not very good in class. Can you think of one particular day and what it was, what happened? 2. Monday. (no hesitation)	Peers gatekeeping football
Bullying	1. Monday? Tell me why that was? 2. Somebody kicked me in the face. 1. Did they, and tell me how that happened.	Bullying/violence
Violence	2. Somebody just ran up to me and kicked me in the face?	Just-no provocation Violence
Per relations	1. Was that in the middle of a football game? 2. No, in class.	In classroom-class ethos?
Peer relations	1. Oh, why did they do that? 2. Because they were **real mean.**	Real mean-peers
Friendships	1. And did you..had you fallen out before it happened? 2. Yeh.. we was friends then not	Friendships with conflict
Adult relationships	1. Did you tell the teacher? 2. No. 1. Oh, but your teacher would do something about it, wouldn't she?	Relationship with teacher-isolation
Empathy	2. I don't know.	
Adult relationships	1. Don't you think she would want to sort it out? 2. all I want is to tell Miss P about everyone...all I want to tell Miss P	Faith in teacher intervention poor/will teacher protect

Bullying	is that people just pick on me. **I want to tell that to Mrs S.** (said in anger) 1. Yeh..We'll have a word with Mrs S on Monday. And then we can talk to Miss P too? 2. My mum's going down to the Sports Day.	Victimization, angry about it
Extended family in school	1. Is she? 2. Yeh, and my Nana's picking me up at four. I'm not going to football, because I know I'll get probably really badly injured. I think I'm missing a PE session.	Parents in school-family support
Importance of sport Violence anxiety Exclusion	1. Oh right, let's finish this up then quickly. If you had a new pupil come in to this school next week, what would you tell them about your school?	Importance of football-violence an issue in game? Illness?exclusion from game? Anxiety injury
	2. Nothing, because I don't like new people.	Relationship difficulties new people-dislikes unknown
Peer relations gatekeepers friendships Violence	1. But, say if you had to tell them something good about the school and something bad about the school, what would you tell them? 2. That something good is you can get some friends if they let you, and the bad is you get really hurt. 1. Yeh..how do you get hurt? 2. Like, kick, hit, bit..pinched....	Importance of friendship-gatekeepers to friendship-peers Violence from peers
Peer relations=violence	1. Why would you get hurt? 2.People don't like you	If people don't like you they hurt you Violence physical
Importance of sport	1. Yeh, what do you like about school the most? 2. Football.	Importance of football
	1. What do you dislike? 2. Science and literacy. 1. Why do you like football the most? What's good about football?	Literacy-difficult subject-Science=lots writing?
	2. Because you get to run around.	Importance of sport
Curriculum differentiation	1. And why don't you like Science and Literacy? 2. Because it's too hard. Ehmm...and I like maths because it's the best, and I'm the best at maths. 1. Are you? Oh that's good.	Curriculum differentiation, good self esteem maths
Importance of sport	2. And I'm the best at football and maths. 1. Are you..wow. So is maths your favourite lesson? 2. Yeh..(laughing) 1. Yeh..what do you think it is about maths that you like? 2. Adds, and take-aways, and times tables. 1. Oh wow...What makes a lesson fun and enjoyable? How could the	Importance of sport and being 'good' in a subject-pride-contrast to rest of narrative

Theme	Dialogue	Interpretation
Rewards	teacher make it enjoyable? 2. I don't know........Free time, if you've done some really good work and you get to go on the laptops.... Make it fun 1. Yeh..I suppose that makes it very fun. 2. Yeh...	Rewards/motivators Fun=free time-what if work is not good?
Adult relationships	1. Who's your favourite adults in the school? 2. Mrs Smith. 1. And why is she.....? 2. And Miss V	Good relationship with one adult-incongruence from 'no one'
Communication, relationships with adults, acknowledgement, empathy Fairness	1. Why are they your favourites? 2. Because they make me happy. They nice.. talk to me. 1. Aw.. 2. Because if somebody's being naughty, they deal with it straight away.	Emotional well being, feeling cared about, communication, being listened to, acknowledgement Fairness and resolution
Self exclusion, escaping school, disengagement	1. Oh they sound really good, I'm glad you've got those adults. Would you say you work really hard at the school? 2. Sometimes, sometimes I fall asleep. 1. Do you actually fall asleep, really fall asleep? Do you sleep at night? Do you go to bed early? 2. No I can't sleep at night.	Low motivation, self exclusion-protecting self
Anxiety	1. So in the daytime you're tired. 2. I come out at night and play, and in the daytime I sleep. 1. Does your mum know you're playing in the night r can't sleep? 2. Well I do get a sleep, but I don't get much sleep. 1. Do you keep waking up? 2. Yeh.	Poor sleep patterns-anxiety?illness?
	1. Can you think of anything the school could do to help you in lessons, what could they do? 2. Help with stuff? 1. What kind of stuff would you like help with? 2. Help with spelling. 1. Anything else? 2. Well........too much writing	
Curriculum differentiation	1. what makes a good teacher? If you were going to be the interviewer for a new teacher, what would you be looking for? 2. A nice teacher, a kind teacher, a beautiful teacher, a pretty	Acknowledgement of literacy difficulties Curriculum differentiation?
Communication, kindness, caring teacher	teacher....not shouting at me	Nice, kind, physical attributes, not shouting at me-personalised

Importance of sport	1. aw..what would make them nice to the children? What kind of things would you be looking for? 2. Sporty teacher Yeh. Because my old teacher, Miss H did like sport. Listening, nice like not shouting	Importance of sport, listening-being heard, nice, not shouting-repeated Teachers relate by shouting
Communication		
Adult relationships	1. Is it important for you to be a confident learner? Before you leave school, is it important?	
Disengagement	2. No.	Low aspirations, disengaged learner?
	1. Why do you think it's not important? 2. Because I'm not going to go in to year seven.	
Exclusion	1. Aren't you? Where will you go instead? 2. I'll just stay in bed.	Self excluding in advance
	1. Will you? What sort of job would you like when you're older? 2. Be a Footballer.	Bed=depressed? Tired from illness?
Importance of sport	1. Be a Footballer? Do you think you're mum will let you stay in bed instead of going to year seven? 2. Yeh.	Importance of sport-football aspirations
	1. Do you think so? I bet she would like to stay in bed. 2. She does that sometimes. 1. You've been brilliant at all these questions. Thank you	Mums health?

5.7.10 Appendix 10: RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN FOR SITE SCHOOL

School Belongingness Action Plan

Some of the actions points may seat themselves in more than one theme. Although the recommendations here focus mainly on individual and classroom strategies to promote a sense of belonging, it is important that the school adopts a whole school approach to foster a positive connected school climate. Policy and organisational structures such as bullying policies/strategies, support in place for staff, a positive management system, peer support programmes can all influence school belonging

- Develop an awareness of differences in emotional climate between classrooms.
- Share good practice within your school to develop the emotional climate in your classroom.
- Use fist person plural (terms such as we, us, ours etc) in the classroom to foster a shared goal of learning.

Interpersonal Relationships

> *…perhaps there is no other nonfamilial adult that is more significant*
>
> *in a child's life than his or her teacher… (Kesner, 2000, p. 134)*

Teacher-pupil

- Recognise the importance and power of one to one interactions with pupils. Make time to build relationships.
- Use 'golden moments' to show a personal interest in each child and talk about 'out of school' matters.
- Remember things pupils have told you, repeat back and show interest.
- If you have identified a pupil who has a low sense of belonging, try to 'see' them at least one time per lesson (look at, stay near, praise, help him/her etc).
- Convey non-verbal interest through smiles, nods, eye contact etc (be aware of cultural perceptions with eye contact).
- Smile and show positive recognition, using pupils name, when outside of the classroom. Smile when teaching in class giving eye contact (cultural awareness).
- Send out messages of care and respect by using a 'quiet voice' and developing active listening skills.
- Model unconditional care for all pupils.
- Use self-reflection to monitor the development of relationships with pupils, and try to detect early relationship difficulties with pupils.

Pupil-pupil

- Use the teacher-pupil relationship as a relationship model for the pupils.
- Create an emotionally supportive classroom in which a sense of community flourishes.
- Encourage supportive relationships through cooperative learning in the classroom (small groups/mixed ability).
- Give pupils opportunities to help peers in an area of strength.

- Help pupils to feel safe in expressing feelings, needs and anxieties, creating ways for them to share their concerns.
- As a whole school carry out an audit of the school's policies/strategies on bullying, collate pupil, teacher and parent views.

Teacher practices

- Be aware of verbal and non-verbal body language that may convey messages of teacher preference, especially for pupils with learning and/or behavioural difficulties, and children demonstrating desirable behaviours such as quietness and neat handwriting.
- Use specific techniques to maintain or heighten your awareness of the actions of pupils in your classroom i.e. self-exclusion, withdrawal, verbal harassment from peers, social exclusion), techniques such as scanning.
- Ensure rewards are attainable for all pupils through the creation of a democratic classroom.
- Be aware of inconsistency in application of rewards and sanctions.
- Talk positive of the pupils, modelling respect and unconditional regard for all
- Show and tell your pupils you care about them.
- Ensure the classroom climate promotes open dialogue with regards to bullying and victimisation.
- Be aware that some pupils may need support with conflict resolution skills, and this may be contributing to bulling and victimisation.
- Deal with any issues of bullying sensitively; direct confrontation can exacerbate the situation for the victim. Enlist peer support
- Monitor bullying acts such as verbal aggression, indirect aggression and social exclusion.
- Ensure each pupil feels 'connected' to at least one caring and responsible adult in school.

Emotional Equilibrium

- Ensure pupils have adequate time to foster and maintain friendships, develop social skills, and develop conflict resolutions skills in their breaktimes - ensure teaching staff value 'playtime'.
- Encourage all school staff to build stronger relationships with pupils who are experiencing difficulties (social, learning, behaviour, bullying, illness).
- Provide peer support for pupils who may be struggling with peer relationships and /or appear unhappy with their social network.
- Create opportunities to involve family in meaningful school and classroom activities.
- Create opportunities to engage fathers in school life. As a school complete 'the dads included test' (www.dadsincluded.org) and see how father inclusive your school is.

Physical Illness

- Provide opportunities for catch up (outside of breaktimes) for pupils who may have fallen behind through illness etc.
- Support pupils who have been in hospital for long periods who may be finding socialisation difficult on their return to school (peer support interventions).

- Help others in the class understand the pupil's difficulties, gaining pupil and parent permission first.
- Develop pupils' self esteem through providing emotional support, creating a bridge over difficult periods. Give praise and positive feedback, and focus on strengths.

Self-exclusion and disengagement

- Make the link between self-exclusion (leaving the room, ignoring peers, non-participation in class) and low sense of belonging and disengagement
- Use strategies from sections above as applicable.
- Self reflect on your relationship with any pupils who display these behaviours. Are they isolated from peers, from you as a teacher?

> *... the way of teaching demands a long journey that does not have any easily identifiable destination ... It is a journey that I believe must include a backward step into the self and it is a journey that is its own destination. (Tremmel, 1993, p. 456)*