From 'pushed out' to re-engaged

A grounded theory study into the experiences of young people who chose to transition to a 14 to 16 college

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Abstract

Further Education (FE) colleges have been able to offer 'direct entry' to 14 to 16-year-old pupils since 2013, following the recommendations of the Wolf Report (2011). Currently, there are 17 FE colleges in the England offering this type of Alternative Provision (AP). Research focused on pupil transition into APs does exist, though most of this focuses on Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) or school-selected FE provision. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted which showed a 'gap' in the research concerning 14 to 16 college provision in England. The aim of this research is to attempt to address this gap to a degree, and to gain an understanding of the experiences of young people who chose to make a 'non-traditional' transition into a 14 to 16 college.

Classic grounded theory was selected as the methodology for this research (Glaser, 1978; Holton and Walsh, 2017). The aim of this research was to develop a substantive grounded theory of the experiences of participants 'pushed out' of mainstream who chose to transition to a 14 to 16 college. Qualitative data was collected initially through a focus group and five semi-structured interviews with purposively recruited target participants. The constant comparison method of grounded theory guided data collection and analysis. Theoretical sampling took place once a conceptual core category had emerged, resulting in data collection from four additional participants and re-interviewing an original participant.

The main theoretical concepts emerging from the grounded theory methodology were: disempowerment and disengagement, agency through self-determination and re-empowerment. These theoretical concepts were linked within a theoretical framework drawing on transition models of self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Pierson et al, 2008) and bioecological systems (Trainor et al, 2008). The concepts of bounded agency (Evans, 2007) and 'critical moments' (Thomson et al, 2002) have been applied to explain how 'pushed out' participants were able to choose to make a 'non-traditional' transition to a 14 to 16 college. Implications for Educational Psychology practice have been discussed as well as areas for future research.

Contents

Appendices:

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Code	A descriptive label attached to a particular event in the data identified during analysis
Constant comparison	A process by which data is simultaneously collected and analysed and compared with previously collected data for indicators of emerging concepts.
Core category	The main category emerging from data that explains how participants were able to resolve and manage their identified concern.
Field notes	Notes made by the researcher whilst in the field providing 'in the moment' reminders of indicators of potential concepts
Focused coding (Level 2)	Following emergence of the core category, further data collection and analysis focused upon achieving theoretical saturation of the core category and related concepts
Main concern	The main issue emerging as the source of concern across the coded data in the research setting
Memoing	Retrospective notes made by the researcher which process and develop theoretical concepts as they emerge during all stages of the coding process
Open coding (Level 1)	The initial coding stage in which each incident in the data is coded for as many concepts as is relevant. This proceeds alongside memoing until a pattern emerges which indicates a potential core category
Theoretical coding (Level 3)	The final stage of coding which conceptualises how the focused codes relate to each other to be integrated into an emerging grounded theory.
Theoretical sampling	Sampling whereby the researcher seeks people, events or information to define the boundaries and relevance of the identified theoretical categories
Theoretical saturation	When no new properties of theoretical concepts arise from further data collection and analysis, just more indicators of the same identified concepts

Adapted by the researcher from Holton and Walsh (2017, pp.210-214) and Charmaz (2008, pp. 186-189)

Chapter 1: Introduction

> *'Pushout... describes experiences of youth who have been pressured to leave school by people or factors inside school, such as disrespectful treatment from teachers and other school personnel, violence among students, arbitrary school rules, and the institutional pressures of high-stakes testing'* **(Tuck, 2011, p. 818)**

'Pushed out' is a term used to describe young people who have either been forced to leave mainstream education or have themselves chosen to leave (Menzies and Baars, 2015).

Menzies and Baars (2015, p. 6) have adopted Tuck's (2011) term of 'push out' to focus upon the weaknesses of the education systems that cause young people to be marginalised, rather than the 'abnormality' of the child. Many of these young people end up in Alternative Provisions (APs), though some may end up being home-schooled and some may become disengaged entirely from education, and as a result may never reach their potential (Menzies and Baars, 2015). There are a variety of APs in the UK including colleges, workplaces, charities, special schools, independent schools, free schools, further education colleges and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) (Ogg and Kaill, 2010, p. 6).

Whilst PRUs have been researched widely the other types of APs have received less research attention (Menzies and Baars, 2015). This is an area which should concern educational psychologists (EPs). Pupils who attend APs tend to come from the most deprived backgrounds, are mainly males (potentially indicating gender inequality), and are highly represented by students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (Apland, Lawrence, Mesie and Yarrow, 2017, p. 7). To add to this concern, pupils in APs are more likely to end up as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) than their mainstream peers, as illustrated in Table 2, indicated by low engagement in post-16 education and training. My area of interest, and thus the focus of this study, is the experience of students in non-PRU APs who have chosen this alternative route and how they are then prepared for the transition to post-16 education or training and adulthood.

1.1 Rationale and personal interest

I have selected young people who have transitioned from a 14 to 16 college to post-16 education as my focus for this study. These young people have been 'pushed out' of mainstream education due to a range of environmental factors which led to them becoming disengaged and powerless to change the situation. Until 2014, I did not know of the existence of such colleges despite teaching for many years in the secondary and post-16 sectors. I first found myself in such a college on a supply assignment in 2014 and was interested to find that it was not, as I had assumed, like a PRU at all. In fact, the students I taught at this new college were very motivated and keen to learn. Behavioural issues were mainly low level as they were in the secondary schools in which I have taught.

It was not obvious to me that these pupils had been 'pushed out' of mainstream though I only spent five days there. The inception of my idea for this research developed during my first year on the DEdCPsy course when I spent time at a 14 to 16 college talking to staff and students. I became interested in how students in these small establishments were prepared for the next phase of their lives in comparison to what I had experienced in mainstream education. It became clear to me that this type of institution was clearly very different from any secondary school I had worked in, largely due to the relatively small size and perceived sense of 'community'.

As a teacher working mainly with young people in Key Stages 4 and 5, I often felt concerned about the focus on curriculum content. I did not feel that myself or my colleagues were equipped with the knowledge and skills to prepare young people for life and work beyond the confines of school. The relevance of secondary education in terms of preparing young people for adulthood is an area of personal interest as I feel school policy and priorities are often focused on attainment at the expense of this. As a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), it became apparent to me that some secondary schools often find it difficult to meet the needs of some young people, especially those with Social and Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs. I have found myself engaged in conversations with school staff where the anticipated option for some pupils is for them to conform or leave, which I believe is exclusive rather than inclusive. Having experience of working both at secondary and post-16 institutions, I became interested in

how students from the local 14 to 16 college experiences shaped their educational experiences and transition into post-16 education or training.

My aim in this research was to explore this further, from the perspectives and experiences of young people who have left the mainstream system, to seek an alternative. This enabled me to determine how some young people are being socially excluded through educational policy to explore emancipatory goals and solutions.

The literature review chapter that follows focuses on the history and background of the development of 14 to 16 colleges. The theoretical literature review was suspended until the emergence of the core category during data collection and analysis in line with classic grounded theory (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 33). Classic grounded theory is defined as the 'systematic generation of theory from data that has been itself systematically obtained' (Glaser, 1978, p. 2).

The literature review will focus upon theoretical models of the process of transition as well as the specific transitions highlighted by the participants, from mainstream school to the 14 to 16 college, and from this college into post-16 education. It was not possible to be completely neutral prior to starting the research process due to my previous knowledge and experiences in the secondary and post-16 sector. I kept a research diary to enable any biases to be made transparent but also to act as a tool to stimulate reflective thinking through noting my thoughts and questions during the research process. Excerpts from the research diary have been included at appropriate points in the text.

At the start of the research process I decided to document the assumptions that I held regarding the potential themes that would arise from the data from my previous experience and knowledge. These assumptions will be revisited in the discussion section. These were:

1. Students from the 14 to 16 college are likely to be well prepared for post-16 due to access to appropriate careers and specialist staff from the post-16 provider on the shared campus.
2. Students from the 14 to 16 college will tend to be those who did not want or were not able to access purely academic curriculum at secondary school and are likely to be on vocational courses at post-16.

3. I would expect most of the students from the 14 to 16 college to transfer to the post-16 provider that they share a campus with as it is familiar and geographically close.

Following the literature review as described, is the methodology chapter which critically evaluates and justifies the methodology and methods selected as well as my ontological and epistemological positioning. The research process will then be outlined as well as the unit of analysis along with ethical considerations. The findings chapter details the codes that emerged during data analysis and includes a diagrammatic model to conceptualise the relationships between the theoretical codes. The discussion chapter considers each theoretical code in detail, in terms of theoretical frameworks and the literature. The limitations of the research in terms of reliability, validity and process will then be discussed along with recommendations for future research and implications for the practice of EPs. The research will close with reflections and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Classic grounded theory position on literature reviews

I did not intend to carry out a literature review prior to the research as this is conducted after the emergence of a core category to assist with theoretical sampling and coding (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 33). It would be impossible for me to take a neutral stance towards this topic due to my prior experience and knowledge of the selected education institutions for the research even if no literature review was carried out. According to Dey (1993, p. 229), taking a *tabula rasa* approach to research can be 'dangerous' as it can make the researcher prone to prejudices and misconceptions, which can be averted by making ideas and knowledge explicit rather than pretending they are not there. Lempert (2011, p. 254) advocates the use of literature throughout the research process for pragmatic reasons to determine the parameters of the research as well as identify gaps in theorising through comparisons with the emerging data. The caution here is to view the literature with an open mind and not allow it to define the research (Lempert, 2011, p. 254).

I therefore decided to carry out the literature review during the data collection and analysis following the emergence of the core category as recommended by Holton and Walsh (2017) in line with classic grounded theory methodology. Despite this, the literature review is presented prior to the analysis as is consistent with the traditional format of theses.

2.2 Historical context of APs

During the 1970s, alternative provisions for students with challenging behaviour mainly took the form of off-site centres such as 'support centres' and 'disruptive units' (Menzies and Baars, 2015, p. 9). This model was criticised as being haphazard with processes varying widely from local authority to the next. The number of young people being permanently excluded from school in the UK increased from 3,333 to 12,699 between 1991/2 and 1995/6 (Ogg and Kaill, 2010, p. 13). This increase of exclusions led to the development and introduction of PRUs in England and Wales in 1994 (Menzies and

Baars, 2015, p. 9). In 1996, a statutory duty was placed upon local authorities in the UK to provide alternative education for children who were not able to access mainstream education and a target set to reduce the number of exclusions (Menzies and Baars, 2015, p.9). The rate of permanent exclusions in the UK reduced by 50 per cent (from 12,669 to 6,550) between 1996/7 and 2008/9 (Ogg and Kaill, 2010, p. 13). However, this was due in part to schools adopting alternative strategies such as referrals to PRUs, onsite 'inclusion units' and managed moves (Menzies and Baars, 2015, p. 9). A managed move is the transfer of a pupil to an alternative educational provision (an AP or a different mainstream school) with the agreement of the school and parents (Messeter and Soni, 2017). The report developed by Menzies and Baars (2015) is the result of an Inclusion Trust led multi-disciplinary round table forum including young people, staff from APs, academies, trusts and other independent bodies. Data from this report is included, despite it not being peer-reviewed, as it provides data and context relating to exclusions in the UK which is relevant to this research.

2.3 The 'rise' of 14 to 16 colleges

Further education (FE) colleges providing education to under-16 pupils began in 2002 as part of the Labour government agenda to address low levels of engagement in post-16 education and to improve employability (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2002). In the early stages, this tended to be done in the form of pupils spending a proportion of time weekly at a post-16 provider, with the provision being selected by schools rather than the pupils themselves (Haynes, 2008). In a questionnaire survey carried out in 301 UK secondary schools, many head teachers targeted potentially disaffected students, those of a lower ability, those at risk of exclusion and poor-attendees (Haynes, 2008). McCrone, Wade and Golden (2007) described post-16 colleges as 'dumping grounds for the disaffected' indicating that schools were in control of which Key Stage 4 pupils attended colleges and which remained on site. This research was based upon interviews carried out with 22 members of staff and 41 learners (including 20 aged 14 to 16 years) at five FE colleges in England (McCrone et al, 2007, p. 2). There is some evidence that this type of programme did improve post-16 college recruitment and retention by exposing Key Stage 4 to the post-16 environment at this early stage (Styles and Fletcher, 2006). This type of provision is still available at several FE colleges

in England, with pupils being selected by schools rather than pupils choosing this provision.

The Wolf report (2011) made several recommendations regarding the reform of 14 to 19 vocational education in the UK, which included the teaching of 14 to 16-year-olds at FE colleges. Wolf (2011, p. 8) identified that pupils were often being directed to study on 'vocational' programmes which were effectively 'dead-end' rather than addressing labour market needs or individual progress. Following this, FE colleges were able to enrol 14 to 16-year-olds directly and teach them full-time from September 2013 (The Guardian, 2014). Six FE colleges in England opened 14 to 16 'direct entry' provision in September 2013. Currently there are 17 FE colleges in England offering full-time 14 to 16 provision, with 19 having registered to offer provision in 2018/19 (www.gov.uk, 2018). Of these, ten are in the north of England, one in the Midlands and eight in the south.

The low number of 14 to 16 colleges across England is likely to contribute to the lack of knowledge, understanding or research regarding this AP. There are stringent criteria that must be met by post-16 colleges wishing to enrol 14 to 16-year-old students full time on site, known as 'direct entry'. As well as providing a secure designated area (to prevent access of post-16 students) on site for the sole use of 14 to 16-year olds, the college must provide full-time study programmes that include the core GCSE curriculum alongside high quality vocational qualifications (Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), 2017). The post-16 provider must also have an Ofsted rating of 1 (outstanding) or 2 (good) as well as having an identified pastoral and curriculum leader for 14 to 16-yearold students (ESFA, 2017).

14 to 16 colleges are measured in terms of progress in the same way as mainstream secondary schools in terms of Progress 8 scores (ESFA, 2017). Progress 8 aims to measure the progress pupils have made from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school across eight curriculum subjects (Department for Education (DfE), 2016). The stringent criteria, as well as having to provide a 'secure' designated area, may well be factors inhibiting other FE colleges from opening their doors to younger pupils.

The Progress 8 scores, introduced by the DfE (2016), may not be a fair or relevant performance measure in the unique 14 to 16 college contexts as it measures progress of

pupils from Year 7 to 11 across eight subjects. A number of 14 to 16 colleges have found themselves recently with a Progress 8 below -0.5 (an average of -2.10 across the 17 colleges) and being described in the media as the 'worst schools' (FE Week, 2018). This is despite many of these colleges having a high entry of pupils onto post-16 training or education and being rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

2.4 The local context

In the city (located in the north of England) where this research was carried out, APs for secondary age pupils include a PRU, a 14 to 18 technical college (which opened September 2017), a medical PRU, an AP for vulnerable students and a 14 to 16 college. These APs are geographically situated on their own sites, apart from the 14 to 16 college which is affiliated with, and on-site of, an FE college. The number of pupils at each AP is low, for example, for the academic year 2017/18, there are 37 at the PRU and 44 at the school for SEMH pupils (www.eduinfo.co.uk/school). At both providers, 89 per cent of the students are boys and 11 per cent are girls (www.eduinfo.co.uk/school). It is perhaps no surprise that much of the research on APs focuses upon boys and their 'underachievement' which dominates social and political discourse (Russell and Thomson, 2011, p. 294). By contrast, there is little research on girls' experiences at non-mainstream educational provision or how this shapes their identities (Russell and Thomson, 2011, p. 294).

I met with the Head of the 14 to 16 college (at which target participants had attended) to discuss the research. The statistics provided at this meeting paint an interesting picture and a contrast to other APs in the city. In the last academic year cohort (2016/17) from which the research participants were students, 65 pupils left at the end of Year 11 in July 2017. Of these 97 per cent gained places in post-16 education or apprenticeships. Of these 64 per cent of the pupils were girls and 36 per cent boys. This is a stark contrast to the PRU statistics as outlined earlier and it is unclear what the reason for this is, but these statistics are consistent with previous years. Therefore the 'boys-as-norm' discourses that can dominate with girls struggling to find a place within the AP is likely to be irrelevant in this college (Russell and Thomson, 2011, p. 306). It would be interesting to determine if there is an alternate 'girls-as-norm' discourse operating within the 14 to 16 college culture, though when I observed this was not evident on first

impressions. According to Kendall and Kenner (2005) there may be less attention focused upon girls as they may not be as readily as a 'threat' or a problem compared to boys. Class sizes at the college tend to be between 18 and 20 pupils. For pupils with a high level of support needs, classes are smaller with between seven and 15 pupils.

% pupils with:	14 to 16 college	Average in city schools	Average in neighbouring rural county schools
Free School Meals (FSM)	57	44.8	21.6
SEND	40	16.7	12.9

Table 1: Comparison of the 14 to 16 college with local schools (statistics provided by the Head of the 14 to 16 college (January 2018))

The statistics in Table 1 indicate that the 14 to 16 college is highly represented by pupils who could be described as from the most 'vulnerable' and marginalised groups; such as those with SEND and from disadvantaged backgrounds (in receipt of FSM). This is supported by the Ofsted Monitoring Report (2014) of the 14 to 16 college which states:

> *'many students have had a disruptive history in secondary school for a variety of reasons, including behaviour issues, bullying and low attendance'* (p. 4).

The Head of the 14 to 16 college described the culture and ethos as being for individuals who want an individual response, want good teaching, and want support for learning and well-being issues through the development of trust and care. The Ofsted report (2015, p. 8) rates the 14 to 16 college as being 'good' and notes the positive impact college is having regarding the vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. Despite the positive Ofsted reports and high numbers of pupils transitioning to post-16 education or training, the Progress 8 score was -1.21 which is defined as being 'well below average' (www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk). This low Progress 8 score may reflect the fact that pupils spend only one or two years at the college. Additionally, the 14 to 16 college curricula do not cover all eight of the academic subjects due to the vocational components of the timetable (14 to 16 college prospectus, 2017)

It should be kept in mind, however, that the Ofsted inspections were conducted three and four years ago and are not directly relevant to the participants, who attended the college

post-inspection. The 14 to 16 college is due to be inspected during 2018, which will yield more relevant data, though is not available for this research.

2.5 Transitioning to adulthood: The role of agency

The role of agency of young people is central to this research as it aims to provide the participants involved with 'voice' as well as focusing upon choices that they have actively made. Agency can be defined as 'the capability of persons to make choices and act on these choices' (Martin, 2004, p. 136). The DfE (2014) defines pupil 'voice' as listening to the views of pupils or involving them in decision-making. Regarding pupil 'voice' the DfE (2014) refers to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 which states:

> *"1. Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
>
> *2. For this purpose, the child shall, in particular, be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law."* (UNCRC, Article 12, from DfE 2014)

However, despite schools being strongly advised to pay heed to the UNCRC, there is no statutory obligation to comply with it (DfE, 2014). This may make student 'voice' in schools vulnerable to tokenism. Even if the UNCRC were a statutory obligation, schools could determine from (1) above that pupils are not old enough or mature enough to be involved in decision-making processes.

Elder and Giele (2009) encapsulates the transition from adolescence through to adulthood within the context of the agency/structure binary:

> '*…the principle of human agency leads to individuals to construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance.*' (p. 4)

This indicates that young people can exert agency to make choices that will influence their life course but that this is determined by the societal, legislative, cultural and political structures causing a type of 'structured individualisation' (Evans, 2007). Evans proposes the concept of 'bounded agency' as an alternative to 'structured

individualisation'. 'Bounded agency' transcends the traditional agency/structure binary and is defined as:

> *'socially situated agency, influenced but not determined by environments and emphasising internalised frames of reference as well externalised actions'* (Evans, 2007, p. 93).

The empirically grounded concept of 'bounded agency' differs from the concept of 'structured individualism' as it moves towards the idea of individuals as 'actors' (Evans, 2007, p. 93).

Bounded agency' is a concept where action taken in the present, affected by past experiences, by negotiating perceptions of social structures and landscapes (Evans, 2007, p. 92; Heinz, 2009, p. 399). Evans (2007) research was conducted in the UK (and Germany) with young people aged between 18 and 25 years. It has relevance to the transition of the participants into post-16 education though less so for transition into the 14 to 16 college. The concept of 'bounded agency' is often used in life course frameworks to explore changing youth transitions (Schoon and Lyons-Amos, 2016, p. 12). For young people, this offers a perspective on their roles which is enabling rather than blaming for lack of agency.

Aaltonen (2013, p. 375) applied the concept of 'bounded agency' to pupils who chose to move educational provision outside of 'traditional' transition points before the end of compulsory education. Though set in Finland, the participants chose to transition between the ages of 15 and 17 years, which does have relevance to the target participants in this study. Aaltonen (2013, p. 377) describes the concept of 'critical moments' (or 'turning points' as conceptualised by Thomson, Bell, Holland, Henderson, McGrellis and Sharpe, 2002) in a young person's life as being events in a person's life which can catalyse them to act. This potentially indicates an active response that a young person may take in response to being 'pushed out' an educational setting.

2.6 Defining transition

As the participants that were recruited for this study were in post-16 education, they are a unique group of individuals who have chosen to undergo an additional transition at the age of 14, as well as transitioning to post-16 education. Carroll (2015, p. 349) refers to

three different models of conceptualising transition; the generational approach, bioecological systems theory and self-determination theory. These three theories, discussed alongside the Life Course Theory (LCT) model of transition, have been selected due to their applicability to the transitions made by adolescents which involve an element of choice.

2.6.1 Generational approach to transition

Furlong, Woodman and Wyn (2011, p. 156) adopted a generational approach to transition and explored the changing relationships between transitions and cultural perspectives from a sociological perspective. They describe this as a 'false binary' which converges to provide insights into young people's lives. Furlong et al (2011, p. 156) described transition from school into work as being a process of economic socialisation that cannot be separated from visible aspects of youth culture. Furlong et al (2011, p. 362) described how social change has affected transitions, with young people today expecting to be in education for longer periods with labour market opportunities being less clear cut than it was for their parents. Furlong et al (2011, p. 363) proposed that the ability of young people to navigate uncertainty, develop resourcefulness and life-management skills is of increased importance at a time when education is more central to the lives of young people. Though this approach does acknowledge social and cultural aspects of the lives of young people, it is less easy to apply this model directly to this piece of research which involved small numbers of participants. In addition, this research was not longitudinal, nor did it compare generations and so this approach was not appropriate.

2.6.2 Bioecological systems theory of transition

Trainor, Lindstrom, Simon-Burroughs, Martin and Sorrells (2008, p. 56) recommended the adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological theory of human development to consider multiple systems which influence transition. This ecological paradigm necessitates construction of a differential conceptual framework as a:

> '*system of nested, interdependent, dynamic structures ranging from the most proximal… to the most distal…*' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 4).

Trainor et al (2008, p. 57) described the most proximal system as the 'microsystem' which constitutes the people in direct contact with a young person who should serve to increase self-determination skills to maximise transition opportunities. According to Field, Martin, Miller, Ward and Wehmeyer (1998), self-determination is:

> *'...a combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behaviour… understanding of one's strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination… individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults.'* (p. 2)

This definition does seem to be pertinent to young people in terms of the skills and qualities necessary for transition into adulthood and work, though can be equally relevant for other transitions such as that from Key Stage 3 to 4 when selecting curriculum options.

Trainor et al (2008, p. 59) described the 'mesosystem' (interconnection between 'microsystems') within the ecological model of transition with home-school interaction as an area where a consistent approach can enhance individual development. The 'exosystem' (system level communications such as between community and school) and the 'macrosystem' (societal level interactions such as educational policy with school) are both areas where barriers or opportunities can exist and impact upon transitional processes (Trainor et al, 2008, p.61). Policy can be examined to determine the degree to which they affect young people who may potentially face marginalisation during specific transition processes (Trainor et al, 2008, p. 62). The ecological model of transition is useful as it does enable the identification of contextual factors on different systemic levels which can inform specific support required by different groups of young people.

This model has some relevance to the research as it provides a framework to examine the different levels of systemic factors which affect a young person's decision to leave secondary school. However, care needed to be taken when analysing the systems beyond the 'microsystem' as data provided by the participants provided their own perceptions of external systems and the level of understanding of impact may be limited. This is an area where additional data beyond interviews, such as extant texts and interviews with college staff provided supporting data which was triangulated with participant experiences which reduced the potential for a perspective bias (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 31).

2.6.3 Self-determination model of transition

Another model of conceptualising transition outlined by Carroll (2015, p. 350) is that of individual self-determination. Pierson, Parker, Lane and Glaeser (2008, p. 115) discussed this concept in terms of the development of social skills and self-determination which can be a predictor of student capacity to cope with transitional change.

The role of self-determination is viewed as important in adolescence as it links with opportunities for deepening the capacity to transition through to adulthood (Pierson et al, 2008, p. 115). According to Wehmeyer (1998), self-determination is a construct which involves choice-making, decision-making, problem-solving, goal setting and attainment, self-advocacy, self-efficacy, self-knowledge and understanding, self-observation, evaluation and reinforcement, independence, risk taking and safety, self-instruction and internal locus of control. However, it is not clear what the impact on an individual would be if one or more of these specific qualities, aligned with self-determination, were not evident. Jones (2012, p. 31) suggested that self-determination is not only affected by an individual's capabilities but also the extent to which the individual's environment enables choice-making and control over one's own life. This would suggest that self-determination skills training alone may not enable an individual to be in control of their own decision-making due to environmental, societal and other potential barriers.

The extent to which young people can demonstrate self-determination has been found to impact upon later life outcomes (Hardre and Reeve, 2003). This model of transition has implications for teaching young people self-determination skills especially those with SEND and SEMH due to these groups having high levels of disengagement and reduced transition services (Trainor et al, 2008).

However, the research of Pierson et al (2008) is limited in that self-determination is viewed as being a measurable trait which can be developed in a young person through specific interventions selected by others. The research focused upon transition of young people with SEND, who were situated as objects to be liberated rather than as agents who can make their own choices.

Ryan and Deci (January 2000, p. 68) developed self-determination theory (SDT), a theory of motivation, through the adoption of quantitative methodology. Though SDT is an empirically focused framework, it claims to share ideas with critical theorists as it

aims to identify how social contexts impact upon actors' experiences (Ryan and Niemiec, 2009, p. 263). SDT has been used to achieve emancipatory goals in education such as the opposition to 'high stakes' testing (Ryan and Brown, 2005). However, much of the SDT research in education is not necessarily emancipatory as it focuses on development of pupil motivation within a defined curriculum area, such as physical education (Katartzi and Vlachopoulus, 2011; Mitchell, Gray and Inchley, 2015). In Mitchell et al's (2015) research, the success of an SDT-based intervention to increase participation focuses upon attainment measures, which is inconsistent with SDT which views these as extrinsic motivators (Ryan and Deci, January, 2000).

Within the SDT framework, Ryan and Deci (October, 2000, p. 231) identified three innate psychological needs which are the basis for an individual to become self-determined through the development of intrinsic motivation. These are competence (the ability to control outcomes and experience mastery within the environment), relatedness (interaction, connectedness and caring for others) and autonomy (being able to self-organise experiences and behaviours) (Ryan and Deci, October 2000, p. 231). Ryan and Deci (January 2000, p. 68) proposed that these factors are essential for optimal functioning and personal wellbeing of an individual as well as development of intrinsic motivation to make own choices. School systems can serve to diminish pupils' intrinsic motivation through the extrinsic rewards, threats, deadlines, directives, pressured evaluations and imposed targets (Ryan and Deci, January 2000, p. 70). However, SDT has been critiqued for overemphasising the negative impact of extrinsic rewards on the development of intrinsic motivation (Cameron and Pierce, 1994; Eisenberger and Cameron, 1996). This study was concerned with how contextual factors impacted upon levels of participant engagement and well-being, rather than with categorising motivation beyond whether participants were motivated or amotivated.

When the factors necessary for self-determination are reduced, such as in 'controlling' educational climates, this is likely to lead to reduced motivation, anxiety, boredom and alienation (Niemiec and Ryan, 2009, p. 134). Karvonen, Test, Wood, Browder and Algozzine (2004, p. 36) identified barriers to the development of self-determination including student characteristics such as 'learned helplessness' after years of academic failure. Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996, p. 130) provided an additional dimension to this view whereby self-determination will be externally produced, and a negative view of the

self will be internalised in an 'oppressive' environment. This views self-determination as being shaped or impacted upon by external forces, which is compatible with Deci and Ryan (January 2000).

The self-determination model of transition is relevant, when applied in the context of SDT for this research, as it does provide a framework, which can explain how and why the participants felt motivated to leave mainstream education at the age of 14. However, self-determination is a social construct and care needed to be taken not to attempt to 'shoehorn' individual's experiences into a model for the sake of theory development.

2.6.4 Life Course Theory (LCT) model of transition

LCT views people's lives as dynamically unfolding during transaction with social contexts which is punctuated by transition points which help to provide a structure of the courses of life taken by an individual (Benner, 2011, p. 299). According to Elder and Giele (2009) the central premise of LCT is the

'…*notion that changing lives alters developmental trajectories*' (p. 1)

LCT provides a developmental lens to study educational phenomena and can bridge the two components of transition; academic performance and socioemotional wellbeing (Benner, 2011, p. 299). This relates to the ecological model of transition already described as it links the 'microsystem' student experiences to the 'exosystem' (and potential inequality) affected by educational policy (Benner, 2011, p. 299). LCT views transition as punctuations to life course trajectories which can potentially cause a 'shock' to development which has the potential to alter social pathways and affect developmental trajectories (Benner, 2011, p. 301). This concept of transition is supported by Riglin, Fredrickson, Shelton and Rice (2013, p. 507) who described transition as involving simultaneous changes in the school environment and social interactions alongside biological changes of adolescence.

Both Benner (2011) and Riglin et al (2013) focused upon transition from primary to secondary school which was of limited relevance to this study as during this transition factors external to the student determined choice of provision. Though LCT is a useful

concept to consider, it does appear to lend itself to longitudinal studies or research with participants who have completed compulsory education.

All four of the different conceptual approaches to transition discussed do overlap in terms of the acknowledged complexity and interweaving of factors at different levels which are to be navigated by young people during transition. I believed that the two most useful models for this study were that of SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and Trainor et al (2008) adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological systems theory, which as discussed, have areas of compatibility. Wilding (2005) has applied SDT within a school context to work systemically to identify contextual factors which may impact upon pupil engagement.

These models of transition focus upon contextual factors that directly influence young people in terms of levels of engagement and wellbeing within a system which can impact upon transition. However, though these models attempt to explain the complexities, along with the processes and ideal internal and external conditions, of navigating change, they are more applicable to 'traditional' transitions. The 'non-traditional' transition of moving from mainstream school into a 14 to 16 college is one for which there is no formal preparation or expectation, due to it being one that the young people themselves have chosen to navigate. For this reason, the concepts of 'bounded agency' and 'critical moments' are applied to provide a framework to explain how the participants were able to make a 'non-traditional' transition. The concept of agency is compatible with SDT as it depends upon the motivation of an individual to act as well as both drawing on postmodern emphases on autonomy (Smith, 2013, p. 573).

2.7 Transition of 'pushed out' pupils to the 14 to 16 college

Much of the research in the transition out of mainstream at age 14 relates to PRUs such as that carried out by Lawrence (2011) and Thomas (2015) which focused upon the reintegration of pupils moving back into mainstream education from PRUs. This research was of limited relevance to this study despite these pupils also being 'pushed out', as unlike the participants, they had little choice. As the development of 14 to 16 colleges are a recently-evolved type of provision as described, it is not a surprise that there is a lack of research focused upon these educational providers or the reasons for

young people opting to attend them. There is clearly a gap in the research as demonstrated in the box below regarding study of this type of AP, which is the focus of this study.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

To determine the degree to which pupils attending 14 to 16 colleges had been the subject of research I carried out a SLR as general searches had failed to yield any relevant studies. I selected three databases: British Education Index via EBSCO, Education Database and PsychINFO. These seemed most relevant to the search terms which included '14 to 16-year olds', 'vocational education', 'vocational colleges' and 'alternative educational provision'. The selected parameters were research dating from 2012 as prior to this 14 to 16 colleges did not exist, peer reviewed articles and UK-based research which would be directly relevant. The search yielded a total of six articles which met the criteria. However, though there was some relevance in terms of age range and vocational provision, none were directly relevant as none of the research focused upon 14 to 16 colleges which pupils themselves had selected to attend ('direct entry'). The findings of the SLR are summarised in Appendix 1.

</div>

There are several reasons which may lead to a young person to choose to become 'pushed out' from mainstream education. Kendall and Kinder (2005), in a European-wide study identified factors affecting engagement including school factors such as curriculum and policy, as well as individual factors such as relationships with peers. Kendall and Kinder (2005, p. 14) suggested three types of 'disengaged' learner. These included the 'disappointed' (who attend school but do not engage as they find the curriculum irrelevant); the 'disaffected' (who are visible and 'disruptive' and are likely to be 'at risk' of exclusion); and the 'disappeared' (who have 'opted out' and have low attendance). Fleming, Dixon and Merry (2012, p. 195) described young people who leave mainstream education before the minimum school leaving age as 'excluded or alienated' and who may drop out of education completely were it not for APs. This is compatible with the description of young people who leave mainstream education as 'pushed out' due to factors within the educational environment or system (Tuck, 2011; Menzies and Baars, 2015).

One positive example of leaving mainstream is the desire to be involved in a more vocational or employment-focused curriculum, which is offered by the 14 to 16 college (14 to 16 college prospectus, 2017). However, the Ofsted Monitoring Report (2014, p. 4) as discussed in the 'local context' section described pupils as having had 'disrupted'

educational experiences prior to attendance at the 14 to 16 college. This does indicate that the desire to be involved in a vocational curriculum may not be the only reason for these pupils opting out of mainstream.

Duckett, Sixsmith and Kagan (2008, p.90) carried out research with 557 pupils (Year 8 and Year 10) and 24 members of staff in three UK secondary schools to determine factors affecting 'wellbeing' as part of the Healthy Schools agenda. The findings indicated that negative wellbeing of students was affected by teachers' pressure on pupils to achieve, high regulation and overzealous enforcement of rules, uniforms, prison-like surveillance and ineffective anti-bullying strategies (Duckett et al, 2008, p.96). School systems which are highly authoritarian such as those described in Duckett et al's study (2008) involve teachers imposing order to gain compliance from pupils (Porter, 2006). This leads to a power imbalance with pupils having limited influence and autonomy. Duckett et al (2008) concluded that the less power and influence a pupil has, the lower their sense of 'wellbeing' may be which is consistent with SDT.

Positive wellbeing was associated with supportive, reciprocal and trusting relationships between peers, and between staff and students which also served to increase aspirations (Marsh, 2012; Kirk, Lewis, Brown, Kariboo and Park, 2016). Positive relationships were found to provide pupils with involvement in decision-making and a sense of community (Duckett et al, 2008, p. 95). Duckett et al's (2008) study was not intended to focus on why pupils left mainstream schools but does provide some relevant data pertaining to power in schools.

Pupils who self-limit participation within the national attainment agenda are labelled as being 'disaffected'. This is a relative term more likely to indicate a disaffection the young person has with the system (Hartas, 2011, p. 104). This is consistent with the view of Riele (2006) who pointed out that the labelling of these pupils as 'at risk' draws attention to what is wrong with the young people rather than what is wrong with the school system. This narrative is likely to leave pupils with a sense of nowhere to go as they find themselves being pathologized. It would be more useful to identify environmental barriers, which can lead to the possibility of solutions (Riele, 2006). However, much of this research (Riele, 2006; Hartas, 2011; White and Laczik, 2016) focused upon the

'disaffected' learner rather than the 'disappointed' or 'disappeared' (Kendall and Kinder, 2005) which may be due to the disruption impacting upon daily classroom life, hence the focus of research on PRUs.

2.8 APs and transition to post-16 education or training

Group of pupils	% pupils leaving KS4 onto a sustained post-16 placement in 2014*
All mainstream (nationally)	92 (DfE, 2016, p. 6)
Pupils from APs (nationally)	54 (DfE, 2016, p. 11)
Pupils from 14 to college (local)	97 (X City College Group, 2015)

Table 2: Percentages of pupils moving onto a post-16 placement in 2014 (collated by the researcher)

*A sustained placement is defined as being a training or education place which is attended by a young person for at least two terms (DfE, 2016, p. 11).

Table 2 provides a summary comparing the level to which different groups of pupils engage in post-16 provision. In terms of AP's, the statistics for these are not broken down into different types of provider. Table 2 does present the local 14 to 16 college favourably, with pupils being more likely to go onto post-16 education and training than their mainstream peers. It is recommended that pupils at APs are offered suitable vocational and academic options which support transition into post-16 training and education (Tate and Greatbatch, 2017, p. 58). A 14 to 16 college affiliated to an FE college is likely to have the expertise, staff and resources to provide post-16 support, which may account for the statistics in Table 2. Additionally, it does raise the question for the national statistics in terms of whether the AP figures are 'skewed' by pupils leaving PRUs. Pupils with SEND or from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to attend a FE college than their peers, who were more likely to attend a sixth form college (DfE, 2016, p. 6). It is possible that the reason for this is that it is more likely, as demonstrated by the local college prospectuses, for an FE college to provide a broader range of courses at all levels, compared to a sixth form (City College websites, 2018).

According to Barentsen, in an editorial review (2013, p. 66), pupils in Key Stage 4 of education are more likely to become disillusioned with school. However, this article

focused upon the link between disaffected young people with persistent absence rates with the 2011 riots in London. Statistics were the basis of this report, which does not necessarily demonstrate causality. It is more likely that young people will be disengaged from education for a period prior to this phase rather than 'suddenly' becoming so in Year 10. Gorard (2010, p. 15) found that pupil experience at school did affect aspirations and motivations to continue to be involved in education or training, with high levels of autonomy of students, and quality of guidance on offer being indicators. Gorard (2010, p. 15), concluded that top-down educational programmes and high levels of class control which reduce pupil autonomy have a negative impact on pupil engagement. This echoes the messages of Duckett et al (2008), Menzies and Baars, Tuck (2011), White and Laczik (2016) and SDT (Ryan and Deci, January 2000). However, it needs to be considered that Gorard's (2010) research was conducted with year 11 pupils who were predicting likely outcomes at a time prior to the raising of the school-leaving age. The 14 to 16 college statistics are very different from those of PRUs. I therefore feel that it is worth exploring this type of provision as a separate entity, and the young peoples' experiences who have attended there and how this may have impacted upon transition and preparation for adulthood.

2.9 Research question

As is consistent with grounded theory methodology, the original research question was open and focused on the young people's experiences of transition (Sbaraini, Carter, Evans and Blinkhorn, 2011). My main research question initially was:

'How do young people experience the transition between a 14-16 college and a post-16 provider?'

However, during data collection, it became clear that the participants were more interested in talking about the transition from mainstream school to the 14 to 16 college and how this had impacted upon their following educational trajectory. I therefore, felt that a richer research question would be:

'How has the decision to move to a 14 to 16 college impacted upon the following educational experiences and transition to post-16 education or training of young people?'

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Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter I have outlined the design of the research, justified my rationale for the selection of grounded theory methodology and taken a critical perspective on this methodology. The research process and the selected methods, procedures, participant sampling and ethical considerations have been discussed.

3.1 Research design

The approach to this research was qualitative. A qualitative approach aims to gather data about human events and experiences which would, if reduced to numerical form, lose meaning (Coolican, 2009, p. 54). Grounded theory methodology is a general research methodology that can use any, and all, types of data (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p.12). Grounded theory methodology was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to allow new theories to develop inductively from the data whilst minimising the researcher's impositions of assumptions. The development of a grounded theory methodology will be useful to potentially move beyond the data to say something about the experience of transition for the research participants (Willig, 2013, p. 80). Due to the qualitative approach taken, it was not intended for the theory developed to be generalised beyond this research though there may be a level of transferability to similar populations. Additionally, this research could act as a source of reflection for other researchers and educational professionals working with young people transitioning between similar institutions.

3.2 Grounded theory methodology: a rationale

Grounded theory methodology

> '*is designed to encourage researchers' persistent interaction with their data, whilst remaining constantly involved with their emerging analyses ... the iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and emerging analysis makes the collected data progressively more focused and the analysis successively more theoretical*' (Bryant and Charmaz, 2011, p. 1).

Part of my reasoning for selecting grounded theory was that it is a 'full package' methodology as it progresses a study from data collection to analysis to a theoretical

explanation of the phenomenon under study especially in an area of limited existing research (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 12). There is a lack of research regarding APs, with much of the existing literature being focused upon pupils with SEMH and those at risk of exclusion (Tate and Greatbatch, 2017, p. 59).

Another reason that I selected grounded theory was due to its focus upon the study of social processes and its use of symbolic interactionism which was informed by pragmatism (Charmaz, 2008, p. 7). Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective which

> *'assumes society, reality and self are constructed through interaction and thus rely on language and communication... that interaction is dynamic and interpretive'* (Charmaz, 2008, p. 7).

This influenced my selection of methods for data collection, which rely upon the use of language and communication mainly using focus groups and semi-structured interviews. I was keen to develop local theory in context to be able to understand the social processes of local phenomena, in this case students' experiences of transition, using grounded theory methodology.

I had initially considered adopting a descriptive phenomenological methodology to explore how students perceive and experience the phenomenon of transition (Willig, 2013, p. 85). However, I wanted to move beyond a descriptive interpretive perspective to use the concept of abduction to develop new ideas and hypotheses which move beyond the data, which grounded theory methodology enables one to do (Bryant and Charmaz, 2011, p. 23). Peirce introduced the concept of abduction in the late nineteenth century as an imaginative form of inference which facilitates the creation of new ideas or explanations, which goes beyond the summarising of data such as in abstraction (Locke, 2011, p. 567).

Schools and colleges are organisations which have unwritten norms and rules, as well as formal rules and policy. The nature of these will dictate the procedures and nature for interaction between the members within the system and across the boundary with other organisations (Miller, 1996, p. 99). According to Miller (1996, p. 99), the location of these boundaries between organisations may be difficult to define and be less certain than those within the organisation. Having worked in both pre- and post-16 settings, it is

possible that the cultures, norms, rules, and thus operation of these two types of organisations differ greatly. I am interested to understand how the communication and interface between the pre- and post-16 providers take place and how this is experienced by the participants.   As I have worked in this area, I am aware that my practice was shaped by school policy, culture and systems. According to Holton and Walsh (2017, p. 31), grounded theory's openness to all data, especially in the theoretical sampling phase, creates a triangulation in data sources which reduces the potential for a perspective bias by the researcher.

Grounded theory methodology relies upon working inductively to analyse data to move from the particular to the general to develop new hypotheses or theories leading to an open approach to the research process (Sbaraini et al, 2011, p. 3). There is an element of deductive analysis in the classic grounded theory process, during the stage of theoretical sampling, whereby specific data is collected to test emerging hypotheses and theories (Sbaraini et al, 2011, p. 3). Figure 1 below illustrates the aims of abductive, deductive and inductive reasoning:
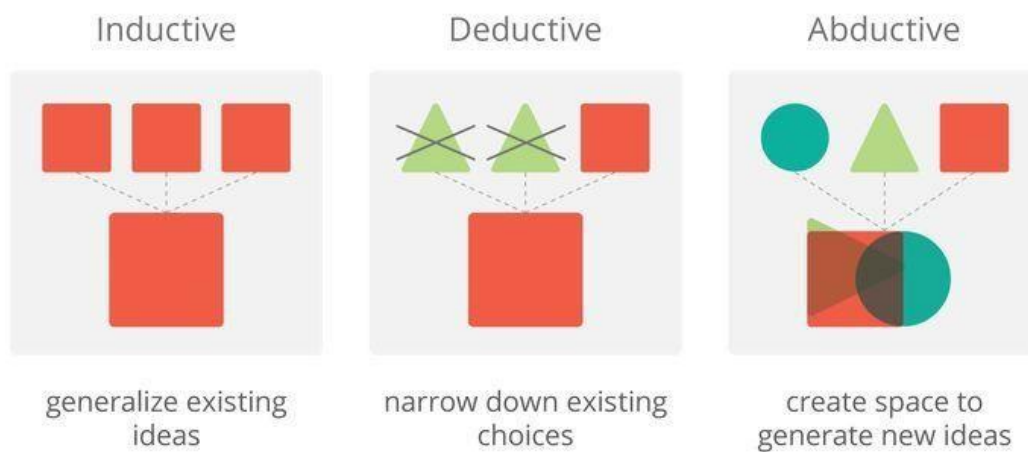
Figure 1: Diagram illustrating the aims of inductive, deductive and abductive reasoning (from https://i.pinimg.com/736x/03/b6/cd/03b6cd167a5638ddef2cc3c786967345.jpg)

3.3 Development and critique of grounded theory methodology

The original classic grounded theory methodology was developed by the sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967). This methodology focused upon the way that humans negotiate and manage social situations in a dynamic changing world, which makes it suitable for study for transition (Willig, 2013, p. 77). The original grounded theory methodology was inductive in nature with the aim that it would 'liberate the researcher from the straitjacket of hypothetico-deductive research' (Willig, 2013, p. 78). Hypothetico-deductive research depends upon the development of hypotheses which are then tested, which may inhibit development of new theory. Strauss and Corbin later developed a more prescriptive form of grounded theory methodology due to the addition of specified analytic tools and coding frameworks for the collection and analysis of data which some viewed as a different methodology (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 8). I did not select this more prescriptive version as I felt that it was important to retain the essence of grounded theory methodology in retaining a level of openness and flexibility in response to the data.

There are other forms of grounded theory methodology that have developed including post-modern situational analysis and 'dimensional analysis' (Sbaraini et al, 2011, p. 2). Situational analysis moves grounded theory to a situational analysis of discourses and therefore beyond the focus of the knowing subject and is a move to relativism (Smit, 2006, p. 562). I decided that this version of grounded theory methodology was not appropriate as I wanted to analyse the social experiences of participants and not move towards discursive analysis. I believed that situational analysis would 'lose' the experiences of the participants which would feel very 'real' to them.

Dimensional analysis is based upon the theory of 'natural analysis'. This is the application of normative cognitive processes to analyse and interpret experiences and phenomena and aims to identify all the 'parts of the whole' (Kools, Mccarthy, Durham and Robrecht, 1996, p. 314). However, there does appear to be a reliance on observation to determine dimensions. This would have been difficult and impractical to apply to the study of transition which is a sequence of events experienced by pupils over a period too long for the research period.

I originally decided to adopt the constructivist grounded theory methodology as it assumes that grounded theories are constructions of reality and interpretive portrayals of the studied world (Charmaz, 2008, p. 10). Constructivist grounded theory is reflexive and pragmatic rather than prescriptive and recognises that reality is temporally, culturally and structurally situated. This version of grounded theory methodology enables the researcher to engage reflexively with the data, whilst acknowledging that there are multiple realities experienced by participants and mutual creation of knowledge. I felt that this was appropriate for my research as each of the participants has experienced the process differently due to several social, internal and experiential factors which will produce different versions of reality of this social phenomenon. The constructivist version of grounded theory methodology does not abandon the original underpinnings of grounded theory, but it does acknowledge that a neutral stance on social reality does not exist (Charmaz, 2008, p. 9).

Constructivist grounded theory incorporates reflexivity by addressing the role of the researcher-participant interactions on the research process (Hall and Callery, 2011, p. 257). It also enables the consideration of relationality, which is the power and trust relationship between the researcher and participants and has the potential to increase the validity of findings in grounded theory studies (Hall and Callery, 2011, p. 258). However, despite carrying out a lot of research on the constructivist grounded theory, I continually had reservations about adopting an approach which would 'wed' me to adopting a relativist epistemology.

I thus returned to classic grounded theory and decided this would be more suitable due to it being a general methodology for research which is open to a range of epistemological perspectives (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 4). Some of the critique of classic grounded theory has been that it does not satisfactorily address the question of reflexivity and the role of the researcher (Willig, 2013, p. 78). However, theoretical sensitivity is addressed in classic grounded theory which encourages the researcher to attempt to suspend preconceptions as much as possible to let the data speak for itself (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 42).

3.4 Navigating epistemology and ontology

3.4.1 Initial adoption of relativism

A criticism of classic grounded theory methodology is the assumption that it takes a positivist epistemology. This assumes that the truth of the phenomenon emerges from the data and is there to be discovered by the researcher whose role is to adopt a neutral stance (Charmaz, 2008, p. 9). This positivist epistemology did not appear to suit the study of a social process such as transition and this led me initially to reject it as a methodology. Additionally, researching transition of students from a positivist stance does not allow for human problems nor do I believe it is compatible with the desire for social justice for marginalised groups such as the population I have selected to work with. According to Hall and Callery (2001, p.258), classic grounded theory paid little attention to social processes that influence data generation and focus purely on the data itself, thus ignoring the role of the researcher in the process. I found myself focusing upon Charmaz's constructivist version of grounded theory. I felt that constructivist grounded theory would enable me to contextualise theory, view complexities and avoid overgeneralising that occurs with the deletion of time, difference, positionality and location (Bryant and Charmaz, 2011, p. 50).

According to Austin (2016, p. 217), who conducted a constructivist grounded theory study on gender identity in young people, this methodology can be used to collect in-depth narratives which produces multiple voices and multiple truths of a phenomenon. However, I did feel that Austin's analysis, whilst staying close to the narratives in the data, did not go beyond the descriptive to move into theory formulation. This, I feel loses the original essence of grounded theory and does not feel different to other forms of methodology such as thematic analysis.

3.4.2 Movement to critical realism

My position and selection of constructivist grounded theory methodology remained until the early stages of data collection, however this felt uncomfortable with the associated relativist stance (Taghipour, 2014, p. 102). This perspective holds that researchers co-construct meanings mutually with participants and that there is no pre-existing version of reality and with all claims of knowledge being equally valid (Taghipour, 2014, p. 103).

This left me with a dilemma as I felt that this would not be useful for my research to inform EP practice.

I believe that there is a 'reality' concerning the process of transition, but that it may be experienced differently by individuals due to a variety of temporal, spatial, individual, social and environmental factors. I then attempted to justify the use of constructivist grounded theory despite my stance being more aligned to critical realism. A critical realist approach to reality is that it is multifaceted and may be perceived differently depending upon the person and the context which can be socially and historically conditioned (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. xii). Critical realism looks for a regularity in events but does not look for universal laws and accepts the role of context, individual agency and social structures when seeking explanations for phenomena (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. xiii). I therefore continued to have an 'internal struggle' regarding critical realism being aligned with a constructivist methodology which on the surface do seem to have some common areas such as its multifaceted nature. For example, one entry in my research diary illustrated this well:

Research diary: 10/10/2017. This is causing me significant concern; grounded theory methodology appears to be neutral in terms of epistemology but Charmaz's version does not feel particularly flexible and I don't feel that I can comfortably take a critical realist stance whilst using this methodology. Despite my search I cannot find any real justification of what I am proposing. I feel that I need to go back and look at Glaser's original classic grounded theory, which may be more compatible as it is claimed to be epistemologically and ontologically flexible (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 11), though there is claim that it does have a 'realist' orientation which is useful (Willig, 2017, p. 79).

3.4.3 The 'marriage' of critical realism and classic grounded theory

At this stage I decided to re-examine classic grounded theory to consider whether this would be more compatible with a critical realist epistemology. Classic grounded theory felt a better fit to the area under study as Glaser acknowledged that though there will be motivational reasons to select an area, the researcher must remain open to the main concern under study (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 8). As data was collected the focus of the study did change significantly, partly due to ensuring that I acknowledged and set

aside assumptions as far as possible. The constant comparison method in grounded theory is designed to enable the researcher to acknowledge and potentially reject any preconceived assumptions (Bunt, 2016, p. 4).

According to Oliver (2011, p. 371) critical realism and grounded theory are compatible, due to the focus upon abduction and the interconnectedness of practice and theory. Critical realism can combine the positivist search for a reality external to human consciousness with the relativist stance that reality is socially constructed (Oliver, 2011, p. 372). Grounded theory from a critical realist perspective would enable me to address the event of transition itself, the meanings made of it and to pursue emancipatory goals by describing a social world where there are opportunities for interventions and change (Oliver, 2011, p. 374). I doubted the degree to which this research focusing upon transition could 'pursue emancipatory goals' and came close to abandoning critical realism. However, the field notes, emerging themes and subsequent direction and focus of data collection made it clear to me that this was achievable. An example from my research diary illustrates this:

> **Research diary: 9/10/2017**. The focus group was very interesting and discursive, and it was clear that the participants were not just working through the prepared list of questions provided for structure and guidance. What really struck me was how the event of transitioning from the 14 to 16 college to post-16 education produced less discussion than the transition from secondary school to the 14 to 16 college. This was an area that aroused a lot of emotive descriptors and discussion around the 'oppressive' features of mainstream secondary settings which then led to the following 'journey' through Key Stage 4 and into post-16 education through 'making brave and unknown choices'.

This made me realise that in fact there was an emancipatory and social change element to my research due to the refocus on the transition into the 14 to 16 college with the social structures of mainstream secondary education being interrogated. Grounded theory can provide critical realism with an appropriate methodology which can help tie research firmly to practice (Oliver, 2011, p. 373). Critical realism holds a realist view in the ontological domain (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. xii). A realist ontology maintains that the world is made up of structures and objects that have a cause and effect relationship with each other (Willig, 2013, p.12). For grounded theory it is assumed that social events and processes (such as transition) have a reality in the as they take place regardless of the

researcher. However, it is recognised that these social realities are shaped by human actors and their interpretations, thus focusing upon dynamic 'process' and 'change' (Willig, 2013, p. 80).

3.5 Research process

Having settled on classic grounded theory methodology, I began my research by carrying out interviews with staff involved with the transition procedures at the post-16 provider to provide context for the research. These interviews were highly structured and focused upon roles, processes, additional arrangements, timescales and involvement of young people and their families in transition. Extant texts such as organisational policies and documents were also scrutinised for content and structure and for additional contextual information on transition.

3.6 Recruitment of participants

I initially carried out purposive sampling to recruit participants from the identified target group, which was any student who had attended a 14 to 16 college prior to joining a post-16 provider. Purposive sampling is the recruitment of participants according to specific identified criteria relevant to the research question (Willig, 2013, p. 91). In terms of the number of participants to be selected, it was difficult to ascertain due to the nature of grounded theory methodology and the ongoing cycle of data collection and analysis until theoretical saturation is reached (Stern, 2011, p. 117). Stern (2011, p. 117) recommended approximately 20 to 30 participants which would clearly be appropriate for an academic doctorate research thesis. As this research was smaller in scope, I intended to recruit ten participants which would allow for the possibility of participants withdrawing from the process or not providing consent.

However, participant recruitment became a source of difficulty, potentially due to the small target population. For example, there were only ten target participants in FE College Y with 1324 students aged 16 to 18. In FE College X there were 28 target participants from a total of 2,978 students aged 16 to 18 years (www.compare-schoolperformance.service.gov.uk). More participants were recruited from the smaller college, which may be due to the smaller single-site campus and the Student Support

Manager having more regular contact with students. Three participants who had agreed to be interviewed withdrew before data collection. The reasons for the difficulty may be due to the priorities of students this age which were likely to be peer relationships, meeting tutors and only being on-site only for timetabled sessions. Six suitable participants, from the two main post-16 providers in the city were recruited.

I carried out a focus group with three participants, and individual interviews with all six, with one being a pilot interview. The problem identified initially as 'disaffection with mainstream', and the core category initially defined as 'student exercise of agency and choice' emerged during the initial focus group (Appendix 8) and persisted through following one-to-one interviews. Later in the research process, theoretical sampling took place to refine and saturate categories and determine links between them (Willig, 2013, p. 71). This involved a focus group with three post-16 students who had not attended the 14 to 16 college to and a participant who was home-schooled to determine more information around the concepts surrounding the identified problem. the core category and emerging concepts.

 A summary of key data of the ten recruited participants and the educational providers attended is illustrated in Table 3. In terms of levels, level three is a course equivalent to Advanced levels, and a level 2 course is equivalent to GCSE grade 4 (or grade C) and above (https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-ofqualification-levels).

'Name' – pseudonym selected by researcher (identifier)	Age	Secondary school attended (location, age range, gender, Ofsted criteria at time of leaving)	Location of GCSE (14-16) education	Post-16 college attended currently	Level of course(s) currently studied
Liam 01	17	A Urban, 11-16, mixed, inadequate	14 to 16 college	Y	3
Kerry 02	17	B Rural, 11-18, mixed, good	14 to 16 college	Y	3
Jack 03	16	C Urban, 11-16, mixed, inadequate	14 to 16 college	Y	2
Lara 04	18	D Urban, 11-16, mixed, requires improvement	14 to 16 college	X	3
Jamie 05	17	E Urban, 11-16, mixed, requires improvement	14 to 16 college	X	2
Holly 06	18	F Urban, 11-16, girls only, academisation	14 to 16 college	Y	3
Alice 07	17	G Rural, 11-18, mixed, requires improvement	Home schooled	Y	3
Bob 08	17	E Urban, 11-16, mixed, requires improvement	E secondary school	Y	3
Harriet 09	17	H Urban, 11-16, mixed, outstanding	H secondary school	Y	3
Helen 10	17	H Urban, 11-16, mixed, outstanding	H secondary school	Y	3

Table 3: Research Participant Profiles (compiled by researcher)

Once the theoretical (level 3) codes began to emerge, I re-interviewed one of the original participants (Liam) to re-examine specific concepts. At this point theoretical saturation was achieved in that it was clear that no new data or properties for the theoretical concepts were evident (Willig, 2013, p. 71).

3.7 Collecting data: focus group

Prior to carrying out interviews with participants, I carried out a focus group from which a set of emerged themes were developed which informed the interview schedules. A focus group is a group interview which uses the interaction between participants as the

source of data, with the researcher acting to 'steer' the discussion when required (Willig, 2013, p. 34). There were three participants in the focus group which is, according to Adams and Cox (2008, p. 24), the minimum number required to generate sufficient in-depth discussion on a topic. The focus group was provided with a list of general themes, in the form of questions, to discuss (Appendix 2) which enabled participants to reflect collaboratively on shared experiences. These were provided a few minutes before the start of the group discussion to provide participants some time to consider their own experiences in response to the themes (Adams and Cox, 2008, p. 24).

I sat with the group due to the small number of participants and at times used prompts to facilitate discussion although the participants were able to generate shared discussion with little input from myself (Willig, 2013, p.35). A set of informal ground rules were set at the start of the session, including stating that all participants' experiences were valid and welcomed. Participants were requested to try not to talk over each other to assist with transcription. A short warm-up section was included at the beginning of the session where participants introduced themselves, though they did know each other already, which I believe helped the discussion to flow. The focus group enabled me to observe the social processes taking place with participants comparing opinions, developing themes and querying each other (Willig, 2013, p. 35). Examples are evident throughout the transcript (Appendix 9) such as where a participant questions another (lines 106 to 122) and where participants continue to develop a theme with no intervention from myself (lines 128 to 149).

3.8 Collecting data: semi-structured interviews

Following the focus group, I collected data using semi-structured interviews with participants. The interview agenda was developed using the themes that arose from the focus group data. I initially carried out a pilot interview with one of the participants to determine suitability of the questions as well as timings, with additional feedback from the participant. I had considered the use of the funnel interview structure, with more general concrete non-threatening open questions asked first to establish rapport and trust, with more specific, complex questions being used later in the interview (Roller, 2015, p. 18). The purpose of the funnel interview is to move the questioning from the general to

the specific research objectives (Roller, 2015, p. 18) with four stages illustrated in Figure 2:
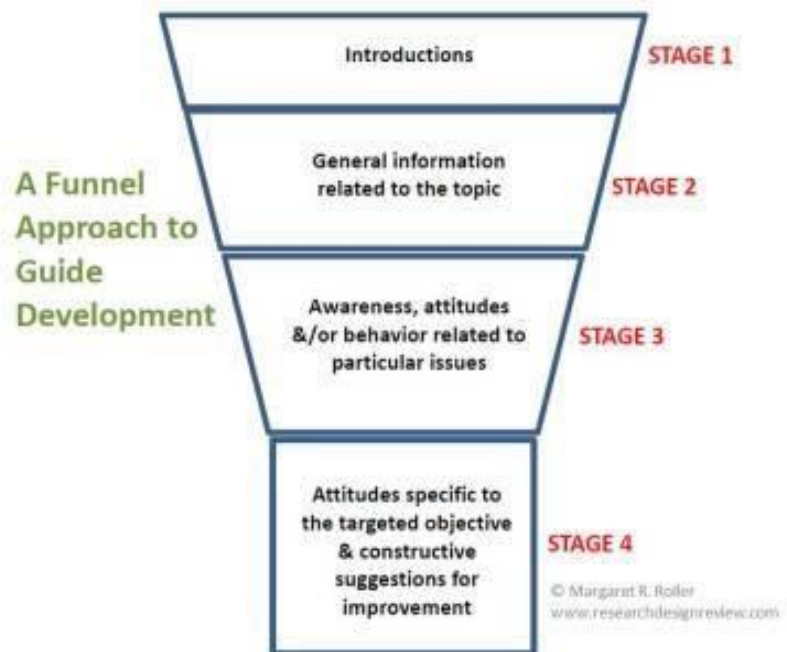
Figure 2: Funnel interviewing (from Roller, 2015, p. 18)

However, the first stage of this interview-style, whereby general questioning is used did not work well in the pilot interview. The participant stated that he 'didn't understand' the initial broad questions which were 'tell me about your educational experiences since Year
9' and 'how do you feel about the decisions that you have made?'. These were felt to be 'too big' and the participant didn't know how to begin to answer them. At the other end of the 'funnel', it was difficult to set specific questions narrowly focused upon the research objectives due to the use of grounded theory methodology.

According to Willig (2013, p. 72), the research question will be initially broad and focused more through theoretical sampling during the research process. I therefore, abandoned the 'funnel method' and focused instead upon asking open, but structured questions about the phenomenon under study. An interview schedule was produced following the pilot interview (Appendix 3). During the interviews, time was taken at the beginning to ask general non-threatening questions to establish rapport and trust, which worked well (Faux, Walsh and Deatrick, 1988, p. 183).

The initial question was broad, but this was returned to at the end of the interview. Three of the participants (Kerry, Jamie and Liam) were asked to complete an influencing factors activity (Appendix 4). Participants indicated on a (non-numerical) scale the degree of influence that a range of factors had upon decision-making (from 'not important' to 'very important'). The aim of this was to then discuss with participants influencing factors in more detail and to focus questioning during the interview on participants' experiences. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, pp. 75-76) it is important to listen to participants' stories regarding a phenomenon in the early stages of the research, with later interviews resulting from theoretical sampling being more focused. The advantage of this style of interview allowed me to go beneath the surface of transition, find out more about the participant's thoughts, feelings and actions, respect the participants and show appreciation for their time (Charmaz, 2008, p. 26).

In addition to the scheduled questions, I asked additional non-judgemental questions expressing interest and wanting to know more about described experiences, thus creating a more conversational interview than a formal, traditional interview (Charmaz, 2008, p. 26). These included questions such as 'can you tell me a bit more about that?' and 'what was that like for you?' This did mean that there were different questions posed to participants in addition to the key questions outlined in schedule which arose to further participants ideas and experiences. This could be a potential source of bias, though if these additional questions were not posed, the depth of experience and illustrative examples provided by participants would have yielded less 'rich' data.

Due to the retrospective nature of the research, participants were expected to recall autobiographical memories of events from three to four years previously. Maughan and Rutter (1997, p. 20) attempted to address the issues of reliability and validity of long term recall, though this was in the context of adults who had experienced traumatic childhoods. The main approach recommended is to aim to achieve stability of participants reports of past events at two or more points in time, which can be done through corroboration with others (Maughan and Rutter, 1997, p. 20). It would not have been appropriate to question parents of participants due them being over 16 years. However, the use of the focus group enabled some level of corroboration with other young people who experienced the same events at the same time. Two of the focus group participants were interviewed individually and events discussed were returned to,

which determined stability of recall. However, some of the recall may be reconstructive if discussed with others and other peoples' narratives may become incorporated (Maughan and Rutter, 1997, p. 23).

As the participants were over the age of 16, interviews can to be of up to an hour in duration (Faux et al., 1988, p. 192). Despite this, I was mindful of fatigue and the fact that participants were being interviewed during 'free' periods. I ensured that interviews were completed at least ten minutes before scheduled lessons to allow participants to have a short break. The length of interviews ranged from 30 to 50 minutes. I audio-recorded the interviews digitally to focus upon interactions and non-verbal responses which enabled me to write field notes directly following each interview (Sbaraini et al, 2011,

p.8). The audio-recordings were then transcribed for open coding.

3.9 Memo-writing and coding

Memos are the researcher's theoretical notes about the data and conceptual connections between codes and categories, and they are written during the coding process (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 89-90). Memos in grounded theory are written in an informal style, using unofficial language for personal use with the main purpose of advancing the thinking process, comparing data and identifying any gaps in the analysis (Charmaz, 2008, p. 72). Conceptual memos were written about the initial codes and focused codes that were developed. The purpose of conceptual memos is to record thinking about the meanings of codes, how and when processes occurred and changed as well as focusing upon similarities and differences between data sets (Sbaraini et al, 2011, p. 5).

Case-based memos were written during coding in response to my impressions about the interviewee's experience and enabled me to question any of my pre-existing ideas (Sbaraini et al, 2011, p. 8). However, it was difficult to separate case-based memos from the conceptual memos as many had elements of both. Therefore, I kept the memos together (Appendix 10) and during the theoretical sampling phase cut them up and sorted them to begin to develop and saturate theoretical codes as well as determine links between them (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 116).

Initial coding of data took place using open coding whereby each line of data from transcripts (Appendix 9 and 12) and field notes (Appendix 11) was analysed with occurring actions and events defined (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Open coding is the identification of incidents in the data that indicate one or more concepts and is labelled using a limited number of words to capture the concepts indicated (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 81). This enabled ideas to develop inductively through staying closely grounded to the data whilst through constant comparison enabled potential gaps and ideas for subsequent data collection to occur (Butterfield, 2009, p. 320).

The number of times each initial open code appeared was recorded in Table 5. This is similar to coding frequency as carried out in content analysis (Krippendorf, 2004). However, in grounded theory coding categories emerge from the data, whereas in content analysis coding categories are determined prior to analysis (Willig, 2013, p.70). The purpose of this was not to create a hierarchy of codes nor to carry out any quantitative analysis as is the case in content analysis. Frequency of codes was recorded (Table 5) to provide a sense of representativeness within data to aid development of the focused and theoretical codes.

To determine the rigour of the codes selected during open coding and to adopt a degree of quality control of coding and transparency, inter-rater reliability using Cohen's Kappa (K) was calculated. Cohen's Kappa (K) is a statistic which is used to calculate the degree to which different raters or observers agree when coding the same data-set (Coolican, 2009, p. 129). For this task, one transcript was selected (Alice) which was not coded. I asked a peer (post-graduate researcher familiar with qualitative analysis but not grounded theory) to carry out open coding with no coding framework other than a synopsis of the research. This did limit the process especially as the peer rater was not involved in any other stages of the research and may well have continued the following stages of data collection and analysis in a different manner. In some instances, raters used different words to indicate the same meaning, such as 'peer groups' and 'friendships'; in cases such as this these codes were agreed between raters to be the same. The calculation of K in this case was 0.6048 (standard error of 0.1246, range of 0.3606 to 0.809 with a confidence interval of 95%) which indicates a 'good' level of concordance between raters (http://vassarstats.net/kappa.html). According to Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman and

Marteau (1997, p. 605) analysis of qualitative data is a 'dialogue' between the researcher and the data and it is acknowledged that there is an inherent subjectivity in this process. However, I felt it important to know the degree to which (even if an approximation) of how others may carry out open coding in a similar way. Though this is consistent with a realist ontology, the research cannot take a 'pure' realist stance as it is not possible to objectively measure the realities experienced by the participants.

A core category was tentatively identified during the initial coding stage, with other emerging concepts considered in relation to this which explains how the main arising concern or problem is managed, processed or resolved (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The three levels of coding which were used as described by Holton and Walsh (2017, p. 141) and adapted from Glaser and Strauss are summarised in Table 4.

Phase/ level	Type of coding	Description of coding	Focus of phase/level
1	Initial open	Study fragments of data, words, lines, segments, incidents. Include 'in vivo' codes, codes of participants' meanings of views and actions, special terms and symbolic markers of speech and meaning. Coding using gerunds to detect processes. (Charmaz, 2008, pp. 48-49)	Identification of the main concern (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 141)
2	Focused (selective)	Use most significant or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. Categorise data incisively and completely (not linearly); move across interviews and other data sources and compare people's experiences, actions and interpretations. Compare initial codes according to similarities, difference and significance (Charmaz, 2008, pp. 57-58)	Emergence of the core category Theoretical saturation (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 141)
3	Theoretical	Conceptualising how the focused codes may relate to each other to form hypotheses to be integrated into theory through memo-sorting and visual mapping (Charmaz, 2008, p.63)	Integration and elaboration of the grounded theory (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p.141)
4	Diagramming	Creating a concrete image of ideas to provide a visual representation of categories and relationships to create and refine theoretical links and compares categories at an abstract level (Charmaz, 2008, p. 117)	Integration and elaboration of the grounded theory

Table 4: Types of coding and the research process. The process of constant comparison occurs through phases 1 and 2. (adapted by the researcher from Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 141 and Charmaz, 2008).

Once stage 3 of coding was reached, theoretical sampling of participants took place to begin focus upon specific emerging categories and develop incomplete ideas (Sbaraini et al, 2008, p. 6). Theoretical sampling is where the researcher seeks people, events or information to further define the identified categories (Charmaz, 2008, p. 189). This took the form of re-interviewing participants as well as recruiting new participants due to the emergence of categories within the data.

During the phase of theoretical sampling and coding (level 3), rather than transcribe and code each digitally recorded interview, field notes were coded, with *in vivo* statements being used (Locke, 2011, p. 571). *In vivo* codes capture exactly what is going on in the incident and may use the exact terms used by participants (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 81). The purpose of this was to move into the use of the process of abduction to move beyond the descriptive to generate theory (Locke, 2011, p. 571). At this stage of the research process the properties of categories were developed until data collected through theoretical sampling yielded no new categories, i.e. theoretical 'saturation' was reached (Charmaz, 2008, p.113). According to Sbaraini et al (2008, p. 3), theoretical 'saturation' in a grounded theory study is reached when all the concepts in the developing theory are well understood and can be substantiated by the data.

A final stage of diagramming (Figure 6) took place following memo-sorting to produce a visual representation of categories and the relationships to aid in the identification of emerging theory (Charmaz, 2008, p. 117). This assisted theorising about the construction of the social world experienced by participants during the phenomenon of transition.

3.10 Summary of procedure

As the research process was non-linear and consisted of stages during which constant comparison took place with data collection and analysis occurring concurrently, a step-by-step summary of the discussed stages of the procedure is therefore meaningless. I have therefore summarised the process diagrammatically in Appendix 7. The diagram illustrates the complexity of the grounded theory research process which is mainly due to the iterative process of constant comparison and moving between data collection and analysis (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 73).

The start point of the process in the diagram was purposive sampling. The whole process is divided into three distinct colour-coded phases which provides some sense of sequence. The three phases shown on the diagram are the process of collecting data (orange), the process of conceptualising data through coding and memoing until a core category was identified (blue). Directly following data collection, field notes were written. A field note is an *in the moment* reminder of incidents that may indicate specific concepts (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 71). Interviews and focus groups (prior to theoretical sampling) recordings were transcribed. Coding was carried out on the transcripts as well as the field notes as can be seen in Appendix 9 (focus group transcript), Appendix 12 (interview transcripts) and Appendix 11 (field notes). Coding was interrupted at regular points to write memos (Appendix 10) to conceptualise the main themes. The final phase is the process of exploring data (green) and development of a grounded theory through theoretical sampling and coding. Details of the stages and chronology of the research process is illustrated in Appendix 8.

3.11 Ethical considerations

According to Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 262), there are many considerations of ethics which need to be accounted for when conducting qualitative research with participants. Two of the main areas of consideration are procedural and situational or relational (also referred to as 'ethics in practice').

3.11.1 Procedural ethics

Once ethical approval was received from the University ethics committee and the local authority the 14 to 16 college and the FE colleges, who would be stakeholders, were contacted to gain consent. This was especially important for the FE colleges whose students would be identified for participation in the research. Colleges were sent the research proposal as well as notifications of ethical approval from both the University ethics committee and the local authority. All stages of the procedural ethics procedures were developed with reference to the Code of Human Research Ethics (British Psychological Society (BPS), 2014) and the Division of Educational and Child Psychology Professional Guidelines (DECP, 2002). Participant consent forms (Appendix 5) and information sheets approved by the Ethics committee (Appendix 6)

were shared with the FE Colleges to enable participants to be identified and recruited (BPS, 2014, pp.18-19). The information provided in the information sheets and the consent forms were focused upon ensuring that participants had the age-appropriate information to provide informed consent especially as audio recording was planned (DECP, 2002, p. 5-7). This process took some time as it was felt to be inappropriate to recruit students too early in the autumn term as they were still effectively undergoing transition.

In terms of minimising any harm or distress to participants (BPS, 2014, p.13), inconvenience to participants and their education was reduced by negotiating interviews to take place at a time suitable to them. The interviews took place during the working day on the college site with the door kept ajar with regular discrete 'drop-ins' arranged with the Student Support Team. The proposed topic of transition is not one which could be described as 'high risk'; however, there was always the possibility of sensitive issues being raised by participants due to the open nature of interview questioning (BPS, 2014, p. 13). Participants were made aware of the right to withdraw at any point and any data destroyed should they wish (DECP, 2002, p. 9).

Confidentiality of data was ensured by providing each participant with a pseudonym which was recorded on the appropriate consent form (BPS, 2014, p.20; DECP, 2002, p. 9). This pseudonym was then used on transcripts and in the final thesis. The original consent forms were stored in a locked facility. Audio-recordings were stored on the digital recorder and deleted once they were transcribed. The transcribed documents contain no names or identifying data of named institutes, individuals or locations. Data was stored on my personal laptop which is password protected.

3.11.2 Situational and relational ethics

The four primary ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity identified by the BPS (2018) were referred to in terms of professional conduct during the research process.

1. Respect

This includes the respect for dignity and worth and rights of all people and treat people as individuals (BPS, 2018, p. 5; Health and Care Professions Council, (HCPC), 2016, p. 5). It was important to ensure that informed consent was obtained from all parties involved, in this case, college staff and participants (HCPC, 2016, p. 5). It was important to ensure that relationships with participants and staff members was professional with clear boundaries by limiting conversations to topics relevant to the research and its organisation (HCPC, 2016, p. 5).

In terms of relational ethics, it was important that the institutions who are stakeholders in the research, in this case the colleges identified, were involved at various stages of the research process. Regular communication took place and a summary of findings will provided and discussed to ensure that the institutions were represented in a fair and transparent way in the final research report.

According to Shaw, Brady and Davey (2011, p. 6) it is important to ensure that it is communicated to young people that they are experts and social actors in their own lives. Gaining the voice of young people is essential for them to be research collaborators to be able to influence research, policy, practice and service developments (Shaw et al, 2011, p. 7; BPS, 2018, p. 5).

To respect participant's privacy and confidentiality, participants were informed that identities would remain anonymous with pseudonyms being used rather than real names. It was made clear to participants at the beginning of each interview or focus group that they did not have to disclose anything, or answer questions, that they were uncomfortable with (BPS, 2018, p.5).

2. Competence

Competence refers to the ability to provide services, in this case conducting research, to an appropriate professional standard and following legal guidelines (HCPC, 2016, pp. 67; BPS, 2018, p. 6). For this research, participants were asked to provide feedback following each interview or focus group to inform future practice. During, and following interviews, I used my professional judgement to determine levels of participant distress (BPS, 2014, p. 13). The colleges have on-site counsellors who I could have referred

participants to, or they could have been directed to their college coach or mentor. This did not take place, though I did inform participants that this option was available to them (BPS, 2014, p. 23). I ensured that I was aware of college procedures regarding the reporting of any safeguarding issues. No safeguarding issues were raised during any of the interviews or focus groups.

3. Responsibility

It was important to be aware of responsibility towards others and to ensure that trust is not abused and that the power of influence is managed appropriately (BPS, 2018, p. 6-7; HCPS, 2016, p. 9). My role as a TEP was communicated to stakeholders, as was my role as a researcher. At the beginning of the focus group, it was important to ensure that ground rules were discussed to ensure that all individuals felt able to contribute. It was communicated to participants that they should try to respect different opinions, be clear that all responses were equally valid and to ensure that participants did not talk over each other.

During the focus groups and one-to-one interviews, I was mindful of the potential power imbalances that could exist between researcher and participants especially as these will take place within an educational setting (Creswell, 2014; DECP, 2002, p. 5; BPS, 2018, p. 5). Time was allocated at the beginning of each data collection session to create an informal and relaxed atmosphere to de-escalate any anxiety participants may have. It was important for me to dress informally, as college pupils are used to working with adults who dress this way daily. I ensured that the room was laid out in a manner that encourages open discussion by removing tables.

Students are accustomed to relating to adults in the college in a way with regard for institutional expectations which they may have transferred to the research. I was clear with participants about the nature of the research and my role as a researcher. Participants were told that they were experts in their own experiences and that they should provide information that they felt was important. As the participants were over 16 years of age and students on level 2 or 3 courses, I felt that it could be assumed that they were able to access relevant information.

4. Integrity

It is important to be honest, truthful, accurate, consistent and be open when things go wrong in a professional context, in this case during research (BPS, 2018, p. 7; HCPC, 2016, p. 8-9). I ensured that the information provided to participants and stakeholders was as accurate as possible and that this was reflected in communication including consent forms and information sheet. It was made clear that if there were any concerns about any aspect of the research that contact details (of my research supervisor) were provided. This was present on the information sheet and attention drawn to it prior to gaining participant consent.

According to Chamberlain (2013) an additional ethical issue exists with the use of grounded theory methodology which must be considered. This is the danger of overlooking the importance of producing 'evocative, descriptive, thematic accounts of the social world' in favour of generating original theories (Chamberlain, 2013). Care was taken to give credence to stories of the research participants and balance with the researcher's own interpretations to empower others and contribute to the possibility of social change (Chamberlain, 2013, p. 102). To ensure that participant and stakeholder data was represented as accurately as possible, the initial draft of the thesis was discussed with representatives of both groups. Feedback was encouraged by stakeholders and participants.

Chapter 4: Findings

Following the process of analysis including coding, constant comparison, theoretical sampling and memoing seven focused (level 2) codes were identified. These focused codes were developed by synthesising, integrating and organising the initial codes into the most salient of categories (Charmaz, 2008, p. 46). An example to illustrate the classic grounded theory process in the development of linked theoretical concepts from data is shown in Figure 3. Table 5 below provides details of two examples of how codes and categories were developed from raw data:

Example raw data	Open code (level 1)	Focused code (level 2)	Theoretical category (Level 3)
'I started off doing a couple of hours bricklaying at the 14 to 16 but the teachers were really good they managed to get me sort of like moved up and before I moved to college I was doing up to 13 hours a week bricklaying' (Jamie, lines 46-48, Appendix 12c)	Flexibility to pupil needs -staff recognised potential and adapted the curriculum	Development of teacher-pupil relationships (within the community) to enhance learning opportunities (Focused code 6)	Re-empowerment: becoming and remaining reengaged through inclusion
'I really liked the fact that everyone else who was starting there was new as well so I wouldn't be the only one. If I went to another secondary school, everyone would know about each other already' (Kerry, lines 110-113, Appendix 12d)	Everyone else would be 'new as well' (all in it together) unlike at an alternative secondary school	A rapid new start: Facing new challenges despite the difficulties (Focused code 4)	Agency through self-determination: rejecting the system and taking control through decision-making

Table 5: Two examples illustrating how codes and categories were developed from the raw data (produced by the researcher)

Figure 3: Example of moving from data to conceptualisation (developed by researcher)

Data: '*I really liked how the teachers got to know you and they were easy to talk to and if you couldn't hand work in or if you had any problems they listened*'. (Holly, transcript, lines 23-24, Appendix 12a)

Open coding:

Development of positive relationships to enhance learning:

One of 43 'development of relationships' incidents present within the data

Memo: Development of 'whole child' wellbeing (23/10/2017)

This theme appears in all participants' data. An institution which is student-centred helps to enable a young person to flourish. When all facets including social and emotional wellbeing and development of relationships are considered and prioritised alongside, not of a lower status, than academic attainment; then students are likely to feel valued as 'whole' people.

Constant Comparison:
Comparing data from different participants; identifying similarities and differences

Selective Coding: 'Development of relationships' codes grouped and considered under "re-engagement"

Developing a theoretical model

Relating "re-engagement" to the core category and the identified concern

Three theoretical categories were conceptualised. The main identified concern faced by participants was conceptualised as: Disempowerment and disengagement; lack of influence within the school system.

The core category which emerged during initial coding and was further refined through theoretical sampling was: Agency through self-determination: rejecting the system and taking control through decision-making. This core category had centrality in the data as it was pivotal to the participants' main concern and it had variability in that, though conditions vary, the central meaning remains constant (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 89). The core category occurred frequently in the data and explained how participants were able to manage, process and resolve the identified concern (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 88). The third related theoretical category, which directly relates to the core category was: Re-empowerment: becoming and remaining re-engaged through inclusion.

Table 6 offers an overview of the codes and categories which emerged from, and were refined through, the grounded theory process. The initial codes resulted from analysis of the focus group transcript, five interview transcripts (Kerry, Liam, Jamie, Lara and Holly) and field notes written by the researcher. There were several similar open codes, so these were 'collapsed' and clustered together where this occurred, with frequencies recorded.

In the following section, the theoretical categories will be outlined in terms of the contributing focused codes. Each of the focused codes will be outlined and examples cited from the coded transcript data, coded field notes and memos to demonstrate how these were conceptualised and how they interrelate. An overview of the theoretical categories and how they interrelate is presented in a diagram at the end of this section (Figure 6).

Initial open codes (Level 1) (from transcripts/fieldnotes with **frequency** of occurrence in data)	Focused codes (Level 2)	Theoretical categories (Level 3)
Student choice or needs not acknowledged (by staff) **(3)** Reduced opportunities for learning (and potentially poorer outcomes) **(2)** No challenge posed in lessons **(1)** Left doing nothing in lessons **(1)** Gender inequality (of system/policies) **(2)** Specific inflexible uniform rules led to isolation and exclusion from learning **(2)** Lack of choice/agency/power **(3)** 'Backed into a corner' (forced to make decision) **(1)** Negatively labelled and unfairly targeted **(4)** Reacting to sanctions leads to exclusion **(3)** (Staff) had knowledge of appropriate strategies but unwilling to adopt **(1)** Constant changes of staff limits learning **(2)** (Staff had) limited knowledge in terms of (pupil) progress **(1)** Disaffection with lack of consistent or quality (mass) teaching **(4)** Poor behaviour management impedes learning **(1)** Lack of trust in management/staff **(3)** Management decisions affected pupils negatively **(1)** Poor (pupil: teacher) relationships due to rigidity of system/rules **(5)** (Pupils) isolated due to bullying (by peers) **(2)** Unsupported and let down by staff **(6)** Power employed (by staff) rather than relationship development (with pupils) **(1)** 'I was just a number' **(1)**	1: Problems experienced due to institutional systems and processes	Disempowerment and disengagement – lack of influence within the school system

Large class sizes inhibit relationship development **(1)** Lack of regard for sanction system **(2)** Rejection of negative labelling (by staff) **(2)** Rejection of mainstream secondary school systems **(5)** Desire to be reintegrated into (a different) type of education **(2)** Determined to maintain individuality regardless of rules **(1)** Desire to avoid unnecessary 'pressuring' environment **(2)**	2: Recognition of failures leading to the rejection of the secondary mainstream system	Agency through self-determination: rejecting the system and taking control through decision-making
Reached a point where enough was enough **(1)** 'It became personal' **(4)** Own decision-making to lead to enjoyment and positive experiences **(1)** Family support to feel able to make decision **(2)** Realisation of negative outcomes if situation hadn't changed **(1)** Decided the unknown is better than the known **(1)** Bravely took control/took decision into own hands **(7)**	3: Tipping point: Taking control through own decision-making	
New opportunities valued/'fancied a change' **(4)** Everyone is new/'all in the same boat' **(5)** Resilience/bravery to 'go it alone' **(2)** Choice based on minimal information **(3)** Fresh start with new teachers **(3)** Sudden, rapid transition **(3)** Inconvenient course change on arrival to deal with **(2)** (considered alternative) to be isolated in a different secondary school **(1)**	4: A rapid new start: Facing new challenges despite the difficulties	

Value vocational opportunity (makes academics bearable) **(2)** Importance of appropriate (vocational) resources **(1)** Upskilling for the future **(1)** Smooth transition into post-16 **(1)** Structured, integrated transition support valued **(7)** Considered/informed decisions and choices (for post-16) **(8)** All staff involved with transition **(1)** Unbiased support with transition **(2)** Part of career pathway (a 'means to an end') **(1)** Acknowledges importance of the future despite it being unknown **(1)** Focused career aspirations since young **(1)** Clear well-defined future aspirations **(5)** Enhanced support (from staff) and (personal) reputation **(1)** Building potential and self-esteem through recognition (by staff) **(2)** Desire to achieve through enjoyment **(1)** Increased confidence **(3)** Creation of a positive identity **(2)** Defined future business plans **(1)**	5: Integrated planning and support for post-16 and employability	Re-empowerment: becoming and remaining re-engaged through inclusion
Felt accepted as an individual **(1)** Specific learning needs met **(3)** Student-centred **(7)** Small classes/more space leads to better staff: student relationships aid learning **(4)** Accepted by (FE) college despite issues with grades **(1)** Staff recognised potential and adapted curriculum **(2)** Value consistency of staff to aid learning **(3)** Making and maintaining friendships **(2)**	6: Development of positive relationships and community to enhance learning.	

Small, safe, intimate community environment (fosters relationship development) **(9)** Behavioural problems rare (due to relationships) **(6)** Positive, cooperative relationships with staff **(3)** Able to express individuality without judgement **(2)**	57	
Felt privileged having access to resources (not available to mainstream secondary students) **(3)** Outcomes compare favourably compared to peers who remained at secondary **(2)** Feel 'smug' compared to secondary peers ('schadenfreude') **(1)** Looking back and being pleased with choices **(7)** Attended 'unique' institution (like, but unlike both school and college) **(6)**	7: Affirmation of choice – sense of privilege compared to secondary mainstream peers	

Table 6: Table developed by the researcher illustrating an overview of level 1, 2 and 3 codes and categories emerging from the data analysis of transcripts, fieldnotes and memos.

4.1 Level three theoretical categories

The identified focused codes were clustered and, using theoretical sampling and sorting of memos, were developed into theoretical categories as shown in Table 6. Diagramming then took place to provide a visual representation of the arising theoretical categories and refine the theoretical links. The theoretical categories which encapsulate the experiences of post-16 students who had opted to attend the 14 to 16 college are discussed in terms of the contributing focused codes.

4.2 Theoretical category: Disempowerment and disengagement – lack of influence within the school system

This theoretical category encapsulates the main concern as experienced and identified by all the target participants, and additionally by the theoretically sampled individuals who remained at secondary school for Key Stage 4 (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 141). This category emerged early during the process during initial coding and became saturated through conceptual memoing and theoretical sampling (as illustrated in Table 3). 'Saturation' refers to the point reached during constant comparison of concepts where additional data yielded no further theoretical elaboration (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 103). The identified main concern conceptualised problems experienced due to the educational systems, which participants realised they were not able to influence. Participants viewed the secondary mainstream school system as being rigid, inflexible, not conducive to learning, overly authoritarian, not inclusive and ensuring that pupils had minimal power or influence within the system. This led to a strong feeling of disconnection with the part or all the education system and a desire for change.

4.2.1 Focused code 1 - Problems experienced due to institutional systems and processes

This code was represented in all the participant's data regardless of whether the student had attended the 14 to 16 college or not. This was expressed in many ways and through specific examples which were variable, but the overall outcome was the same in that participants felt that they had little influence or power within the school system. This led to many of the participants, especially those that left secondary school at the age of 14,

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feeling excluded and 'pushed out'. For Kerry, this took the form of a uniform policy which was inflexible and did not take student need or circumstance into account and could be interpreted as discriminatory in terms of gender:

> *'The school was too strict, my friend died a couple of years ago and I wanted to shave my hair off to raise money for charity and erm, they told me that I couldn't cos it didn't fit in with their guidelines even though there were guys with shaved hair but I'm not allowed it cos I am a girl, but I did it anyway. They didn't kick me out but they were too strict.'* (Kerry, Interview transcript, lines 82-86, Appendix 12d)

For Jamie, this feeling of exclusion was a combination of a system that he felt was too rigid and inflexible, which led to him feeling negatively labelled and, from his perspective, unfairly targeted by staff since Year 7. The sanctions that he received served to exclude him from the classroom, through the inevitability of internal or external exclusions:

> *'Well I was sort of obviously year 9 and it had been going on since year 7. You'd sort of like get a bit of a reputation and the teachers don't give you a break, you know if you do any little thing wrong, things that other kids might do and just get a little bit of a warning you are getting a C1, then a C2, then a C3 or some of that rubbish and it just wasn't fair that I'd be getting it for that cos I've got this reputation. And it makes you more angry and you get really annoyed with them and then you get your next level so you're get even more angry and then you end up getting thrown out or get put in isolation or you get excluded or summat.'* (Jamie, Interview transcript, lines 59-66, Appendix 12c)

For Holly, the experience of exclusion was more extreme as, after a period of home schooling due to anxiety and personal circumstance, she decided she was ready to return to her secondary school but was unable to. This I captured in a memo whilst coding her interview:

Memo: (Appendix 10) Excluded and abandoned by school (16/10/2017)

Holly ended up having to be home-schooled for a while due to anxiety created by personal circumstances. No consideration of personal circumstance or support when needed; not allowed re-entry to secondary even though this is what she wanted, forced to look elsewhere. She felt unsupported and effectively abandoned by school and was unable to return when she felt able so had to seek out an alternative.

It was clear in the data that participants, even by the age of 14, valued and realised the importance of relationships between staff and students. This took a variety of forms for different participants but with a similar end-result. For Liam this was a result of being at

a school in special measures which seems to have had issues with recruitment of staff and he made a comparison with staff-pupil relationships at college:

> *'Just constantly having supply teachers nearly every lesson and then with the supply teachers they don't have any idea of the subject, they don't have any idea who you are or sort of what your grades are or what work you need to be doing or what you have done previously er as in college you've got the same teacher all the time, they know you and the know what progress you've made and they know how to help you as well er but then I don't know er...'* (Liam, Interview transcript , line 107-111, Appendix 12e)

This issue of staff-student relationships also was raised during the focus group with pupils who did not attend the 14 to 16 college and concerned the seemingly 'common practice' of classes 'working in silence'. In my fieldnotes written after the focus group (6/11/17) I noted:

> **Fieldnote**: *'However, there were some areas that all three did agree on and discuss such as the relationships of staff and pupils. All agreed that the system and the rules were not conducive to the development of relationships in a secondary school between staff and pupils and in addition they noted that the having to 'work in silence' rule also prevented any kind of collaborative learning with peers. I was surprised that with a total of 10 pupils I had spoken to that all (from a total of 8 different secondary schools across two counties) were talking about 'working in silence'.* (Fieldnotes, lines 226-232, Appendix 11)

In the focus group, referred to in the above field note, Harriet stated:

> *'There was a few teachers that were like calm but then there was like them ones that like we sometimes would give us like 5 minutes just to talk, but others were you had to sit and work in silence for the full hour...'* (Focus group transcript, lines 99-101, Appendix 13)

There was a communicated dissatisfaction of participants with the systems of secondary schools and an understanding of the implications these have on learning. Kerry details several incidents and uniform rules which she received sanctions for (including being excluded from class) which she recognised were not linked to learning:

> JH: *'Did any of these things affect your learning?'* Kerry: *'Well yes, cos I got took out of class for them, but the things themselves didn't. I am naturally ginger and I died my hair bright orange and I got took out of class for that as well. Apparently that was not a natural colour but there were girls with like red or pink hair and that was OK. I only got detentions for the way I looked not for any of my behaviour. I even got a detention once for taking my blazer off when I was too hot one day'* (Kerry, Interview transcript, lines 98-103, Appendix 12d)

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Earlier examples provided also illustrate how secondary school systems of management of behaviour (Jamie) and the inconsistencies of staff (Liam) also serve to inhibit learning opportunities of pupils.

4.3 Theoretical category: Agency through self-determination - rejecting the system and taking control through decision-making

This theoretical category was identified as the core category as, it soon became clear early in the data collection and analysis process that this is the key process which enabled the target participants to resolve their concern. What is striking about this theoretical category is that it requires a high level of self-determination for an individual at the age of 14 years to make the decision to make a non-traditional transition at a pivotal time of education. For the purposes of this research, the definition of self-determination relates to that provided in the literature review by Field et al (1998, p. 2). These young people had very little in the way of information regarding the college to which they moved, knew no-one there and had little idea of the potential ramifications on their educational achievements. What the target participants had in common was that they had reached a 'tipping point' where their positions in mainstream secondary school had become untenable mainly due to being negatively impacted on a personal level. For these young people, anywhere else seemed almost preferable to remaining where they were leading them to actively take the choice to move schools. Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between focused codes which underpin the development of this theoretical category.
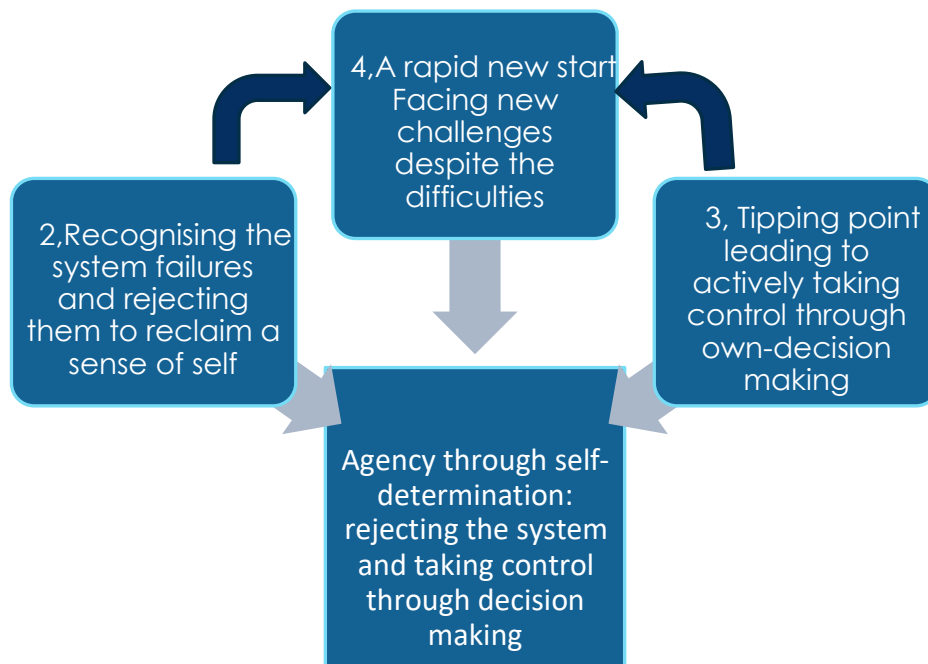
Figure 4: Theoretical category 'agency through self-determination: rejecting the system and taking control through decision-making' and the contributing focused codes (2, 3 and 4) which contribute to this category (developed by the researcher)

4.3.1 Focused code 2 - Recognition of system failures leading to rejection of the secondary mainstream system

This code was shared by all the participants who went to the 14 to 16 college and seems to be the first stage in the decision-making process to move from mainstream secondary to an alternative provider. For the participants the processes and systems that were rejected did vary in nature, but the outcomes were very similar in that these young people did not accept the system they found themselves being compromised by.

For Liam this was a rejection of a system that provided little learning opportunity due to endless supply teachers. He also rejected the management in the school as he felt that there was a lack of honesty with students:

> '…*you would have no explanation from any of the higher up staff, they would just say 'oh they are on sick' but if that many teachers were, and I don't believe that that many teachers were all be going on sick but they would never come back so. I would rather know if I am going to have a supply teacher for several months rather than being told they are on sick and they will be back in a few weeks and then they don't come back. I just didn't trust what anyone was telling us.*' (Liam, Interview transcript, lines 122-127, Appendix 12e)

Jamie described how he felt labelled at secondary school which led to him feeling that he was constantly targeted by school staff because of the negative discourse surrounding him. Despite this, he did not enter the discourse and allow himself to be defined by it and rejected the decision the school appeared to be making for him. The appeal of a new start with new teachers was necessary to help him to escape the rejected negative discourse and help him to re-engage with learning:

> *'I think I would have been sent there. I didn't want to go there, I didn't want to be labelled as this bad lad and going to places like that cos I don't think that I am although a teacher did tell me that I was once er I wanted to actually get out and do something that I enjoyed that I was going to be good at. And I wanted a fresh start really because the teachers at 14 to 16 didn't know me so I don't think they was going to erm treat me differently to others. I felt like I had to look around and find somewhere I wanted to go to before the school sent me to the PRU'* (Jamie, Interview transcript, lines 143-149, Appendix 12c)

Kerry provided clear examples to illustrate just how little regard she had for the school rules pertaining to appearance and school clothing. Kerry clearly rejected these rules and regularly broke them rather than compromise her individuality and needs relating to her medical and sensory issues:

> **Fieldnote:** *'Kerry talked in great detail about the rules that she broke at secondary school especially those pertaining to her appearance which is clearly important to her ….She laughed a lot during the interview and provided lots of detailed examples to illustrate just how 'ridiculous and lacking in common sense' that she found the system.'* (Fieldnotes, lines 158-166, Appendix 11)

4.3.2 Focused code 3 - Tipping point - Taking control through own decision-making

This is a pivotal focused code and key component of the core category. All six participants who had left secondary school to attend the 14 to 16 college had reached a point where they felt that their position in the school had become untenable. This was an event or issue which had gone beyond pupils being unhappy with the system and had affected them or compromised them in what was perceived as a personal way. This led these young people to make the decision to leave the school and move to a new establishment at one of the most important points of their educational life; i.e. at the beginning of Key Stage 4. I summarised this code in a memo:

> **Memo (Appendix 10) Wanting to escape the situation and find somewhere else to go (23/10/2017)**
>
> There was a real feeling from all these students that they had reached a point where their position in mainstream secondary had for them, become untenable. They reached a point where they were motivated enough to look for an alternative at a pivotal time of their educational lives, i.e. just before GCSE's. This seemed to be a way of exerting some control over what seems to have become uncontrollable and undesirable and made a decision to shape their own educational pathways.

For Kerry the point at which she decided that she needed to leave secondary school was when she was punished for her hairstyle. She had done this as a tribute to a friend who had died and was personal to her:

> *'The thing that made me move in the end though was the shaved hair as it was straight after my friend had died.'* (Kerry, Interview transcript, lines 103-105, Appendix 12d)

For Lara, the lack of intervention from staff regarding her being bullied by peers made her feel personally isolated and unsupported which would potentially only continue to occur if she had remained at the school:

> '*Well I just got bullied quite a lot and I ended up feeling really alone and that I didn't want to go to school anymore. The teachers didn't really want to help and my parents tried to talk to them but like they said they would do stuff but they never did..*' (Lara, Interview transcript, lines 12-14, Appendix 12b)

For Liam, it was a realisation that the ongoing inadequate situation with staffing was not going to change and was compounded by a lack of trust in management to improve the situation. Though this seems less personal than Lara or Kerry's reasons for leaving, it was affective for him in terms of what he viewed as important for his future. He felt that this would therefore, be a situation which was likely to affect his grades, and therefore impact on his defined pathway to his chosen career:

> *'I would rather know if I am going to have a supply teacher for several months rather than being told they are on sick and they will be back in a few weeks and then they don't come back. I just didn't trust what anyone was telling us and I reached a point where I felt I had to leave and go somewhere else, anywhere..'* (Liam, transcript, lines 124-127, Appendix 12e)

I further expanded upon Liam's reasons for leaving secondary school in the form of a fieldnote at the end of his interview, and interestingly he had considered what would have prevented him from feeling like he had to leave:

> **Fieldnote:** *'The inconsistency of staff led to a lack of knowledge of the students, progress made and staff-student relationships were not able to be developed. Liam even commented on some staff not having subject knowledge. In addition he lost trust in the management of the school as he felt that they were not being honest with the explanations given to students, and Liam also had evidence of untruths to further compound and validate this lack of trust. He said at the end of the interview that a more honest approach may have made him reconsider leaving but the lack of consistency was in his eyes, not acceptable.'* (Fieldnotes, lines 201-207, Appendix 11)

Jamie felt that the school had placed him in a position where he felt that if he didn't make a choice that would be suitable for his needs then he would have an undesirable one made for him. By taking the decision to apply to the 14 to 16 College he had the chance to have a fresh start and avoid the negative '*bad lad*' (Appendix 12c, line 144) label he felt he would get if he remained at school. The school's decision to send him to a PRU would merely, from his perspective, have served to further reinforce the negative narratives, which yielded nothing positive for him. At this point, Jamie realised that he was able to influence his own outcomes through being able to make a choice himself in terms of his own education provision:

> *'Erm, well when you are starting at school you don't really know that you've got any choices, you just sort of like do what everybody else is doing which is sort of why I went to Secondary School E and it was only when it wasn't working out for me there, you know when it was a bit rubbish that I realised that I had some choices and that's when I was able to make them but I didn't really want to make them they were sort of made for me almost.'* (Jamie, Interview transcript, lines 8-12, Appendix 12c)

Holly was ultimately rejected by the secondary school when she tried to return after a period of home-schooling and forced to look for alternative provision herself:

> *'Well I had a lot of stuff going on at home and it was difficult and I felt too anxious to go to school and the teachers didn't really try and help me. I didn't enjoy it at home and I was quite upset that Secondary School F wouldn't let me go back, it's like they had forgotten about me.'* (Holly, Interview transcript, lines 14-17, Appendix 12a).

It was clear from the focus group of participants who had remained at their secondary schools at Key Stage Four that, as discussed, similar 'problem' issues were evident. However, the main difference was that the participants in this focus group did not experience the issues on a level that affected them as personally as for the target group of participants. Therefore, these participants seemed more accepting of the situation and 'put up' with it. Alice, the participant who had intended to attend the 14 to 16 college did reach a 'tipping point' which was personal. Her situation does have parallels with Lara's in terms of feeling unsupported by a school system failing to intervene in her being bullied by her peers, despite parental intervention. However, Alice was not able to make the transition to the 14 to 16 College at that time:

> **Fieldnote**: '*Alice did consider moving to the 14 to 16 college and did go for an interview and a tour but at this stage her anxiety levels were too high for her to consider entry.*' (Fieldnotes, lines 283-284, Appendix 11)

The 'influencing factors activity' (Appendix 4) as used in interviews with Liam, Kerry and Jamie provided an interesting insight here. All three participants graded the influence of others (including parents, teachers, peers, friends and other adults) as being comparatively less influential on decision-making than future career plans, curriculum and resources which were ranked highly. This potentially illustrates the independent decision-making processes that these young people engaged in with high regard paid to their own needs rather than the influences of others.

4.3.3 Focused code 4 - A rapid new start – facing new challenges despite the difficulties

A common code that emerged for the target participants was the rapidity of the transition from secondary school to the 14 to 16 college. This became evident during the initial focus group when participants were comparing the transition from secondary to the 14 to 16 college with the recent transition into the FE college:

> JH: '*So how did your preparation for coming here differ from your preparation to go to 14 to 16?*' Kerry: '*Well I mean this one was guided whereas my other one wasn't, when I moved to 14 to 16 I had no idea what I was doing. Like here I have been told what I can do and what I can't do and that lot and that like helped a lot.*' (Focus group transcript, lines 172-176, Appendix 9)

Part of the feeling of this sudden change seemed to stem from the participants having very little knowledge of the 14 to 16 college before applying there or having interviews on the same day as a visit to look around. Once at the 14 to 16 college, some difficulties were faced by participants such as being unable to do the courses that they had opted to do:

> (Liam)' …*then they said 'oh well we will get back to you' and then they rung me up and told me that I couldn't do the options that I picked about a month or two before I started right at the end of the school year so they like confirmed the place but I couldn't like do the options that I picked er so I ended up having to pick two others*.' (Liam, Interview transcript, lines 174-178, Appendix 12e)

What seemed to really help the participants to cope with the rapid transition and any difficulties that they faced was the fact that they knew that all their peers were also new to the 14 to 16 college as well which would not have been the case at a different secondary school. This seemed to provide a sense of solidarity and knowing that all students were new, a theme which appeared frequently in the data. Having parental support (though not direct influence) for decision-making was viewed as being important in terms of coping with this transition. Kerry described her experiences:

> '*I saw a post on Facebook and I thought I would have a look. It's funny cos it wasn't even positive, it was about a student who was failing their maths (laughs). I had a look at the website and it was fine. I did visit with my dad and I had my interview at the college on the same day after I had heard online. It was much better than Secondary School B. I really liked the fact that everyone else who was starting there was new as well so I wouldn't be the only one. If I went to another secondary school, everyone would know about each other already*.' (Kerry, Interview transcript, lines 107-113, Appendix 12d)'

I captured the essence of this code in a memo:

> **Memo (Appendix 10): Resilience, independence and pure bravery; agency (9/10/2017)**
>
> These students had no idea what they would find at the 14 to 16 and describe a 'sudden' transition. Knew no-one but knew that everyone else would be 'in it together'
>
> Brave leaving somewhere you knew well but seems that anywhere was a better option that where they were; certainly not a case of 'better the devil you know'. A feeling that it has paid off and that they are in a better place than their peers.

4.4 Theoretical category: Re-empowerment - Becoming and remaining re-engaged through inclusion

This theoretical category developed directly from the focused codes labelled 5, 6 and 7 (from Table 6). The relationship between these focused codes and the theoretical category is illustrated below in Figure 5.
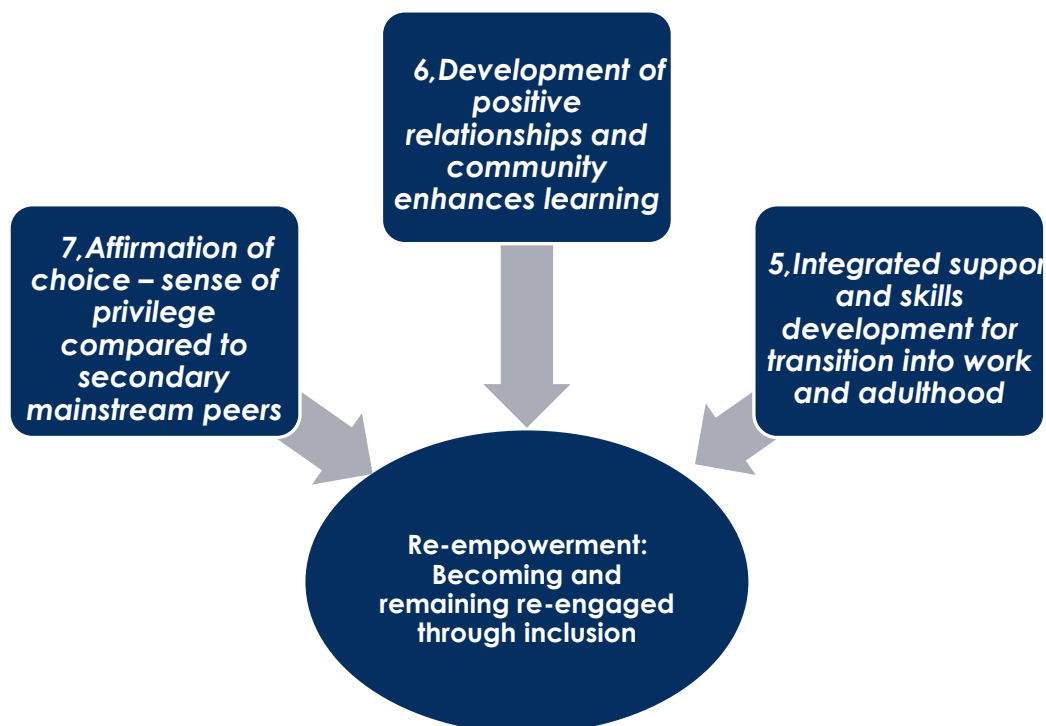
Figure 5: Theoretical category 'Re-empowerment - becoming and remaining engaged through inclusion' and the contributing focused codes (5, 6 and 7) (developed by the researcher)

There was a recognition that a more equal distribution of power between staff and pupils provided the impetus for becoming re-engaged and being able to be known as an individual rather than by the grades and degree of conformity to the system. The individuals themselves accepted the new environment with its small community and student-centred focus and were able to identify several criteria which facilitated the move towards feeling re-engaged with education. The issue of power was a pervasive one with a sense that this had become rebalanced with young people feeling that they were not external to decision-making which affected their lives but instead re-empowered. The power had shifted from the identified concern due to the system holding most of the

power to it becoming more equally distributed between all individuals within the community. This helped to enable learners to become and remain motivated to become re-engaged with learning and education.

None of the participants regretted the decision that they had made to attend the 14 to 16 college and would not have made any different choices in their education. There was a feeling that the move to the 14 to 16 college had in fact endowed participants with resources, facilities and positive relationships with staff not enjoyed by their mainstream secondary peers. These factors were viewed as being essential to enabling and preparing participants to make informed choices for post-16 and adulthood. This led to a feeling of privilege and appreciation for the time that participants had spent at the 14 to 16 college. It was clear from the interviews that the target participants had very clear goals regarding their future aspirations and knew how these could best be achieved.

4.4.1 Focused code 5 - Integrated support and skills development for transition into work and adulthood

The ex-14 to 16 college students were united in their appreciation of the integrated support provided throughout the two years at the college for employability and planning for the transition into post-16. The discussion between the participants of the initial focus group compares this aspect of the 14 to 16 college with the provision at secondary school with the latter felt to be providing less useful support:

> *Kerry: Yeah because at High School B they don't do the applications properly as they assume that everyone is going to the sixth form so they didn't really know what they were doing. I don't think we had a careers officer I think that they had left.*
>
> *Liam: I think the employability lessons definitely helped, that's what we did at the 14 to 16*
>
> *Jack: Yeah they were really useful, my tutor helped me choosing courses for college.*
>
> *Kerry: Yeah, we had them once a week or once a fortnight...*
>
> *Liam:... Yeah once we got further into Year 11 we did them more.* (Focus group transcript, lines 182-188, Appendix 9)

The opportunity to engage in a curriculum with vocational components taught by tutors at the post-16 provider on campus as well as access to industry-standard equipment and resources was felt to be an attractive component of the 14 to 16 college:

'Yeah so with it being a college, they have better resources for learning than what School A had er so like in science we could go into the main tower block and use all of their resources to do experiments and some stuff I wouldn't be able to do in a normal school…. They were all of the level 3 facilities yeah that we could use too' (Liam, Interview transcript, lines 49-54, Appendix 12e).

Holly described how the vocational aspect of the curriculum aided the transition into post16 through the development of an understanding of the expectations through real specific structured support:

'They had us do vocational studies at College X on Thursdays to give us a college experience while being at school. This gave me an opportunity to get a qualification while being at school. The school also talked to us about what is expected at college when we leave such as, meeting deadlines and getting to lessons on time.' (Holly, Interview transcript, lines 29-32, Appendix 12a)

A key theme identified by the participants was how the integrated employability, vocational courses and planning for adulthood at the 14 to 16 college may have contributed to the smooth transition into FE college. The participants appreciated that the preparation that they had received at the 14 to 16 college was non-biased and focused on the best interests of students:

'.. and College Z and so they weren't restricting us to X College sort of thing... they gave us options for like College W and other places and we had lessons about applying to other colleges and stuff and we put us on this thing where we could go on.' (Focus group transcript, lines 65-67, Appendix 9)

As participants looked back on their educational journeys and choices retrospectively they were able to reflect upon how things had changed from their original state in Year 9 at secondary school to the present.

Jamie speculated about his future aspirations and felt that vocational studies at the 14 to 16 college provided him with knowledge that other students may not possess:

'Erm, I thought maybe about an apprenticeship but I'm learning everything I need to learn there and I can get an apprenticeship after I finish there. And I will be ahead of a lot of the other apprentices cos they will be starting from scratch and I will already know how to do a lot of it.' (Jamie, Interview transcript, lines 160-163, Appendix 12c)

For Liam, who stated that he has known since the age of 13 years what his future career aspirations are, he is now already planning the next stage of his educational journey through informed decision-making:

'*Well I have had a look and I have looked into the course and that but I have been meaning to book onto an open day but I just don't get chance cos I'm usually working. But I need to cos there are not many unis that do the course that I want to do though. I think there is only three universities as well but I think H will be more convenient so it's my number one choice.*' (Liam, Interview transcript, lines 241-245, Appendix 12e)

Some participants were able to look back and wonder what might have happened had they remained at the secondary schools at which they had been unhappy, but obviously this was speculation. During my final interview with Liam I asked him to reflect upon this and he mentioned the personal qualities he felt he had developed due to his decision-making and linked this to the present and future:

> **Fieldnote:** *'He (Liam) reflected upon his journey from leaving secondary school at the end of year 9 and said that he had a greatly increased sense of confidence and ability to plan and make his own decisions … I asked what he would have done had the 14 to 16 college not existed. He said he didn't know but would have probably 'had to put up with secondary school' but would probably not have achieved grades that would have allowed him to study the courses he is now doing which will enable him to go onto his selected university course ….'* (Fieldnotes, lines 326-333, Appendix 11)

4.4.2 Focused code 6 - Development of positive relationships and community enhances learning

This code was well represented in the data by all the participants when talking about their experiences at both the 14 to 16 college and the FE college. The power seems to have rebalanced with pupils being part of a community where they are known, accepted and listened to rather than *'just a number'* as in secondary school (Fieldnotes (Liam) line 310). The concept of the importance of the 14 to 16 college having a student-centred ethos was a common code which appeared seven times in the data (Table 5).

This code was not evident when participants were discussing secondary schools even by those in the second focus group who remained there for their GCSE's. Lara described how small, intimate and safe the community felt quite early on in her time at the 14 to 16 college, with a focus upon the positive qualities of the staff:

'Finally once I had my interview I knew it was the right place for me to be, the tutors seemed really kind and like they cared deeply about the wellbeing and success of students, I also took a liking to how small the college was it meant there was less students which made me feel more comfortable and safe when attending.' (Lara: Interview transcript, lines 22-25, Appendix 12b)

For Jamie, the fresh start that he had hoped for at the 14 to 16 college did transpire and he appeared to have broken free from the negative discourse of the '*bad lad*' to being reengaged in education. For him, the opportunity to engage in vocational courses appeared to make him tolerate and engage with the academic curriculum:

'Well I started off doing a couple of hours bricklaying at the 14 to 16 but the teachers were really good they managed to get me sort of like moved up and before I moved to college I was doing up to 13 hours a week bricklaying. And you know it's what I really want to do and I really enjoy it. It makes me not mind doing the other lessons cos I know I've got that to go to, it's not all going to be in a classroom.' (Jamie, Interview transcript, lines 46-50, Appendix 12b)

Many of the participants cited smaller class sizes as contributing to the positive teacher-student relationships:

Fieldnote: *'She (Holly) specifically mentions the staff-pupil relationships which were less developed in the secondary which she concludes was a result of class sizes.'* (Fieldnotes, lines 86-88, Appendix 11)

The contribution to the development of a student-centred community with positive relationships between staff and pupils was likely to be aided by a small total number of pupils as well as small classes compared to mainstream secondary schools. Jamie compared the sizes of all three institutions that he has attended making it clear that this factor has fluctuated in terms of importance at different stages of his educational journey. He is now attending a college with many students but due to the geographically spread campus departmental buildings, the feeling of an intimate community is maintained:

'Yeah, cos there were so many people at School E you didn't really matter whereas that was different at the 14 to 16 college, it felt like I did matter but now the size of the college doesn't really matter cos like the course you're on is like a college inside the college if you know what I mean, it still feels quite small.' (Jamie, Interview transcript, lines 127-130, Appendix 12c)

4.4.3 Focused code 7 - Affirmation of choice – sense of privilege compared to secondary mainstream peers

This was an interesting code and certainly one I had not anticipated prior to carrying out the data collection. This code was developed after the second interview with Liam when this code was explored further with the concept being captured in a memo:

> **Memo (Appendix 10) Development of the feeling of 'privilege' (15/12/2017)**
>
> This was further developed by Liam in terms of the unique identity of the college in being located where it was in allowing students to be mindful and exposed to post16 students in their setting. There was also the sense of the 'sudden course' change which some pupils had experienced and were annoyed about, and I had wondered why they were so forgiving of this at the college as they had been so unforgiving about other things at secondary schools. He explained that he had been annoyed but the staff had been so supporting that he viewed it as an opportunity and a privilege to learn something new that he would not have had the chance to do at secondary school.

The data for this code resulted from prompting participants to reflect upon their educational journeys and to consider if they would have altered any of the decisions made in hindsight. Interviewing the ex-14 to 16 college students after transition to post-16 education or training provided this opportunity that interviewing current attendees of the 14 to 16 college would not. None of the participants regretted the decision that they had made to leave mainstream education at the end of Year 9, despite it involving an additional transition. For Lara, as with Kerry, the decisions that she has made since the age of 14 have yielded positive outcomes:

> *'I wouldn't change anything as I'm happy with the way everything turned out and I know I made the right decision moving to 14-16 then going onto the course I have.'* (Lara, Interview transcript, lines 69-70, Appendix 12b)

Jamie considered potential outcomes if he had not chosen to leave his secondary school, and despite stating he may have been on the same post-16 course, he is clear that attending the 14 to 16 college has placed him at an advantage:

'Oh I would have probably have ended up getting excluded or something. I might have ended up doing this course at College X but I wouldn't know as much as I do about it but I don't know if I would be doing it.' (Jamie, Interview transcript, lines 109-111, Appendix 12c)

Liam compared his experiences and educational outcomes favourably when compared to one of his same-aged peers who remained at secondary school:

'Yeah and I was doing business and me and this other lad were the best performing students in the class and we had targets of A and obviously I left and this lad only ended up getting a D in business, I think he is now at College L but I don't really know .... I do sometimes, and I know it's bad but I laugh to myself and think you know what's gone on for that to happen for someone to drop so low.' (Liam, Interview transcript, lines 138143, Appendix 12e)

Participants additionally recognised that being located on the FE college campus conveyed many advantages not afforded to mainstream peers. Some of these are identified in other themes such as positive staff-student relationships, access to experienced vocational tutors, industry-grade resources and workshops. Kerry found that at secondary school her individual learning needs were not really considered, whilst they were at the 14 to 16 college:

'*Well obviously the classrooms were better and they had places where you could be screened for dyslexia and stuff and that was important and they had a place I could go if I had panic attacks and there were counsellors and a nurse who came every Tuesday.'* (Kerry, Interview transcript, lines 52-54, Appendix 12d)

The integrated support and provision for transition planning into adulthood and post-16 was recognised and compared favourably to that offered in mainstream secondary schools. The target participants felt that their peers had missed out compared to their experiences providing a shared sense of privilege amongst the participants for having made a different choice:

'No, from what I've heard, at Secondary School A, I don't know about other schools, they don't like half my friends don't even have a CV, er which I think is sort of like an essential thing especially if you want to get a job or anything.' (Focus group transcript, lines 76-78, Appendix 9)

4.5 Diagramming – developing a conceptual model of the experiences of participants who attended the 14 to 16 college

The following conceptual modelling diagram (Figure 6) illustrates the main theoretical categories, the development of which have been discussed in this section with illustrations to demonstrate how the concepts are grounded in the data. These concepts have been linked following the sorting of memos along with data analysis to provide a substantive theoretical framework in Figure 6. There is a clear linking between the main theoretical categories which enable the students to move from the original state of feeling 'disempowered' to become 're-empowered' through agency and taking control to then move towards positive future aspirations. The following chapter will discuss these areas in more detail, in relation to current literature, theories and the data. Each theoretical category will be addressed separately as I believe each is significant enough to be discussed in isolation though the linking concepts and processes will also be considered.
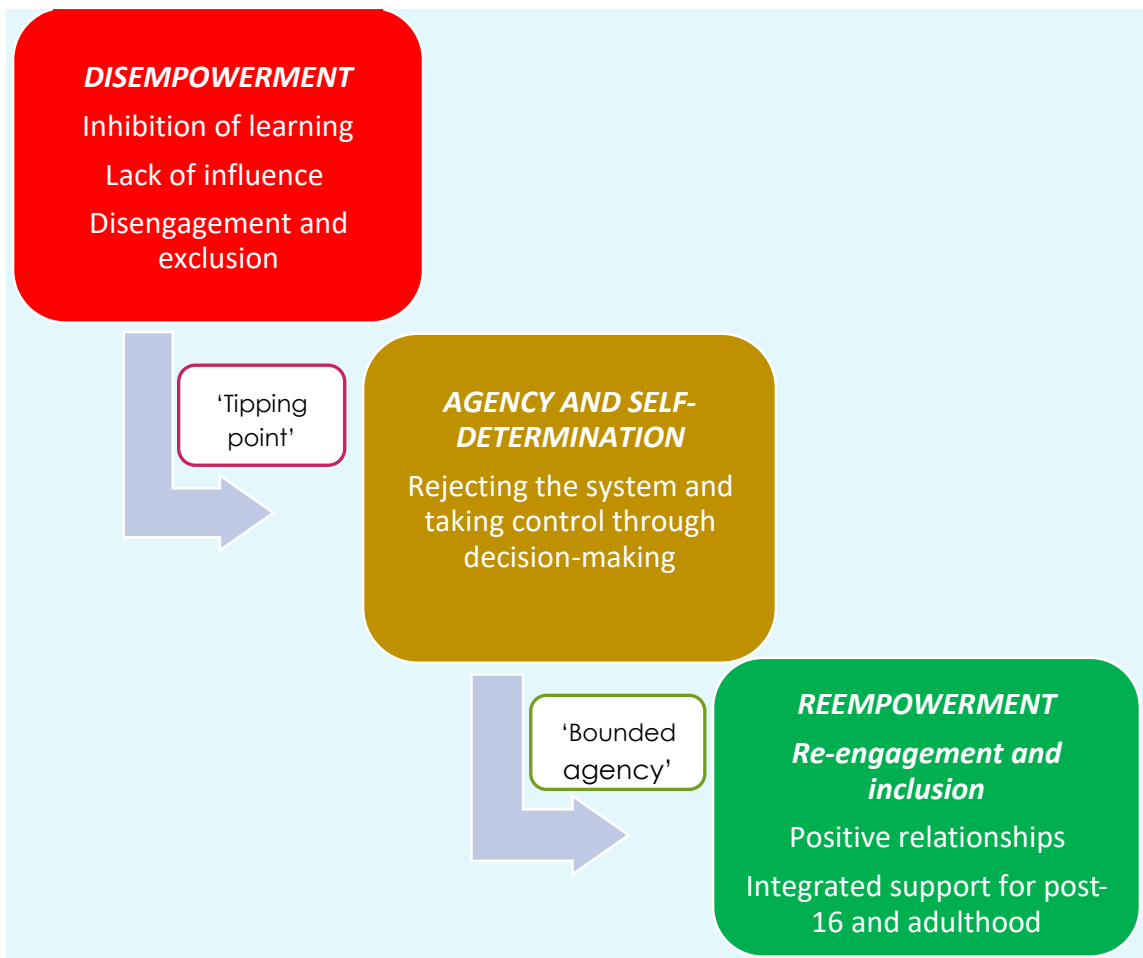
Figure 6: Conceptual diagram to illustrate the how the key identified theoretical concepts link together (produced by the researcher)

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Emergent substantive grounded theory

Figure 6 illustrates a visual model of the emergent substantive grounded theory. The core concept of this emergent theory is of young people exerting choice through 'bounded agency' initiated by reaching a 'tipping point' (Evans, 2007). This is related to the concept of 'critical moments' whereby an event occurs which prompts a person to take action within contextual constraints (Aaltonen, 2013). At this point, the participants decided to leave mainstream school, effectively 'pushing' themselves out due to pressure from the school system (Tuck, 2011). This enabled the participants to move from a state of disempowerment and disengagement to one of re-empowerment and re-engagement. This occurred due to participants choosing to attend a 14 to 16 college which provided the environment in which re-engagement was able to occur through development of relatedness, autonomy and competence as in SDT (Ryan and Deci, January 2000).

This emergent substantive grounded theory can only apply if there is an appropriate alternative opportunity such as, in this case, a 14 to 16 college. The emergent grounded theory is substantive as it can only be applied to the specific settings and context within this research domain (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 213). However, it may be generalisable to other ex-14 to 16 college pupils in England. Within this chapter, the theoretical concepts within this emergent grounded theory will be discussed both in terms of how they link and how they relate to the existing literature.

5.2 Disempowerment and disengagement – lack of influence within the school system

> ***'Excessive control, nonoptimal challenges, and lack of connectedness… result not only in the lack of initiative and responsibility but also in distress and psychopathology'*** (**Ryan and Deci, January 2000, p. 76**)

The above quotation indicates how, within the framework of SDT, pupils whose basic psychological needs are diminished may become disengaged or potentially psychologically harmed. This is further explored within the discussion of the main concern identified by participants which will be contextualised within the literature.

5.2.1 'Disaffected, disappointed, disappeared'

It may appear on the surface that the participants interviewed in this research were not 'pushed out' (Menzies and Baars, 2015; Tuck, 2011), but rather they 'pushed themselves out' of mainstream by choosing to go elsewhere. However, the findings illustrate that participants found themselves at odds with specific school systems and/or policies. This did not occur at the beginning of Key Stage 4, as indicated by Barentsen (2013) but rather during Key Stage 3 with the peak of disengagement being reached during Year 9. It may be the case that if these young people had not left mainstream, levels of disengagement may well have increased during Key Stage 4, though this cannot be assumed to be the case.

There are three descriptors (Kendall and Kinder, 2005) of disengagement which are useful to consider here as they move beyond 'delinquent behaviour' narratives discussed in much of the research focused on PRUs (White and Laczik, 2016; Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2014; Tate and Greenbatch, 2017). The three descriptors of are 'disaffected', 'disappointed' and 'disappeared' (Kendall and Kinder, 2005). Of the participants in this research only two (Jamie and Jack) could be described as 'disaffected', by displaying behaviours contrary to school policy within the mainstream setting. Both pupils experienced external as well as internal exclusions and were facing the reality of being sent to a PRU. However, both participants rejected the 'within-child' negative narratives regarding them and described how behavioural systems were applied in an inflexible manner.

The participants could be described as becoming disengaged due to 'disappointment' with the school system or a policy, which were viewed as being arbitrary, ineffectual or damaging. For Liam, this was due to inadequate staffing which impacted upon his academic attainment. For Kerry, this was the uniform policy which she experienced as discriminatory and being incompatible with her specific needs. For Lara, the antibullying policy was ineffectual and led to her continuing to be bullied by peers despite staff intervention leading to her suffering anxiety. For Holly, the school entry criteria led to her being 'pushed out' of mainstream despite her wanting to attend. None of the participants were 'disappeared' as they were continuing to attend school, except Holly though this was not intentional on her part. However, if these young people had remained in secondary school they may well have become 'disappeared' either due to

nonattendance or opting for home-schooling. Liam, Kerry, Lara and Holly are unlikely to have been sent to PRUs as they were not disrupting school life. However, non-disruptive 'disappointed' pupils could be overlooked and may become marginalised, disengaged and ultimately 'pushed out'.

5.2.2 Disempowerment – lack of autonomy

The type of behavioural policy applied in the secondary mainstream schools, described by participants, is consistent with the principles of authoritarian discipline systems described by Porter (2006). This leads to a power imbalance with the teacher being afforded all the power within the classroom and the pupil very little (Porter, 2006). This type of authoritarian system creates an imbalance of power in favour of teachers who hold role power, coercive power (to punish students to gain compliance) and reward power (to recognise pupil achievements) (Porter, 2006, p. 20). Though SDT does not specifically challenge the role of power relationships, it does indicate that extrinsic motivators such as rewards and punishments are unlikely to foster intrinsic motivation with a young person. Obviously, one may argue that it is necessary to have a system where pupils are managed by adults to retain order in large secondary schools with large classes.

The lack of influence experienced by the participants in this study extend beyond the behavioural policy to others, but these are still imposed on pupils by staff with pupils having little influence on outcomes. This inability to influence one's own outcomes or be able to exert autonomy frequently appeared within the data and was perceived as a source of dissatisfaction by participants.

5.2.3 Lack of relatedness

The teacher-pupil relationships are directly related to the power relationships at play within a school. The experience of being controlled by others is unlikely to promote the development of positive teacher-pupil relationships. Participants in this research (including those that did not leave mainstream) expressed concern regarding the lack of pupil-teacher relationships. This impacted negatively on levels of engagement especially where pupils have specific needs, leading already vulnerable groups to becoming

marginalised. Participants highlighted the lack of, or inadequate, teacher-pupil and management-pupil relationships.

This is compatible with Marsh (2012) who identified the importance of positive teacher-pupil relationships in terms of engaging and engaging and motivating pupils based upon a foundation of mutual trust and respect. This is consistent with the findings of Duckett et al (2008, p. 96) in terms of factors identified such as teacher's enforcement of rules though there is less emphasis on teacher-pupil relationships. Aligned with this, Ryan and Deci (January 2000, p. 71) discussed the value of relatedness within SDT and described how students taught with a controlling approach or by teachers who were perceived as cold or uncaring lose initiative and learn less effectively. Thus, disengagement is likely to be a result of poor teacher-pupil relationships within the framework of SDT.

Lack of relationships is further compounded in a secondary setting with the timetabled school day being fragmented into subjects with different teachers. However, some participants were able to identify some specific individual members of staff who there were positive relationships with. Applying Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory (1979), pupils are unlikely to be aware of the systems beyond the 'microsystem', i.e. those directly affecting the pupils, as much of this (i.e. macro- and meso-systems) are unlikely to 'seen' by young people. This may have led the participants to place the blame squarely at the feet of classroom teachers, though Liam was very aware of the negative managerial limitations in terms on pupil-teacher relationships. Teachers have little control over the organisational system policies, though they can have control over how relationships are managed within the classroom.

5.2.4 Negative impact on well-being

The experience of being disempowered and disengaged within a system is likely to have a negative impact upon well-being, with this increasing over time. According to Duckett et al (2008) high regulation and adoption of rigid or ineffective policies, along with pressure to achieve, impacts negatively on pupil well-being. In an authoritarian system, low autonomy experienced by pupils can be related to low engagement (Gorard, 2010).

It is clear from the discussion that low relatedness and autonomy have been explicitly identified by the participants as being related to dis-engagement, but competency less so,

except in the cases of Liam and Kerry. The three innate psychological needs of SDT may not be of equal importance for all young people in terms of indicating motivation and engagement. This perspective is supported by Vallerand (2000, p. 316) who critiqued SDT regarding the lack of attention it gives to individual differences in terms of the degree to which autonomy, relatedness and competence may influence motivation. However, the three innate psychological needs within the SDT model were developed through experimental research within traditional settings. This does not necessarily translate directly to, or explain the complexities of, the experiences of participants within the mainstream secondary setting. These participants may have been able to achieve competence despite being 'disappointed' within systems that did not foster autonomy or relatedness.

5.3 Deciding to make a 'non-traditional' transition

'By initiating a transition from one status to another outside the traditional transitional points, the young people were able to position themselves in a way that allowed them, from their point of view, to become better resourced in their present situation as well as in terms of their future' **(Aaltonen, 2013, p. 375)**

The participants actively chose to leave mainstream secondary school at the end of Year 9 to attend a 14 to 16 college despite having little relevant preparation or knowledge. This occurred due to the pressures described by participants leading them to be 'pushed out' of mainstream. Obviously, for this to occur, the opportunity of an appropriate AP is essential. In the absence of a 14 to 16 college, the participants stated that they would have either 'put up' with school, or potentially been sent to a PRU by the mainstream secondary school.

The time of leaving school does coincide with a natural transition point in education from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 and the selection of curriculum options. However, for the participants in this study the ability to select subjects for Key Stage 4 was not far-reaching enough to enable re-engagement to occur. Traditionally, this transition is a change specifically in terms of academic expectation rather than a change of environment. The participants in this study reject the system before reaching a 'tipping point' after which the choice to transition out of the system is actively taken.

5.3.1 Rejection of the mainstream system

The agency which a young person has is restricted due to age and the related position that this locates young people within power structures and is thus 'bounded' (Evans, 2007). Whilst pupils are present at secondary school they are expected to behave in accordance to the school rules and policies and conform with the boundaries of institutional norms of behaviour. It is interesting to pose the question: how can pupils in a secondary school exert influence? The answer is that they can, but it is not likely to be welcomed by the school as it can be viewed as lack of conformity or obedience. Pupils can decide whether to participate within lessons (can 'exclude' themselves whilst being present), whether to complete classwork or homework, how much effort is applied to tasks, whether to comply with behavioural or uniform policy, types of relationships with their peers or whether to physically attend lessons or school. Failure to make the 'right choices' within these areas of potential pupil influence are likely to result in sanctions that are likely, as discussed, to lead to exclusion from learning and further diminish teacher-pupil relationships. The participants exerted influence through deployment of a variety of different methods indicating rejection of a policy, aspect of the system, or the whole system. This included seeking answers from management regarding 'inadequate' teaching, refusing to abide by uniform policy, questioning behaviour policy and seeking action to reduce bullying from peers.

In terms of the concept of self-determination these pupils were able to demonstrate some of the qualities as described in Field et al (1998) by rejecting the situation through attempting to exert autonomy. According to SDT, extrinsic motivation can occur when, over time, people internalise or 'take in' a value or regulation (Ryan and Deci, January 2000, p. 71). It is evident from these pupils' views and active rejection of aspects of the system that the participants found the external expectations were incongruent with their internal motivators and values and thus did not internalise them or comply. This is in stark contrast to Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) who viewed self-determination as being negatively shaped by a dominant or oppressive environment. This was not the case for the participants who did not internalise negative views of themselves or accept policies that were experienced as marginalising rather than being motivational or functional.

5.3.2 Reaching a 'tipping point' to initiate decision-making

The participants described a 'tipping point' where the situation, despite rejection and attempts to exert influence within the system, became untenable and personally affective. At this point, the participants took control and made the decision to leave the system altogether and effectively became 'pushed out' learners. The timing of this is critical as this is when secondary pupils are actively encouraged by school to make choices, during Year 9 options. Decision-making before this stage would not have afforded the opportunity to attend a 14 to 16 college. Before age 14, options would have been limited to other secondary mainstream schools or PRUs, the latter not being appropriate for at least four of the participants.

The concept of experiencing a 'tipping point' where attendance at an institution has become undesirable as well as disengaging is not adequately explained by the self-determination or bioecological models of transition. Both models focus upon desirable factors for a successful transition, with most research being focused upon traditional transition points rather than one initiated by the young person themselves (Trainor et al, 2008; Pierson et al, 2008). SDT does appear to explain how the target participants became disengaged in mainstream due to lack of contextual supports for the innate psychological needs. However, it can be applied from the perspective that SDT states people will be intrinsically motivated for activities that are satisfying, interesting or enjoyable for them (Ryan and Deci, January 2000, p. 71). Participants were motivated to seek these experiences in a different setting when faced with the reality that they would not occur in the secondary mainstream environment.

The concept of 'bounded agency' (Evans, 2007; Aaltonen, 2013) is, I believe, useful to apply alongside SDTs concept of motivation, as it situates the participants as actors to negotiate the social landscape, in this case making a 'non-traditional' transition. This 'agency' is 'bounded' due to formal education being compulsory, which limits options to those available within the landscape, in this case the existence of the 14 to 16 college.

The concept and role of a 'tipping point' as serving to catalyse action through 'bounded agency' is discussed by Aaltonen (2013, p. 377) in terms of being a 'critical moment' of a young person's life. A 'critical moment' is defined by Thomson et al (2002, p. 339) as being an event experienced by a young person as having important consequences of lives

and identities. Thomson et al (2002, p. 341) developed a range of categories of 'critical moments' which include being excluded, bullied, and conflicts with teachers. These are compatible with the 'tipping points' experienced by the target participants in this study with most being in the category of 'excluded'. This has a broad definition and for the purposes of this research applies to pupils who were excluded or marginalised whilst being a member of mainstream secondary school, whether directly or indirectly.

However, 'bounded agency' is often taken by young people to act individually to transition out of difficult circumstances when there is an available alternative or to search for the 'least bad' option (Aaltonen, 2013, p. 386). This latter point is important as without a viable alternative such as the 14 to 16 college transition may not have occurred and individuals, as they themselves stated, would probably have remained in mainstream schools. This concept also explains how individuals acted to regain a sense of autonomy through their own actions and decision-making which is not explicitly inherent within the models of transition discussed in the literature review.

5.3.3 Coping with the 'rapid' transition

The decision to leave mainstream secondary school left participants to cope with a 'rapid' transition to the 14 to 16 college with little in the way of preparation. Participants had to rely upon a limited number of evening induction sessions run by the 14 to 16 college as well as support from their parents. Participants stated that parents did not affect the decision to make the transition although it was clear that parents were supportive of the decisions made by the participants. According to SDT, parents who support their children to be autonomous, compared to controlling parents, have children who are more intrinsically motivated and competent (Ryan and Deci, January 2000).

Parental support has links to the basic psychological need of relatedness within SDT. Ryan and Deci (January 2000, p. 71) link SDT to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979) in that infants who are intrinsically motivated to engage in exploratory behaviour are more likely to have a secure attachment to a parent. However, it could simply be that participants desired the opportunity for connectedness and relatedness within the school environment. SDT relates this dynamic to other interpersonal settings across the lifespan, with intrinsic motivation more likely to occur where there is a sense of relatedness (Ryan

and Deci, January 2000, p. 71). This is interesting as the most common initial code related to the 'rapid' transition were in vivo statements such as '*all being in it together*' and '*all in the same boat*' with other young people attending the 14 to 16 college. However, the Head of the 14 to 16 college also used these phrases, therefore there is a potential for this narrative to have become incorporated into participants' constructed accounts (Maughan and Rutter, 1997, p. 23).

The participants entered the 14 to 16 college from secondary mainstream settings where they have felt marginalised and then made the decision to leave the 'known' to go to the 'unknown'. They are likely to have left peers behind to join an establishment where they know no-one, but they knew that others were also new which instantly provided a commonality. This instant initial sense of community, 'in-it-togetherness' or relatedness satisfies the basic psychological need for relatedness and appears to buffer and counter the initial difficulties encountered such as course changes.

This contrasts with Vallerand (2000, p. 317) who critiqued SDT and stated that perceptions of relatedness have a non-significant role in terms of self-determined motivation of young people in educational settings. However, this is based upon an assumption that education is an individualistic activity (Vallerand, 2000, p. 317). This of course, may be the case in specific classroom-based learning activities but it does overlook the fact that a school is a community of people interacting with each other with different levels of influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Participants considered, but rejected, attending a different mainstream school due to the potential of being isolated in an environment where everyone knew each other already

To make the choice through exerting 'bounded agency' as discussed, the participants were likely to have possessed some of the qualities of self-determination described by Wehmeyer (1998). These include independence, self-advocacy, decision-making, risk taking and an internal locus of control and causality, autonomy and intrinsic motivation. It is not clear whether these are qualities which these young people possessed already, or whether they developed because of rejecting the circumstances they found themselves in at secondary mainstream.

5.3.4 Summary

In summary, this section discussed the core category which involved participants' rejection of the system, reaching a 'tipping point' and choosing to leave the system altogether. SDT alone cannot explain the participants' actions as, according to the model amotivation leads to behaviour becoming non-self-determined. The choice to reject the system and leave it indicates the opposite in that participants realised that they were not able to influence the situation and so chose to leave. The concepts of 'critical turning points' and 'bounded agency' are able to provide a greater understanding of this phenomenon. The choice the participants made, does reflect just how disengaging and disempowering the mainstream secondary school situations had become which is encapsulated in the memo:

> **Memo: AGENCY – seizing back control (20/10/2017)**
>
> Making your own decision before it is made for you regardless of consequences or possession of relatively little knowledge. Escape to 'somewhere else, anywhere else' that I have chosen, not you.

5.4 Re-empowerment: Becoming, and remaining, re-engaged through inclusion

The third theoretical concept within the emergent substantive theory exists because of the action taken by participants to transition to a 14 to 16 college from secondary mainstream settings. Despite the pupils having little knowledge of the 14 to 16 college prior to joining, participants indicated that even from the early interview and application stages that this was a positive decision. This section will discuss the main themes that participants felt were important in terms of contributing to the feelings of re-empowerment and re-engagement from entering the 14 to 16 college until the present time.

5.4.1 Development of positive relationships and community enhances learning

Participants described many organisational aspects of the college in positive terms from the sense of being part of a community, solidarity with 'similar-minded' peers and being allowed to be an individual. For the participants this was an opportunity for a 'fresh start' and for pupils such as Jamie who felt negatively labelled, a chance to redefine how he was perceived by others. Participants felt re-engaged and included within the 14 to 16 college which they attributed to relationships. This is evident within the Ofsted reports (2014, 2015) and vision statements of the college prospectus (14 to 16 college prospectus, 2017). This is consistent with the findings of Duckett et al (2008) and Kirk et al (2015) who found that indicators of positive pupil wellbeing were associated with supportive, reciprocal relationships between peers and between staff and pupils.

SDT recognises that when young people are present in a social context which satisfies innate psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy, then well-being and engagement will be enhanced (Ryan and Deci, January 2000). According to Deci and Ryan (January 2000, p. 70-71) when choice, acknowledgement of feelings and opportunities for self-direction are provided individuals are likely to experience enhanced autonomy, intrinsic motivation, desire for challenge and curiosity. These can be provided through positive relationships within the setting which provide a 'secure relational base' (Ryan and Deci, January 2000, p. 71). The analysis of participant data indicates that competence and autonomy were enhanced through relatedness with others. Though the three innate psychological needs of SDT are presented in a non-hierarchical and distinct manner, in this study relatedness appears to be the dominant factor impacting upon the levels of engagement within an educational setting for these participants. When the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is applied this makes sense as teachers are the people, along with peers, who make up the 'microsystem' within a school. Teachers are the 'implementors' of other systems such as policy, with the systems impacting upon the power dynamics and types of teacher-pupil relationships that are possible.

The development of autonomy may appear to be at odds with the relationships which participants related directly to positive wellbeing and being re-engaged with education at the 14 to 16 college. However, Deci and Ryan (2000, p. 74) state that, within SDT,

autonomy refers to being independent rather than detached from others. This is compatible with the concept of 'bounded agency' with autonomy being linked to motivation (Smith, 2013).

The policies of the 14 to 16 college cannot be ignored, however, in enabling participants to feel re-empowered. It is clear from extant data that the college culture is informed by policy, which enables an egalitarian institution with an equal balance of relative power between pupils and staff (Porter, 2006, p. 19). According to Porter (2006), egalitarian practices are characterised through warmth, acceptance and a structure which supports and enhances pupil autonomy. This is compatible with Kirk et al (2016, p. 589) who found that empowerment of pupils is directly related to positive teacher-pupil relationships and development of a community. Empowered pupils were found to be engaged with learning, misbehaved less often and had higher aspirations than pupils who were less empowered, which is reflected by participants experiences of the 14 to 16 college (Kirk et al, 2016, p. 589).

5.4.2 Development of competence and skills for transition into adulthood

This theme does link to the relatedness aspect of the culture of the 14 to 16 college as discussed in the previous section. Though participants did not cite a vocational curriculum as a reason for joining the 14 to 16 college, they expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to engage in the development of new skills.

The 14 to 16 college does have an advantage being affiliated with and on-site of a large FE college as it has access to resources and specialist teachers to deliver the vocational component of the curriculum. However, alongside the vocational aspect, participants expressed appreciation for the transition planning for adulthood and post-16 that was integrated and delivered by all staff throughout their time at the 14 to 16 college. The participants felt that the transition into post-16 education was enhanced through this integrated non-biased support. The comparison between the participants' experiences with those who attended Key Stage 4 at mainstream secondaries is conceptualised in the following memo:

The curriculum at the 14 to 16 college enabled participants to see a clear link between the curriculum and employment and through the embedded transition planning and vocational aspects. This is enhanced through providing the conditions as described in the previous section to enable pupils to develop autonomy, competence, relatedness to enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, January 2000, p. 76).

This is compatible with the self-determination model of transition in that the participants indicated a high capacity of ability and skills to cope with the change of transition to post16 education (Pierson et al, 2008). The enhancement of these qualities of self-determination is likely to equip students for adulthood and employment. However, despite SDT viewing this type of motivation as being intrinsic, it may also be extrinsic as it is attainment-focused or be perceived as a social expectation. However, in this this study, the classification of motivation is not essential as the focus is upon the experiences of the participants, which cannot easily be reduced to categories. This is a limitation of SDT, though it is used merely as a framework in this qualitative study to compare contextual factors which impact upon participant engagement at different points of transitions. The adoption of SDT alongside bio-ecological theory as a framework for transition is useful as it considers factors in the 'microsystem' which allows for a person to evolve and change rather than viewing behaviours as stable traits.

5.4.3 Affirmation of choice

This theme exists due to the retrospective nature of the study whereby participants were able to reflect upon decisions made during their educational journeys. The participants felt privileged at being able to attend the 14 to 16 college due to many factors. Many of

these result from the 14 to 16 college 'not-like-schoolness', with the associated benefits of specialist staff and resources not enjoyed by their mainstream secondary school peers. This is supported by the concept of 'bounded agency' as young people who choose to transition from difficult circumstances can experience a sense of personal competence which enables them to invest in the future and supports future decision making (Aaltonen,2013, p. 386).

In terms of models of transition, this can be explained by the bioecological systems theory (Trainor et al, 2008). The enabling 'microsystem' is due in part to ensuring that factors in the 'mesosystem' and 'exosystem' do not become barriers to transition. This was appreciated by the participants who felt a sense of privilege being able to attend such a unique institution which they themselves had selected to go to. For these participants, the journey into adulthood was viewed as a continuance from the 14 to 16 college as a seamless trajectory.

Participants were able to compare themselves favourably to their peers from their ex-secondary schools in a positive way as conceptualised in the following memo:

Memo: Affirmation of choice (15/12/2017)

Development of confidence through agency, self-determination and making own choices. Comparison of self to peers to affirm choices made and direction taken for own future which has led to favourable comparison and positive steps to selected career choice.

Participants asserted their 'bounded agency' (Evans, 2007) to be able to make this 'non-traditional' transition through experiencing a personally affective 'tipping point'. Participants demonstrated qualities associated with self-determination which provided the motivation to be reject a system and towards another which fosters reengagement (Ryan and Deci, January, 2000). Individuals with high levels of self-determination are more likely to have successful transitions to adulthood and positive life outcomes (Hardre and Reeve, 2003; Pierson et al, 2008).

Participants were very reflective when discussing choices and experiences, though when asked what would have happened had they not transitioned to the 14 to 16 college, there was little negativity. Most felt that they would be probably doing similar courses at

post16 though potentially at a lower level or having achieved lower grades at GCSE. In short, the participants were confident that they would have survived mainstream secondary school but may not have flourished there due to being disengaged and disempowered.

5.4.4 Summary and limitations of the theory

This discussion has explored each of the identified theoretical concepts as developed through the classic grounded theory data collection and analysis process used in this study in the context of the data and the literature. This discussion provides a deeper explanation and analysis of the emergent substantive grounded theory in terms of the identified theoretical concepts and the links between them. Theoretical models of transition such as the bioecological systems theory, SDT as well as the concepts of 'bounded agency' and 'critical moments' have provided a framework. The emergent substantive grounded theory aims to encapsulate the experiences of the 'pushed out' participants who chose to attend a 14 to 16 college within the boundaries of the research question.

The use of SDT as a framework for this grounded theory is not without limitations, despite it being a theory of motivation which has been robustly replicated across cultures and in different settings (Ryan and Niemiec, 2009). These studies have tended to be quantitative and focus upon motivation within traditional settings, such as teaching of physical education or assessment in schools. The innate psychological needs of a person are reduced to three, which can be measured using scales. This does appear to reduce complex human social experiences and motivation to three needs in an environment. However, SDT does offer a model which is compatible with the bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) in terms of focusing on the impact of systemic factors and how these can impact positively or negatively on an individual (Wilding, 2015).

In this study, SDT and bioecological systems theory have been applied to explain how the same participants have been affected in two different settings. This moves away from 'within-child' explanations for disengagement and towards the impact of systemic factors which provides the potential of change for an individual. SDT does not state that, like behaviourism, the environment controls behaviours (Ryan and Niemiec, 2009). SDT

is concerned with how social contexts can impact upon people's experiences and how this impacts upon wellbeing (Ryan and Niemiec, 2009, p. 265).

In this study, participants did try to influence positive change, but realised that they were powerless to do so. The action that was taken to leave the context is not adequately explained by SDT, despite its emancipatory claims, due to people being positioned as 'objects' rather than as agentic individuals. The concepts of 'critical moments' and 'bounded agency' have offered a framework to explain how participants were able to 'push themselves out' to make a 'non-traditional' transition to the 14 to 16 college.

One important point linked with social justice is the capacity of the 14 to 16 college to re-empower young people who are marginalised due to having SEND, or from disadvantaged backgrounds. Though the 14 to 16 college has a higher proportion of these groups compared to other local mainstream secondary settings, 97 per cent transition into post-16 education or training. This alone is testament to the success of the college in enabling disengaged or 'pushed out' learners to re-engage with learning regardless of background or individual needs.

5.5 Evaluation of grounded theory methodology and limitations

Glaser and Strauss (1971) outlined four criteria to evaluate a grounded theory in terms of:

> *'theory that fits the real world, works in predictions and explanations, is relevant to the people concerned and… is readily modifiable'* (p. 176).

Glaser (1992, p. 116-117) further elaborated upon these four criteria which will be used to evaluate this grounded theory research. The four criteria are fit, workability, relevance and modifiability which will be discussed in turn. The framework has been adopted as opposed to a similar model proposed by Charmaz (2006) which focuses jupon credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness due to the adoption of classic grounded theory for this research.

5.5.1 'Fit'

'Fit' is another way of describing how clear the categories and hypotheses are within the research so that they can be verified in future research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 1967). The use of grounded theory, though initially an exciting prospect soon became overwhelming in terms of the coding of the data and the degree to which I was in fact truly able to withhold preconceived notions and remain 'open'. The use of classic grounded theory methodology does enable this through the adoption of an iterative approach where data is concurrently collected, analysed and constantly compared.

I attempted to increase the rigour of the initial coding system through the adoption of an inter-reliability measure as outlined in the methodology. There was a high level of agreement between the sets of data indicating a degree of consistency with initial coding. However, this was conducted towards the end of the data collection and analysis process and it may have been useful to have interrogated the areas of competing explanations to refine the coding process (Barbour, 2001, p. 7). I would question how appropriate measuring inter-rater reliability is for classic grounded theory in which data is initially collected with limited interview schedules and no predetermined coding schemes (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 68). The later stages of coding and theoretical sampling are guided by the data and emerging concepts and therefore the use of any similar measures would not be useful unless comparisons were made with a co-researcher, which I did not have.

One area of anxiety that I had regarding the grounded theory process which may have impacted upon the quality and 'fit' of the emergent substantive theory is the degree to which I was able to transcend descriptions of data and engage in conceptualisation (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 51). This was enhanced using memoing and writing comprehensive field notes, though again, these are also areas of limited experience.

'Theoretical saturation' was the concept which created the most anxiety as, being a novice grounded theorist, I wanted to ensure that I did not cease data collection too soon and thus reduce validity of the research. Factors which may have contributed to this was feeling
'rushed' due to impending deadlines combined with the difficulty of recruitment of appropriate participants. I attempted to account for the latter through a focus group as well as individual interviews to provide depth and detail of participant experiences and

allow for exploration of emerging concepts. However, the time constraints, a small number of participants and the fact that I was a 'novice' grounded theorist may have contributed to a substantive theory which is lacking 'robustness'. However, the presented categories and concepts within the theory are clear enough to be further verified in future related research.

5.5.2 Workability

According to Holton and Walsh (2017, p. 156), 'workability' relates to the external validity and transferability of the emergent grounded theory with replication built into the process through theoretical sampling and constant comparisons. The external validity of classic grounded theory depends upon the researcher's stance and whether the type of theory developed (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 153). The grounded theory developed in this piece of research is an emergent substantive theory which is bound in time, space and context as it is only applied to a selected group of participants who have attended specific educational institutions at specific points in time (Holton and Walsh, 2017). The participants were recruited according to specific criteria and despite being small, there was a degree of variability within the group leading to a representative sample. However, there may have been a degree of self-selection within this group who may be amongst the most engaged young people thus reducing the representativeness (Robinson, 2014).

To increase the external validity or 'trustworthiness' of the theory I adopted three strategies of member checking, triangulation and reflexivity (Lietz, Langer and Furman, 2006). The former, member checking, was carried out during theoretical sampling and involved discussing the categories and emerging theory with a previously interviewed participant to ensure that the analysis was ground in participant experiences. The use of triangulation may appear to contrast with the development of a substantive grounded theory, which is bound in time and space. Triangulation with other sources was intended to provide context and weight to participant perceptions rather than to suggest something essentially real. The use of other data sources such as interviews with college staff and the use of extant texts such as Ofsted reports allowed triangulation to occur and provide alternative perspectives. However, there may be a degree of institutional bias or 'party line' especially during the staff interviews, rather than reflection of 'reality'. I tried to

account for this by prioritising the experiences of the participants and accepting their experiences as their perspectives of the 'truth' despite it being a retrospective study.

In terms of reflexivity, the process of writing field notes, memos and research diary enabled me to question my position as a researcher and whether I was affecting the process of data collection and analysis through the presence of my own 'personal lens' (Robinson, 2014, p. 38).

5.5.3 Relevance

The relevance of a grounded theory is concerned with the practical utility or value of the emergent theory (Patton, 2002, p. 588). This is described by Glaser (1978, p. 100) through the development of a 'meaningful' picture with illustrations which enable the reader to feel a resonance with the participants and their experiences. I believe that the substantive grounded theory does have relevance to both the participants involved as well as the institutions who were involved as transition especially was an area raised as a concern. In terms of relevance beyond the theory itself it can be applied (or adjusted) to other situations such as other transition points in an educational trajectory or to experiences of young people in other APs. It is also relevant currently due to the increased age of participation in education to 19 years of age. This has implications for provision in terms of preparation of young people for the workplace and adulthood rather than retaining a purely academic focus.

5.5.4 Modifiability

Grounded theory is different in scope to hypothetical-deductive research in that theory and hypotheses are developed rather than tested (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 156). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 28), theories can be modified through evidence and testing and potentially be replaced by 'better theory'. From this perspective, the developed substantive grounded theory resulting from this research is open to modification and interrogation by other researchers in other institutions, with different young people at different times.

5.6 Recommendations for future research

Though the study was originally focused on how the young people navigated the process of transition from a 14 to 16 college AP into post-16 education, the participants problematised secondary education and this became the main concern. This moved the focus of the study to the circumstances surrounding transition into the 14 to 16 college from mainstream secondary schools. As well as being a classic grounded theory, it was also retrospective in nature and relied upon participants to recall events from three to four years earlier.

In hindsight, had I known that the research would shift in direction I would have carried out research with pupils attending the 14 to 16 college. A case study approach would be, in my opinion, the optimal research approach as it would enable a study of the phenomenon of transition of pupils into the college within the 'real-life' context of the college. In addition, it would enable the use of multiple sources of evidence from pupils, teachers and parents to explore cultural and systemic factors and the impact upon pupil experience.

5.6.1 Role of Gender

Though the 14 to 16 college has been attended predominantly by female pupils (as discussed in the Literature Review) since opening in 2013, gender did not emerge as in issue from the data. The issue of gender was therefore beyond the scope of this piece of research. Research into gender and relative experiences of transition into the 14 to 16 college would provide an interesting comparison to that carried out by Russell and Thomson (2011). Obviously, at the time of Russell and Thomson's (2011) research 14 to 16 colleges were not in existence therefore caution must be taken when comparisons are made between studies carried out at different times. It would be useful to carry out a comparative study with same-aged pupils at a male-dominated secondary PRU within the same city.

5.7 Implications for EPs

The emergent substantive grounded theory developed is not intended to be generalisable beyond the institutions and individuals who participated in this study. However, there are several implications that arise from the research which are relevant to the practice of EPs.

5.7.1 Working with disengaged young people

The ideal goal of working with disengaged young people would be to find a way to enable them to be included in mainstream school through being re-engaged. Early intervention here is the ideal, but all too often EPs may find themselves working with a pupil who may already be 'disappeared' or the edges of permanent exclusion. It would be useful for EPs to have knowledge of the APs in the geographical location as this study illustrates, these are not necessarily solely PRUs, with some potentially offering a more suitable curriculum for the pupil. The same applies to post-16 education and training. To assist a young person to become forward-looking and re-engaged it is useful for an EP to understand the local context and opportunities available as well as transition support. It would be useful to focus upon the four identified areas for preparing young people for adulthood; employment, independent living, friends, relationships and community, and good health (https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/). The following questions may also be useful to consider when working with pupils of this age:

- What skills does this young person need to develop to be prepared for adulthood?
- When and how should these skills best develop?
- What support does this young person need to enable successful following transitions though to adulthood?

Another key issue regarding disengaged young people is to recognise that they are not simply pupils with behavioural issues or SEND. There may be a role for EPs to help schools look beyond stereotypes of disengaged learners who are in danger of becoming 'pushed out' (Menzies and Baars, 2015). There are some pupils, who may suffer with anxiety-related issues due to bullying or other factors who may also be disengaged. These pupils are more likely to be overlooked due to the lack of disruption experienced by teachers in class which may result in no support or EP involvement at all. This is an

interesting dilemma for EPs whose role is to work with the most vulnerable young people, if there is no awareness of who these pupils are.

Wilding (2015, p. 137) recommended the use of SDT as a framework to recognise systemic factors in an educational setting which contribute to young people becoming disaffected and work with staff through consultation to facilitate change. Systemic factors are grouped as being those which impact upon the basic psychological needs; curriculum content (autonomy), teaching and learning styles (competence) and pupil-teacher relationships (relatedness) (Wilding, 2015, p. 150).

When working with a young person directly, the use of person centred thinking (PCT) techniques can be used to determine what is important and how this can be supported through making the young person's values, interests and aspirations central (Sanderson, Smith and Wilson, 2010). This will only be beneficial if the 'vehicle' of pupil voice is authentic and is actioned by staff; as failure to do so could further undermine the relatedness aspect of SDT and lead to further disengagement. The competence factor within the SDT framework could be developed with young people using a strengths-based approach which emphasises a holistic view of competencies, not just the academic (Sanderson et al, 2010).

Individual casework may not provide any systemic change within a mainstream secondary school or academy with exclusive systems or policies. There is potentially a role for consultancy for EPs to engage schools in working systemically to promote organisational change and move away from student-centred factors. The 'process of enquiry' model developed by Wagner (2000) may provide a framework to engage in a flexible dialogue with staff guided by an EP using curious questions to explore details of organisational details.

To ensure that staff members do not feel threatened during systemic consultancy, it would be advantageous for the role of the EP to be clearly defined, and teachers respectfully viewed as equals with expertise to contribute to the change process. One example provided by Side and Johnson (2014) which is relevant to participants in this research is that of school anti-bullying policy, though it could be applied to any school policy identified as being exclusive. Young people who reported bullying were not kept informed of actions that staff took, which left them feeling powerless with increased

anxiety (Side and Johnson, 2014). A more collaborative approach to school policy development which involves authentic co-production with young people can lead to proactive policy with everyone in the school community sharing responsibility (Side and Johnson, 2014).

5.7.2 Bigger issues – are secondary schools fit for purpose?

This is a debateable issue and one that does not necessarily refer to all secondary schools in the UK, many of which will provide inclusive learning environments for all pupils. The Wolf report (2011) and the DfE (2007) set out a set of recommendations for Key Stage 4 and beyond for schools to implement which focused upon offering a varied curriculum with both vocational and academic components. This has not been realised many years after these recommendations were made and, certainly in the city where this research was located, secondary schools and academies are offering few options beyond academic subjects. I believe that it is the responsibility of the EP profession to question the validity of the direction that secondary education in the UK has taken at a national level in the UK in terms of the degree to which it is serving the employment landscape and the needs of young people. This can be done through providing an EP 'voice' or response to relevant governmental papers or attendance at national conferences and events.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Positioning this research: unique contribution?

In terms of where this study fits within the research discussed in the literature review, there is clearly a gap within the research focused on APs. The 14 to 16 college model is clearly very different from PRUs in terms of the fact that pupils themselves choose to attend the college which is not the case for PRUs. In addition, the 14 to 16 college does appear to provide a model of education that is inclusive and empowering for marginalised or 'pushed out' pupils, which I feel earns these colleges their own unique space and consideration within the AP literature. This research is useful as it directly compares participants' experiences of traditional secondary settings with the 14 to 16 college. The 14 to 16 college, despite being subject to the same external measures of performance and national policy as mainstream schools, was able to re-engage the participants with learning. At the very least, this research will provide an understanding of the existence of an AP that young people can themselves choose to attend.

It is concerning that the future of 14 to 16 colleges are uncertain, with two FE colleges having recently stating that they are unlikely to continue to offer this type of provision (FE Week, 2018). This uncertain future does appear to coincide with the Progress 8 measure of progress introduced in 2016, which is a misleading, irrelevant performance measure for a 14 to 16 college (FE Week, 2018). This has led to several 14 to 16 colleges gaining low Progress 8 scores and thus being labelled as 'failing' schools, which may impact upon recruitment of pupils. The Progress 8 score is designed to measure progress specifically in mainstream secondary schools. It would appear to be more beneficial to refer to other measures for 14 to 16 colleges such as Ofsted ratings and the percentage of pupils who go onto post-16 training or education placements.

6.2 Reflections on the research process

I began this piece of research from a position of curiosity regarding the 14 to 16 college based upon my previous experiences. At this stage I had little idea of the direction that this research would take, and the adoption of a classic grounded theory methodology enabled me to remain open to emerging concepts.

Looking back at my assumptions that I stated prior to carrying out research, it became clear to me just how little I really understood about 14 to 16 colleges. My assumption that this was a college for young people who desired vocational, rather than purely academic, education was simplistic. I had not anticipated the participants' main concern as being disaffection of mainstream secondary schools. However, rather than producing a list of complaints about secondary schools, the participants were able to illustrate very specific examples of policy, systems or relationships and how these led them to deciding to leave secondary school. None of the participants had made this decision lightly and had tried to resolve the situations in which they found themselves, but to no avail. This was saddening to hear, and I did wonder if these experiences had in fact led to these participants to develop qualities of self-determination and 'bounded agency,' or if these qualities or traits were already possessed by them.

6.3 The 'bigger picture': has progress led to a lack of 'evolution'?

> *"State schools in particular are relatively large organisations, with large classes and they have to cater for the majority. If you have complex needs and/or you're of a personality that is typically thinking differently to the norm, or doesn't want to conform… then where do you go?"* (**Menzies and Baars, 2015, p. 15**)

When I first began this piece of research I questioned my adoption of critical realism as the epistemological stance as it was unclear as to whether there would be an agenda of social change. However, it became clear during the research process that some mainstream secondary schools in the local area were not particularly inclusive. There does appear to be a type of resistance or fear of giving young people, especially those who are 'marginalised', influence in their own education. This is compatible with the disproportionate number of pupils with SEND or from disadvantaged backgrounds who find themselves in APs, including 14 to 16 colleges, as they are expected to adapt to the system rather accommodations being made (Fleming et al, 2012). This is in stark contrast to the existence of school inclusion policy and statutory obligations set out in the SEND Code of Practice for schools to 'focus on inclusive practice and remove barriers to learning' (DfE, 2015, p. 20). The continued existence of APs does suggest that schools are not yet fully inclusive to all pupils.

Some secondary schools are not following national guidelines such as those in the DfE (2007) green paper regarding vocational education, with curricula being largely academic. However, this contradicts the use of national indicators of success such as Progress 8 which are likely to discourage a school from implementing vocational education courses which are not recognised in this academic-focused measure. Clearly an almost exclusively academic curriculum does not serve local employment needs nor is it able to allow all pupils to access it. This is not to say that there are not areas of good practice occurring in some secondary schools. Is it possible to even replicate the culture, policies and practice occurring in the 14 to 16 college in large mainstream secondary schools? This is a question that is beyond the scope of this research, but until schools become truly inclusive, institutions such as 14 to 16 colleges will at least provide a viable alternative for those pupils who choose to attend them.

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Appendix 1: Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Summary

Database	Number of results from search terms and parameters	Number of relevant results based on abstract content	Author/date of research	Summary of research	Factors reducing relevance to this piece of research
PsychINFO	1	0			
Education Database	337	2	Atkins and Flint (2015)	Focus on young peoples' perceptions of vocational education.	Research in mainstream secondary schools
			Allan (2014)	Young peoples' attitudes towards work-based learning compared to school	Pupils were 'sent' to work-based learning providers and were those at risk of exclusion only. Focus on return to mainstream setting.
British Education Index via EBSCO	64	4	Acquah and Huddleston (2014)	Focus on impact on raising the age of participation and link to Wolf report (2011). Suggests that more vocational training is required.	Research not focused upon specific provision; focus is recommendations
			Michael and Fredrickson (2013)	Improving outcomes for pupils aged 12 to 16 in PRUs through engaging and relevant curriculum	Based in PRUs – SEBD pupils only
			Black and Lawson (2017)	Focus on vocational opportunities and training for SLD pupils	Focus is SLD provision only
			White and Laczik (2016)	How to re-engage disaffected learners through work-related learning	Most relevant but focus is upon sending out learners from mainstream secondary schools to colleges, not pupils choosing to go to 14 to 16 colleges.

Appendix 2: Focus group prompt questions

Areas for conversation for the focus group participants may include:

- How does life at this college differ from life at the 14 to 16 college?
- What are the similarities between the two colleges?
- How well were you prepared for life at college? What or who specifically helped you?
- How did you go about choosing your courses? Who helped you with your decision-making?
- How did your preparation for coming to this college differ from your preparation to go to the 14-16 college? How was it similar?
- If you could go back and change anything about the way that you were prepared for life at this College, what would it be?

These questions are designed to act as stimuli for discussion as opposed to being answered directly one at a time, which will be made clear to the participants. The content of the discussion, as well as the observed dynamics, including areas of agreement and disagreement, will be then used to develop appropriate questions for the semi-structured questions for the following one-to-one interviews.

Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Interview schedule

1. Can you tell me about the choices that you have made so far about your education? (questions regarding detail will evolve depending upon the areas brought up by the participant)

2. What have been the main influences affecting your choices about your education (use the rating scales (Appendix 4) as a stimulus to explore areas depending upon ratings)

3. What specifically was it about your secondary school that made you decide to look elsewhere and make an additional transition that other pupils don't make?

4. Why did you select to apply to the 14 to 16 college and not another secondary school closer to where you live, despite the additional difficulties with transport this caused?

5. Describe the process of moving from your secondary school to the 14 to 16 college.

6. Why did you choose to remain at the 14 to 16 college despite the subjects you wanted to do not being available?

7. Describe the teaching and relationships with staff; you mentioned that there was more consistency, but how would you describe the relationships and the quality of teaching and learning?

8. Why did you choose to move to this college rather than another college, apprenticeship or 6th form?

9. Describe the process of moving from the 14 to 16 college to this College.

10. Can you tell me about the choices that you have made so far about your education? (revisit question 1) Would you have made any different decisions if you could go back in time? Explain.

11. Is there anything else that you wish to add or ask me?

Appendix 4: Influencing factors during transition

Please rate how influential the following factors were in your decision making by indicating on each line with a cross:

(a) Moving from your secondary school to the 14 to 16 college

Friends/peers

Not important--Very important

Family members

Not important--Very important

Teachers

Not important--Very important

Other adults*

Not important--- Very important

Location of college

Not important--Very important

Courses/curriculum offered

Not important--Very important

Size of college

Not important--Very important

Future career plans

Not important--Very important

College resources/facilities

Not important--Very important

*Role(s) of other adult(s)_____

Influencing factors during transition

Please rate how influential the following factors were in your decision making by indicating on each line with a cross:

(b) Moving from the 14 to 16 college to your FE college

Friends/peers

Not important---Very important

Family members

Not important---Very important

Teachers

Not important---Very important

Other adults*

Not important---Very important

Location of college

Not important---Very important

Courses/curriculum offered

Not important---Very important

Size of college

Not important---Very important

Future career plans

Not important---Very important

College resources/facilities

Not important--- Very important

***Role(s) of other adult(s)_____

Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form: for participation in a pilot interview/interview/focus group

Title of research study:

From pushed out to re-engaged: A grounded theory study into the experiences of young people who chose to move to a 14-16 college'

Name of researcher: Jane Heslop

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please read the statements below and respond by ticking in the appropriate boxes:

Statement:	Yes	No
I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet		
I have had the opportunity to ask questions and had them answered		
I understand that all personal information will remain confidential and that all efforts will be made to ensure I cannot be identified (except as might be required by law)		
I agree that data gathered in this study may be stored anonymously and securely, and may be used for future research		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.		
I agree to take part in this study		

_____   _____   _____

Name of participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____

Name of person taking consent   Date   Signature

(to be signed and dated in presence of the participant)

Appendix 6: Research Participant Information Sheet

Title of research study:

'From pushed out to re-engaged: A grounded theory study into the experiences of young people who chose to move to a 14-16 college'

Invitation

Before you decide to take part in this study 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. A member of the team can be contacted if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this study is to determine the main social processes and factors which help a young person to move successfully from the 14 to 16 college into post-16 education. The research will be used to highlight any areas of support that young people may need when moving to post-16 education. The research study will be completed by June 2018.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been approached to be a potential participant for this study as you have been a pupil at the 14 to 16 college who has moved to train or study at a Further Education College.

Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part is entirely voluntary, and refusal or withdrawal to take part will involve no penalty or loss, now or in the future. ***What will happen to me if I take part?***

You may be asked to participate in a pilot focus group which will involve a discussion around your experiences of transition to the Further Education College. This will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes in duration and will take place at a room at the college campus. The results from this pilot group will not be used in the main study but will be used to produce interview questions for the next part of the study. You may be asked to take part in a one-to-one interview with a researcher where you will be asked questions about your own experiences at the 14 to 16 college and moving to a Further Education college. This interview will be of 30 to 60 minutes of duration. These one-to-one interviews will also take place at the college campus. You will not be under any pressure to disclose any information that you would rather not. You will be asked if you wish to provide any feedback about your interview experience, or if you wish to ask any questions at the end of the interview. Some participants may be asked to be re-interviewed later in the process, but if you do not wish to participate in a second interview, you have the right to refuse.   Please be aware that interviews may take place during your own time, or during timetabled sessions. If topics raised during interviews cause you any distress, you may cease the interview and if required, access the college counselling service.

What do I have to do?

If you are interviewed a time and date that is suitable for you will be selected. The interview will be audio taped using a digital recorder. Tapes will be identified only by a code and will not be used or made available for any purposes other than the research project. These tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Are there possible disadvantages and/or risks in taking part?

No.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You may not directly benefit from participation in the research, though the results of the research may be beneficial to future young people moving into post-16 education.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Your permission will be needed to allow restricted access to information collected about them in the course of the research project. All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential. All data will be identified only by a code, with personal details kept in a locked file or secure computer with access only by the researcher.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The completed research project will be ready sometime after June 2018. Results will be presented at conferences and may be written up in journals. Results are normally presented in terms of groups of individuals. If any individual data are presented, the data will be totally anonymous, without any means of identifying the individuals involved.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Sheffield University is sponsoring the research and funding via a bursary. Participants who are required to travel to the college for interviews at a time they would not normally attend will be reimbursed travel expenses on presentation of tickets or receipts.

Ethical review of the study

The project has received ethical approval from the Psychology Research Ethics Committee of the University of Sheffield and X City Council.

Contact for further information

Mrs Jane Heslop (main researcher). Email: xxxxxxx@xxxxxxx

If you wish to complain about any aspect of the research please contact Dr C Supervisor). Email: xxxx@xxxxx or telephone 0114 xxxxxxxxx. If you feel that your complaint is not handled to your satisfaction, you can contact the Sheffield University 'Registrar and Secretary'.

You will be provided with a copy of this information sheet and, if appropriate, a signed consent form to keep.

Many thanks for considering taking part in my research project.

Jane Heslop

Trainee Educational Psychologist (Researcher)

Appendix 7: Research Process Summary Diagram
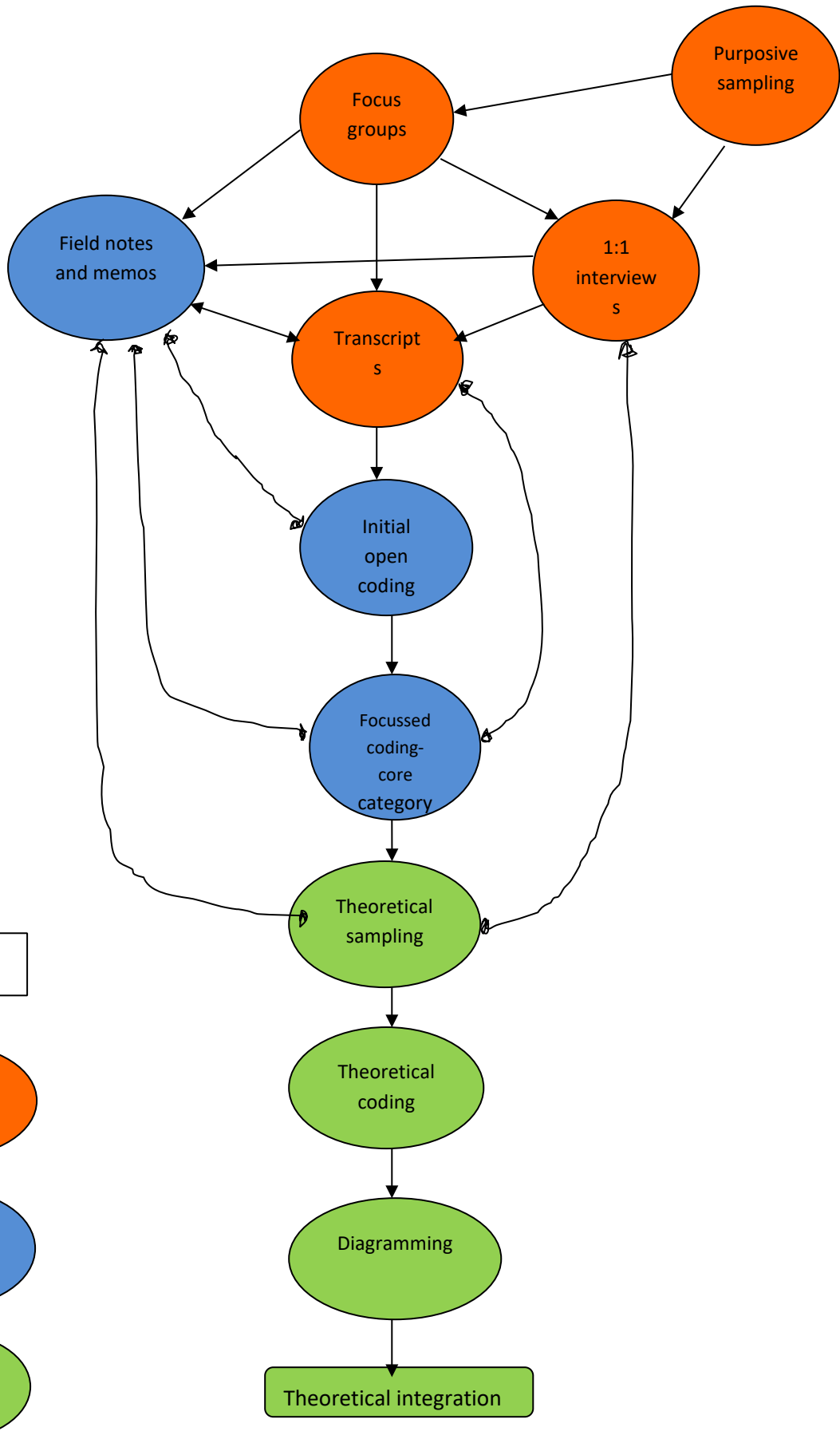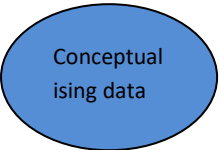
Appendix 8: Research Timeline

Date	Research activity
January/February 2017	Discussions with Head of 14 to 16 college and Student Support Managers at X College and Y College
April 2017	Research proposal finalised
May 2017	Ethical approval received
May 2017	Interview with Transition Team at Y College and development of transition visual
September 2017	Liaison with Student Support Managers (X and Y College) to recruit target participants
October 2017	Focus group with Liam, Kerry and Jack to determine main areas of importance/problem for participants
October 2017	Pilot interview with Jack – development of initial interview schedule
October 2017	Interviews with Lara and Holly (fieldnotes, memos and coding)
October 2017	Extended interviews with Jamie, Kerry and Liam (using comparative scaling for transitions to determine potential influencers) (fieldnotes, memos and coding)
October 2017	Identification of Core Category; focussed coding (level 2)
November 2017	Theoretical sampling: Focus group with Bob, Hannah and Harriet (fieldnotes, coding). Further information regarding identified Problem and Core Category
November 2017	Theoretical sampling: Interview with Alice (fieldnotes, coding), more information regarding identified Problem and Core Category
December 2017	Theoretical sampling: Focused re-interview of Liam and sharing and discussion of findings. Saturation of theoretical codes.
December 2017	Sharing and discussion of findings with Student Support Managers at X college and Y College
January 2018	Sharing and discussion of findings (and collect college data) with Head of the 14 to 16 college

Appendix 9

Focus group 1 transcript (09/10/2017)

3 JH: So we are looking at the questions as a guide for discussion, so I want you to focus upon

4 the difference between the 14 to 16 college and this college and how they are similar. There

5 are no right or wrong answers just have a discussion using these questions as a guide, it

6 doesn't matter if you start talking about other things.

7 Liam: I think it's (this college) quite different. I think the thing with the 14 to 16 college is

8 that they make it out to be different from school but in reality it's not that different because

9 obviously you still have to do all of your core subjects ....

10 Kerry: ... and we have got to be there five days a week...

11 Jack: Yeah ..

12 Kerry: ..and all of the school regulations..

13 Jack: ... Yeah and in this college you know like for example, I'm not in for one day a week er

14 and I have sort of a, I mean, at the 14 to 16 you do still have quite a lot of freedom like you

15 can go out into town at lunch and breaks, er but I think it's still quite a bit away from being

16 anything like normal college.

17 JH: What schools did you go to before you went to 14 to 16?

18 Liam: Secondary school A

19 Jack: Secondary school C

20 Kerry: B High School, it's a long way but this is the closest college

21 JH: How do you feel about the differences Kerry?

22 Kerry: Well I can travel further, to get here now I get three buses instead of two as I still live

23 far out even further now than High school B. I only had to get two buses before but when I

24 was at 14 to 16 I was at the centre of everything ...

25 Liam: So it's easier to get everywhere...

26 Jack: Whereas here there is only one shop nearby where you can go at lunch (laughs). The

27 buses are not as frequent.

28 Liam: No I mean there are only buses like ... well there are the college buses but they are err...

29 Kerry: ... only twice a day...

30 Liam: You see with the 14 to 16 buses there aren't any college buses with them being in the

31 town centre, say like here if I'm here at lunchtime and I want to go back to where my house

32 is at Kingswood I have to wait till four o'clock. It makes the day longer and sometimes you

33 stay here till four o'clock don't you most days just so you can get a bus back home or close

34 to...

35 Kerry: Yeah, the bus I get doesn't go to my village, but going into town to 14 to 16 it only

36 cost £2 per day and you can go anywhere with that on the bus whereas I have to pay £5.60

37 for only four days, that's an extra £3.60 a day to get here and get home... so it was cheaper at

38 the other college.

39 JH: So what are the things that are the same about here and the 14 to 16 college then?

40 Jack: I would say it's pretty similar.

41 Liam: There is quite a similar atmosphere although you've got like have more freedom here

42 than the 14 to 16 where you are trapped in one half of one building. You can go into like the

43 other buildings but it's got like students in different age groups so you feel sort of like you

44 might have students having one lesson on one floor in one building and you're just like

45 altogether...

46 Kerry: We are not separated and pointed out here ...

47 Jack: Yeah, we had to wear like uniform again there ...

48 Kerry: ...they have polo shirts now. But here we sort of like...

49 Liam: ... we look the same as everyone else.

50 JH: Is there anything else that's similar?

51 Jack: The foods not very good (all laugh)

52   Kerry: ...and there is no chip shop near here.

53   Liam: It's a bit overpriced as well, I think anyways for what you get.

54   JH: How do you feel the 14 to 16 college prepared you for coming here?

55   Jack: They did in a way, yeah.

56   Kerry: You get told how to get around to lessons and stuff and how to make friends and where
57   to go if you need help because it is similar at 14 to 16 ..

58   Liam: They do a lot of erm... 14 to 16 they do loads of like employability lessons as well and
59   writing CVs and that and all stuff like that which I think helps

60   Kerry: Careers guidance as well...

61   Liam: Yeah, we have careers meetings ..

62   Kerry: Careers fairs too, they were good.

63   Liam: We had lots of other colleges come in and I had my Y College at 14 to 16; they brought
64   them in along with different colleges ...

65   Kerry: .. and College Z and so they weren't restricting us to X College sort of thing... they
66   gave us options for like College W and other places and we had lessons about applying to
67   other colleges and stuff and we put us on this thing where we could go on..

68   Liam: ..yeah, Log On Move On it's called but we had specific lessons on applying for college
69   and how to do applications for apprenticeships and jobs and stuff.

70   JH: And that was all the way through the two years was it?

71   Jack: Yeah, but we didn't really start, in year 10 we like started to log onto the Log On Move
72   On account and then like so like we were ready and we knew how to get onto it for next year
73   to apply for college.

74   JH: I am not sure if you know this, but do you think that you would have got this from the
75   secondary schools that you went to before?

76 Liam: No, from what I've heard, at Secondary School A, I don't know about other schools,

77 they don't like half my friends don't even have a CV, er which I think is sort of like an

78 essential thing especially if you want to get a job or anything.

79 Jack:.. we did some stuff at Secondary School C in PHSE lessons but the teachers didn't really

80 help us much just let us get on with it.

81 Kerry: At High School B they got us to choose what GCSEs we wanted to do there and

82 didn't learn how to use Log On Move On but thought we were staying there and I thought no

83 I am not because I am leaving. But they expect you to go to their sixth form; it's a new

84 building, well not so new now but it was. Yeah, like you were expected to go to their sixth

85 form, there wasn't really much option to do anything else, but you can't go to the sixth form

86 unless you get the results. Well I mean it sort of is because they are far away and there are

87 not close colleges, but with careers fairs and stuff and apprenticeships for elsewhere they had

88 nothing for any other colleges.

89 Liam: Secondary School A has no sixth form so you can't stay there, but the only thing I

90 would say is that what I preferred about school A was the options that I was given at GCSE,

91 er at 14 to 16 college my initial options were business, and travel and tourism and because

92 there weren't enough people I ended up doing engineering and sport.

93 JH: And that wasn't really what you wanted to do?

94 Liam: No, not at all but I mean I still did it.

95 Kerry: No there weren't that many options, I was supposed to be doing triple science cos I

96 like science and they told me I could do triple but then because there were only two people

97 who chose triple science they dropped it and made me do history.

98 Liam: But the annoying thing is with my choices is that there were like six people in my

99 class here and there were like the same as that as what I selected in my options at 14 to 16

100 and they didn't run the course. So here if they say if they are going to run it then they will

101 run it regardless.

102 Kerry: There were too many in my class here so they separated us into two groups, but they

103 haven't just gone oh no some of you will have to move.

104   JH: So why did you choose to go to the 14 to 16 college?

105   Kerry: I didn't like my old school, I just didn't like it and all of the other schools were in the
106   city and I saw the 14 to 16 and I thought it would be fine.

107   Liam: Yeah I sort of like didn't think I would move to another school but it's just like when
108   you go to 14 to 16 everybody's 'in the same boat', that sort of thing, everybody's new there,
109   but I moved because Secondary School A was in special measures and I was having like lots
110   of supply teachers like twice a day. And then at one point it was just there weren't enough
111   maths teachers, we had a maths group of sixty students with one teacher in the conference
112   room, and there weren't any windows or anything no opening windows, and it was just
113   horrible.

114   Kerry: Was that in the middle of summer?

115   Liam: Yeah... I just thought I can't be doing with this anymore. There was no consistency
116   like with supply teachers and just be given work out of a text book to do sort of thing to give
117   to us and they had no idea where we was or how we would move forward with our work.
118   They had no idea what we had done the previous lesson. There are other students from
119   Secondary School A but some of them went back because they didn't like the college and
120   some of them went back because they didn't make any friends sort of thing. They had their
121   friends back at Secondary School A.

122   Jack: Secondary School C was OK and I liked some of the teachers, but there were others
123   who just didn't like me and they would always wind me up and get me angry. I ended up
124   getting a lot of detentions and exclusions and I just felt like they had all decided I was bad
125   kid. I had had enough and my mate at 14 to 16 told me it was a lot better there.

126   JH: How did you find making friends at the 14 to 16 college?

127   Liam: I think because it's so small everybody knows everybody.

128   Kerry: And I had a boot on my leg so that was a sort of a conversation starter as I had
129   fractured my ankle so that was alright so I sort of spoke to people about that. So I soon made
130   some friends and that.

131   Liam: It was like after a while I knew everybody at 14 to 16 college even in the year below..

132   Kerry: ... and the year above when we started...

133   Liam: and like here like you only really know people like in your class and the people you

134   know from your previous school. But I did like it (14 to 16 college) over Secondary School

135   A because of that, so I think because I don't know it's just nice when everybody knows

136   everybody. You know every member of staff as well. There were hardly any supply

137   teachers, I think over two years we must have had about maybe maximum of 15 lessons with

138   supply teachers, I'd say, I wouldn't think it was any more than that would you?

139   Kerry: No, it would only be if the teachers had meetings and stuff or things they couldn't

140   cancel that day.

141   Liam: Because it was quite small you would usually get another teacher from the 14 to 16

142   college who knows the teacher who was supposed to be teaching you so they can liaise with

143   them as to what you need to know.

144   Kerry: Most of the time they were from the same subject so when one of our English teachers

145   went off ...

146   Liam: .... we would have like the other English teacher, and because like with English we

147   had both teachers if one of the teachers was off and we had the other teacher we could just

148   do our work what we was doing with them already.

149   JH: So the courses you are doing now, how do you go about choosing them?

150   Liam: Er well I did like at Secondary School A you do your options a year early so you pick

151   them in Year 8 and start them in Year 9 erm and I picked business as I had always wanted to

152   do business so I was a bit gutted when I couldn't do it at the 14 to 16 college so I ended up

153   picking it here again. And er, I picked BTEC over A level because I prefer to do coursework

154   rather than do exams and having to remember everything. I am happy with the decision and

155   am not planning to change it.

156   JH: How about you Kerry?

157   Kerry: Well I've got a childcare, health and social care BTEC and I wanted something I

158   could like tie into that so I picked sociology and psychology because that worked and then I

159   wanted to do economics because I like maths, and erm they don't do economics here so I

160   emailed them or something and they said well you can do business so I decided to business.

161   So I do sociology, psychology and business.

162   JH: And you Jack?

163   Jack: I didn't really care what I did really but I decided I wanted to do public services here

164   which is OK.

165   JH: So did anybody help you with choosing or did you go about deciding all by yourself?

166   Kerry: We did have help from the careers advisers ...

167   Liam: Yeah, when I had my interview with College Y I like went through my predicted

168   grades and like what I wanted to do and er I think it was Leanne who interviewed me, she

169   like sort of suggested I could either do A level or BTEC and I am more like hands on so I

170   would rather do the BTEC. Before I met Leanne I looked into it a bit but I wasn't really like

171   I wasn't unaware but I didn't sort of know everything.

172   JH: So how did your preparation for coming here differ from your preparation to go to 14 to

173   16?

174   Kerry: Well I mean this one was guided whereas my other one wasn't, when I moved to 14 to

175   16 I had no idea what I was doing. Like here I have been told what I can do and what I can't

176   do and that lot and that like helped a lot.

177   Liam: Yeah I think it is a bit more structured coming here but at the same time it's like more

178   your responsibility still to apply and like get all the details and everything rather than your

179   parents but yeah it was alright.

180   JH: Do you think having to apply to the 14 to 16 college helped because you have to do that

181   yourself don't you? Do you think that gave you an advantage?

182   Kerry: Yeah because at High School B they don't do the applications properly as they

183   assume that everyone is going to the sixth form so they didn't really know what they were

184   doing. I don't think we had a careers officer I think that they had left.

185   Liam: I think the employability lessons definitely helped, that's what we did at the 14 to 16

186 Jack: Yeah they were really useful, my tutor helped me choosing courses for college.

187 Kerry: Yeah, we had them once a week or once a fortnight...

188 Liam:... Yeah once we got further into Year 11 we did them more. What lesson that we did
189 drop , er...

190 Kerry: We dropped PSD to do it.

191 Liam: Yeah cos we covered most of the PSD content in year 10, yeah so we were like doing
192 applications and er we had like different employers in as well from like businesses. There
193 was more for engineering based stuff but we had a lot of employers coming in doing like
194 talks in assemblies and that which I think was helpful.

195 JH: So if you could go back and change anything about the way you were prepared to come
196 here what would it be?

197 Liam: I don't know er... I think that rather than having loads of like pieces of paper what you
198 have to like bring with you when you enrol I think it would be easier if it was like done
199 online, and like the application, none of it was done online it was all on paper. I was like
200 stressing if I had the right pieces of paper and stuff.

201 JH: How did you find registration Kerry?

202 Kerry: Erm, well I have got a cognitive developmental delay so it wasn't on the form which
203 is important because it is my learning and stuff so I didn't know what to do because I ticked
204 other and they were like you can't do that (laughs) so everyone was confused because not a
205 lot of people have cognitive developmental delay and obviously I do so it's not really like a
206 well known thing like dyslexia or dyspraxia or anything like that.

207 JH: How do you think the teachers have understood that?

208 Kerry: Erm well, I use overlays and stuff but I don't think that I can ask for help because I
209 feel like I am expected to know what I am doing cos they are using sort of like subject
210 terminology and stuff like I don't really fully understand them. I sometimes leave lessons
211 thinking what was all that about? They are alright with it but I need things on the board so
212 that I can follow the lesson properly and they don't really get that and I am supposed to read
213 things on 14 point on paper, but they don't really do that they sort of give me 10 on white.

214   They will get used to it eventually cos with dyslexia and stuff you don't really need certain

215   sized fonts and you don't need everything written on the board but because of my delays I

216   do.

217   JH: Is there anything else you want to add at this stage?

218   All : No

Appendix 10: Memos

Comparisons and binaries (9/10/2017)

Quality of teaching similar at both colleges compared to secondaries

Couldn't do courses wanted at 14 to 16 but it didn't seem to matter despite the college prospectus 'selling' it on specific vocational courses.

Planning and research when selecting post-16 courses – helped by vocational

Community feel and know everybody – but relating to large college campus feeling of lack of own space and felt vulnerable and stand out when on larger campus due to uniform so not full integration

'college like' – compared to what they are now experiencing as college life (hindsight) wonder what they would have said had I spoken to them at the 14 to 16 college

'sudden' leap into the relative unknown transition vs smooth planned and prepared for transition

Sense of privilege: (9/10/2017)

Fairness of staff; non-bias of staff therefore more likely to feel supported cf schools which may prioritise their own post-16 provision even if it isn't what is right for students.

Stated that their secondary peers have 'missed out' in terms of post-16 preparations, refer to CVs and meeting employers and variety of employability sessions throughout the whole 2 years.

Resilience, independence and pure bravery; agency: (9/10/2017)

These students had no idea what they would find at the 14 to 16 and describe a 'sudden' transition. Knew no-one but knew that everyone else would be 'in it together'

Brave leaving somewhere you knew well but seems that anywhere was a better option that where they were; certainly not a case of 'better the devil you know'. A feeling that it has paid off and that they are in a better place than their peers.

Aspirations for the future (9/10/2017)

Planning for the future and a place in the world that is functional, positive and realistic. Staking your place in the world through learning and progressing and making meaning from relationships

Seeking to retain identity through agency (9/10/2017)

Making choices that are 'brave' and into the unknown in order to be able to keep chosen identity intact

Rejection of authoritarianism which serves no educational purpose (secondary) (9/10/2017)

Understanding that authoritarian behaviour management systems and sanctions are unrelated to learning and education and serve little purpose beyond control

Exclusion occurring through sanctions which limits learning (secondary) (16/10/2017)

Sanctions for behaviours and dress not related to learning end up reducing learning opportunity through removal and isolation

Relationships developed through communication and informality (16/10/2017)

At 14 to 16 compared to secondary where 'you would only see staff once or twice a week'

14 to 16 – positive staff-student relationships (16/10/2017)

They really got to know you and listened to problems, small class sizes acknowledged as being a helpful factor towards achieving this.

Planning and working towards the future (16/10/2017)

Positive and useful focus on employability and vocational studies throughout the two years – integrated preparation for the future

Excluded and abandoned by school (16/10/2017)

Holly ended up having to be home-schooled for a while due to anxiety created by personal circumstances. No taking into account of personal circumstance or support when needed; not allowed re-entry to secondary even though this is what she wanted, forced to look elsewhere.

She felt unsupported by school and was unable to return when she felt able so had to seek out an alternative

Negative discourse created through non-conformity; dehumanisation (secondary) (20/10/2017)

Labelling as 'bad lad' and staff perpetuation of negative discourse creating identity for a pupil who does not respond to system. Despite knowing the best way to deal with, and prevent escalation continued use of rigid authoritarian system engrains the negative discourse and is leading towards a PRU. There is no focus on education and learning, merely control and adherence to the system.

Agency – seizing back control (20/10/2017)

Making your own decision before it is made for you regardless of consequences or possession of relatively little knowledge. Escape to 'somewhere else, anywhere else' that I have chosen, not you.

Finding success within the curriculum (20/10/2017)

Raises self-esteem and confidence, helps reduce negative effects of labelling and enables the rest of the curriculum to be 'tolerated'

Excluded from secondary through circumstance (20/10/2017)

No taking into account of personal circumstance or support when needed; not allowed re-entry to secondary, forced to look elsewhere

Creating a positive identity and discourse through relationships; being rehumanised (20/10/2017)

Being treated in a respectful, flexible and cooperative way by adults creates a new positive identity and discourse, learning and development is at the heart of relationships not a rigid inflexible system; abandonment of 'old' negative identity.

Lack of relationship building at secondary due to large class sizes (20/10/2017)

'They didn't really get to know you' – but acknowledged the barriers towards achieving this.

Choices determined by selected career path (23/10/2017)

Wanted to be in educational providers that are able to assist in achievement of each 'stepping stone' planned for the route to the desired HE course; careful planning and choices driven by this

Rejection of inadequate teaching (secondary) (23/10/2017)

Rejecting of supply teachers, lack of subject knowledge, lack of knowledge of pupils, no consistency all limits opportunities to learn

No trust in management or the system (secondary) Power relations (23/10/2017)

Didn't believe explanations regarding lack of quality or consistency of staff, rejected explanation of 'sickness' ('fobbing us off'), had evidence of this, ie staff at different schools who were 'off sick'; not fair on the students

Staff consistency and relationships more important than subjects (23/10/2017)

'We got to know the staff really well there' and had the same staff for the two years, 'thought I would give it a go' (ie two courses not done before due to choices being unavailable)

Wanting to escape the situation and find somewhere else to go (23/10/2017)

There was a real feeling from all of these students that they had reached a point where their position in mainstream secondary had for them, become untenable. They reached a point where they were motivated enough to look for an alternative at a pivotal time of their educational lives, ie just before GCSE's. This seemed to be a way of exerting some control

over what seems to have become uncontrollable and undesirable and made a decision to shape their own educational pathways.

Large class size impedes staff-pupil relationship formation (23/10/2017)

'didn't really get to know you' as too many pupils in each class but the opposite was true at the 14 to 16 as the biggest class was 18 which was 'much better'.

Discriminatory practices and lack of equality (secondary) (23/10/2017)

Gender inequality regarding dress code; being gifted not enabling as you have 'to wait for everyone else to catch up'

Research and support to make informed post-16 choices (23/10/2017)

Many factors taken into account when deciding such as location, courses offered as well as pass rates and future aspirations – the key deciding factor being 'fancied a change' to decide between those that met the criteria

Isolated due to bullying (23/10/2017)

Negative relationships with peers with staff providing little support or intervention, felt let down even parents were unable to create or initiate any positive change

Expression of individuality without judgement (23/10/2017)

No judgement of physical appearance by 14 to 16 staff; more open to allowing expression of individuality

Focused and specialist timetables (23/10/2017)

Having three hour 'chunks' to focus upon a vocational course much better than split up one hour lessons as it allowed you to focus and really apply yourself into a task

Teachers caring about the 'whole child' (23/10/2017)

Teachers interested in the wellbeing as well as the progress of students; tutors 'seemed kind and caring'; facilitation of the development of positive relationships

Opportunities not present at secondary schools (23/10/2017)

Upskilling that took place with regards to support for post-16 compares favourably to that experienced at secondary school; feeling of privilege compared to secondary peers, including careers events and meeting employers and employees

Development of 'whole child' wellbeing (23/10/2017)

This theme appears in all participant's data. An institution which is student-centred helps to enable a young person to flourish. When all facets including social and emotional wellbeing

and development of relationships are taken into account and prioritised alongside, not of a lower status, than academic attainment; then students are unlikely to feel valued as whole people.

'Working in silence' (6/11/2017)

This is consistent across 2 schools in two counties according to 3 students and for me indicates a reversal of progress from collaborative learning and behaviour for learning to rules and sanctions led classroom management. This was during theoretical sampling and came from the pupils who were in year 10 and 11 in mainstream secondary schools – this theme did not emerge from the 14 to 16 pupil experiences but it may have it I had specifically focused upon it in those interviews. Having observed in the 14 to 16 college in 2016, I did not witness any lessons taking place in silence. From my TEP experience in secondaries this does appear to provide structure and enforcement to enable staff to focus upon delivery of high content, dull, powerpoint driven, repetitive lessons. With no overly punitive sanctions, pupils would be unlikely to conform to this due to the inexorable exam-focused 'pressure cooker' tedium.

Who is responsible for transition and preparing for post-16? (6/11/2017)

In the 14 to 16 college it appears to be integrated within the curriculum for two years and the role of all staff. At secondary schools, staff are free to focus purely on teaching subject with the aim of maximising grades for league table. Pupils are referred on to specific staff and 'outsiders' brought in for post-16 and preparation as a separate entity from subjects. This surely makes it difficult for pupils to view the purpose of the curriculum in terms of application to real life or future planning.

Rapid transition difficult for pupils with high anxiety (24/11/2017)

This was experienced by Alice (and may be the case for others) who decided to leave secondary and though she tried the process was too 'difficult' and a too big step for her to take. Perhaps additional support may have been useful at this stage to aid transition into the 14 to 16 college.

Lack of evolution? (24/11/2017)

Secondaries appear to have devolved and have not taken into account the agenda of compulsory education to 19 with little in the way of transition. Transition is seen as an 'add on' not an 'integrated' part of the curriculum with staff being solely focused upon delivery and assessment of separate subjects only. Has this worsened since academisation? Are they following a business model to expand and are only interested in grades?

Development of the feeling of 'privilege' (15/12/2017)

This was further developed by Liam in terms of the unique identity of the college in being located where it was in allowing students to be mindful and exposed to post-16 students in their setting. There was also the sense of the 'sudden course' change which some pupils had experienced and were annoyed about and I had wondered why they were so forgiving of this at the college as they had been so unforgiving about other things at secondary schools. He

explained that he had been annoyed but the staff had been so supporting that he viewed it as an opportunity and a privilege to learn something new that he would not have had the chance to do at secondary school.

Affirmation of choice (15/12/2017)

Development of confidence through agency, self determination and making own choices. Comparison of self to peers to affirm choices made and direction taken for own future which has led to favourable comparison and positive steps to selected career choice.

'Best fit' for students (15/12/2017)

Colleges prioritise what is best ('best fit') for individual students rather than following any other imposed agenda or prioritising specific institutions over others regardless of what is best for the student. A recognition by colleges (which are businesses) that a positive overall experience is best for students, is likely to enhance the college reputation and gain students in the future.

What causes this disaffection with secondary schools? (9/03/2018)

When taking an overview of the codes and the data in the theoretical category of 'disempowerment', it seemed that there were lots of examples and experiences of participants which had contributed towards this state of being 'lacking power, influence and control' within the secondary mainstream system. There is research as discussed in the literature review which does seem to be consistent and support the data. However, I did wonder why this was felt so acutely by such a diverse group of young people. I had assumed that pupils who felt this way would be 'marginalised' groups with SEND, low socio-economic status, BME pupils etc, or those with behavioural difficulties. However, all of those I interviewed were of average or above ability for their age, despite some having additional needs. Only one pupil would fall into the group highlighted in the research (especially that regarding PRUs), who had Pupil Premium and discussed issues that the school had with his behaviour. I then thought about the difference between primary and secondary school. The former, despite being an educational institution likely to promote a more 'holistic' view of the child with stability with staff and class groups leading to familiarity and conditions which are likely to be favourable for peer: peer and pupil: staff relationship development. However, the transition into secondary school, even with careful and prolonged planning is likely to be difficult moving into a large institution with a much greater focus upon academic achievement and assessment through division of every day into subjects with specialist teachers in different parts of the school. Even the presence of form teachers or pastoral year teams does little to promote a holistic view of the child as so little time is spent in a form group. Opportunities for relationship development with teachers is likely to be limited in this situation and it is no surprise that information of a pupil is reduced to numbers pertaining to effort and performance against targets, sanctions, attendance and SEN reduced to codes on a shared electronic system. It is not a surprise that Liam, an academically achieving student, stated that he was 'just a number'. This is a very different situation to a primary school as described. Peer groups formed at primary schools may be fractured as parents select schools for their children based

upon geographical location or 'marketisation', ie. League tables. Do pupils have any choice in this? I don't know, I didn't ask, my research wasn't about this, except perhaps it was! Secondary schools must feel very impersonal, confusing and stressful to new year 7 pupils who are likely to seek comfort with familiar peers or through formation of new peer groups – many may struggle to form new peer groups due to in-group/out-groups and may become the victim of bullying or find themselves isolated with no familiar staff to support them with whom they have a relationship of 'trust'. Pupils have little opportunity to make choices or have influence within this highly controlled environment through rigorously applied policies, other than perhaps 'voice' through the school council which is likely to be 'managed' by staff in terms of real influence. Pupils can 'see right through this' and knowing that they have little influence in a system in which they are unhappy and is not working for them is likely to make 'marginalised' pupils feel further marginalised and excluded. Pupils in the study astutely realised that many of these policies were in fact arbitrary, not related to learning and in fact created a barrier to learning and prevented formation of teacher-pupil relationships. In fact, the only ways that pupils can exert any influence at secondary school is with 'internal' choices such as choice of peer group, future aspirations that are developed, level of engagement and effort in some or all of the curriculum (attendance whilst in school) and whether or not to attend school. All of these can be influenced by peer groups aligned with, siblings and parents. Pupils who decide to exert influence by not engaging or attending are likely to be sanctioned, and potentially experience internal or exclusions, which are unlikely to stimulate reengagement. The first time at secondary school a pupil is able to have real choices and have any influence is in year 9 when making 'options' for Key Stage 4 or in some pupils' cases, the decision to leave mainstream school. This is interesting as for over 2 years in secondary school, pupils cannot make any real choices but are then expected to make choices which potentially could influence and impact upon the rest of their lives.

Maintaining quality despite limitations (16/01/2018)

I had not realised until my meeting with the Head of the 14 to 16 what the statistics would illustrate such as the gender split, which I had assumed would be similar to that of PRUs (ie male-dominated) but is in fact the opposite. I wonder if this is due to males often expressing externalised behaviours which would lead to direction to PRUs and females behaviour being more internalised which would mean they could be at risk of being 'left' by secondaries. The college has a high proportion of pupils from vulnerable groups – ie higher than averages of pupil premium and SEN. The college clearly must adapt to be able to accommodate the needs of these pupils, prepare them for post-16 and ensure that their processes and systems are truly inclusive which it does appear to be the case. This was reflected by the data collected by ex-students who certainly did seem to feel included. The Head of the college is understandably very passionate about what she is doing at the college though she does indicate that small numbers of pupils is a major factor in being able to deliver what is delivered to the pupils. I think this obviously makes it easier especially in terms of fostering relationships and creation of a 'community' but the creation of this type of culture must go beyond mere numbers and be reflected in policies as well as pedagogy adopted by the college.

Appendix 11: Field notes (made directly after each interview/focus group)

Initial focus group (9/10/17)

3   The group of three seem initially quite nervous especially Kerry, though they clearly know

4   each other as they are making 'small talk' whilst they are waiting for me to set up the

5   recorder. They relaxed well into the conversation and there are many instances (see

6   transcript) where they are building upon each others ideas to develop understanding of

7   shared experiences especially their time at the 14 to 16 college. There is a sense that the 14 to

8   16 college felt at times felt 'cramped' and they felt to a degree vulnerable and singled out

9   when going into the main college due to the wearing of the 'sort of uniform'. They had little

10   to say in terms of the experiences at the post-16 college (perhaps running the interviews on

11   the site may have produced the 'party-line responses' though they were all happy with the

12   courses that they had carefully selected with the support of their own research or due to the

13   integrated support carried out over the whole time at the 14 to 16 college. Interestingly two

14   of the participants were unable to do the choices they selected at the 14 to 16 college but this

15   did not seem to mar their experiences there, despite them ending up doing dramatically

16   different courses they may not have enjoyed. This still felt preferable to remaining at the

17   secondary schools, so the extra transition made was not specifically courses-focused which

18   surprised me as the 14 to 16 prospectus is very focused upon vocational subject choices as

19   making it stand out from secondary schools. From the focus group it appeared that actually

20   it was the staff and the small community feel that was important not necessarily the focus of

21   the literature. The discussion was mainly the transport availability and cost as well as

22   limited and expensive food options. Kerry did talk about the lack of knowledge of her

23   cognitive learning delay which she appeared to be frustrated with and she knew exactly what

24   she needed to help her and her attitude was 'they will get used to it' so it didn't feel like it

25   was something that she felt would be an ongoing issue for concern. They compared this to

26   their ex-secondary schools and it came out favourably, with little in the way of vocational

27   and post-16 support provided as far as they knew and in their limited experience. It was

28   interesting that the participants did not feel coerced in any way to remain at the post-16

29   provider directly affiliated with and on the same site as the 14 to 16 which was interpreted as

30   a positive and enabled them to feel like their needs and career choices were prioritised unlike

31   the experiences at secondary. Kerry, from a rural school with a sixth form talked about how

32   there was an expectation that pupils would just continue at the 6th form (something that made

33   me reflect on my own work at rural schools with sixth forms where this also seemed to be

34   the case, but it was interesting to hear the pupil view on this rather than the convenience and

35   assumptions made by staff). Some assumptions were made about this though there was some

36   reference by Liam to his friends who he knows did not receive the focused support that he

37   did as well as their own experiences in Year 9 regarding options choices. So in a sense there

38   was a feeling of privilege in terms of the 'upskilling' that had occurred at the 14 to 16

39   college which seemed to provide a sense of resilience and independence in these young

40   people. The transition to post-16 was felt by all to have occurred 'smoothly' and informed

41   due to the experiences but the transition into the 14 to 16 felt like 'in at the deep end' with

42   very little preparation at all. This felt like a brave thing to do considering that they were

43   leaving all of their friends and peers and a 'known' institution where they had spent 3 years

44   of education to add an additional transition into the 'unknown', other than word of mouth by

45   a friend. This seems to have been couched by the feeling that everyone there 'was all in it

46   together', ie everyone in Year 10 would be new and be unlikely to know anyone. I felt a

47   sense of community and togetherness at the 14 to 16 with staff being part of this as opposed

48   to on the periphery at secondary school. The participants were very critical of their

49   secondary schools, though this is likely to be the case as you wouldn't leave somewhere

50   where you were happy. They provided some great insight as to why they were unhappy with

51   school staff being the main focus and it was clear that these pupils rejected the schools based

52   on this as they knew that this was unlikely to change at a critical period in their education

53   regardless of how

54   'academic' they are, they all didn't want to feel short-changed and all wanted to do as well as

55   they could within their abilities. Teachers at secondary fell short in terms of how well

56   qualified and present they were and the quality of the teaching received. Labelling of one

57   pupil in a negative way which was felt to be unjustified was the view of one participant.

58   Though these two reasons for rejecting staff are very different it led to the same outcome; ie

59   choosing to leave the school, making a decision about their own education in an effort to

60   improve it in some way, despite having little idea about the option they had selected and with

61   very little in the way of preparation or transition. The participants spoke in a lot of detail

62   about the teaching in terms of provision made for when a teacher is absent (a bone of

63   contention at secondaries with it being dealt with badly in their opinions) with it being felt

64   that when such an incident did occur at 14 to 16 it was dealt with well due to communication

65   between staff and knowledge of pupils, progress and subject areas and specific work being

66   done.

67   For my one-to-one interviews, it will be useful to develop the transition and the factors

68   surrounding from secondary school to 14 to 16 in more detail as the participants had a lot to

69   say about that compared to the transition to post-16 which seems to have been a positive

70   structured experience due to their skills, knowledge and support provided at the 14 to 16

71   college and through their own thinking, planning and research.

72

73   **Fieldnotes: Interview with Holly (16/10/2017)**

74   I really felt with Holly that she had come a long way since year 8 in terms of increasing her

75   confidence to be able to make her own decisions and go to a college she didn't know 'for a

76   change' after being so anxious she was unable to attend school during Key Stage 3. Holly

77   had interestingly only left her secondary education for a year to engage with home-schooling

78   due to anxiety which was due to personal circumstances rather than school-based issues. She

79   therefore was not suffering school phobia which helped when she wanted to reintegrate

80   during Year 9 but was unable to. I feel that she felt surprised and let down by her secondary

81   school as well as unsupported and found herself having to look for an alternative rather than

82   continue home-schooling. She ended up at a small alternative provision (which was the

83   predecessor of the 14 to 16 college) which ended up closing. All the pupils had automatic

84   priority to the 14 to 16 college and she found herself there, which although incidental she

85   does not regret. She compares it to her secondary experience and even though she did want

86   to return to secondary it did compare unfavourably in some aspects to the 14 to 16. She

87   specifically mentions the staff-pupil relationships which were less developed in the

88   secondary which she concludes was a result of class sizes. She also commented on the

89   preparation and support that students received for transition into post-16 including vocational

90   and employability studies. This has served her well and she explained how this had

91   informed her decision making in terms of post-16 choices and her future aspirations which

92   seem to be clearly defined.

93

94   **Fieldnotes: Interview with Lara (16/10/2017)**

95   I very much felt for Lara as she had had a difficult experience at secondary school and had

96   experienced bullying by her peers due to her expression of individuality which did not

97   conform to that of her peers. She felt that teachers and management did not support or try to

98	really help even when her parents intervened – she clearly felt very let down and
99	disappointed in the way she was treated. She ended up choosing to go to the 14 to 16 college
100	despite knowing very little about it – just like all the other participants. This ended up, like
101	the others, being a positive decision and she talks about how she felt accepted, not judged
102	and encouraged to express her individuality (this had definite parallels with Kerry and her
103	refusal to conform to secondary rules though she was not bullied). Lara feels very positive
104	about the relationships at the 14 to 16 college as from the first time she entered she felt that
105	staff were interested in the wellbeing of pupils as well as progress. She also liked the way
106	the timetable and courses were structured which she felt greatly benefited her and compared
107	well to secondary. The additional input and support from staff regarding employment and
108	vocational options and choices has really helped to upskill her. Despite feeling empowered
109	by the 14 to 16 college it is interesting that she has selected to remain at the college on the
110	same campus in order to retain the links with staff and retain the support. This is stark
111	contrast to Kerry, Lloyd and Holly who specifically wanted a change and to experience a
112	different setting. Lara prefers security and she talks a lot about not wanting others to
113	experience the bullying that she did – an experience that is still very fresh for her and has
114	affected her educational experiences. She is also very conscious of other students who may
115	be suffering from bullying even at the college and is keen for things to be done or put into
116	place so they don't suffer as she has. I think that it would be useful to carry out interviews/
117	focus group now with some pupils at the same post-16 provider who did not attend the 14 to
118	16 college to determine if the identified 'problem' is a reality for pupils who leave and if it is
119	still a
120	'problem' to what degree and how did those pupils make sense of it.
121	

Interview with Jamie (20/10/2017)

123	I got a sense that Jamie had had a really difficult time at secondary school, which had
124	affected both him and his mum. He seems to have been labelled by staff and thus almost
125	treated in a specific way which fitted the label which was a negative 'bad lad' label, which
126	was overtly used, he was very aware of it. He was defined purely be his behaviour and how
127	he responded to the 'inflexible' sanctions and systems which did not work for him, he said
128	that staff knew what the best way to deal with him was but they chose to pursue the route
129	that they knew would make him worse and accrue more serious sanctions. This seems
130	almost dehumanising and not accepting of Jamie as a person and there seems to have been

131 little attempt to connect with him in any way beyond sanctions used to wield power and

132 control over an individual who continued to resist. As a result, Jamie reached a point where,

133 in a way he was almost backed into a corner and had to make him own decision or have it

134 made for him. The school were leading towards sending him to a PRU which he did not

135 want to go to as despite the continuous negative discourse and labelling he did not appear

136 accepting of it. He selected himself, with some insight from a pupil he knew and a member

137 of staff, to opt for the 14 to 16 college. This feels like a point where Jamie seized control of

138 a situation that he had up until this point little power over. He had no real idea of what the

139 14 to 16 college was like but it really feels like a case where it is not better the devil you

140 know, and anywhere is better than here but not where the school want me to go. It almost felt

141 like he had nothing to lose at this point. When talking about his time at the 14 to 16 college,

142 there is no mention of negative discourse or being defined by his behaviour. He appears to

143 have become re-engaged with education and the adults within the system He describes

144 relationships at the college and how issues were dealt with in a cooperative, 'adult' way

145 which seems to, in his opinion, prevent the escalation of issues that occurred at secondary

146 school. Staff seem to understand him and helped him to develop in the things he was

147 interested in, in a person-centred and flexible way, such as increasing the hours spent on

148 brickwork and helping him to access a specific course at post-16. This theme has continued

149 into post-16 and he is thinking positively about himself, his aspirations and his future rather

150 than being frustrated by a system that seemed to have given him no breathing space at all. I

151 do wonder what would have happened if Jamie had not selected to go to the 14 to 16 college

152 as he seems to have happened upon it almost by chance – it is likely he would have gone to

153 the PRU and become disenchanted? I have met many Jamie's during my teaching at

154 secondary schools and I found that adopting an inflexible authoritarian approach is

155 ineffective.

156

157 **Fieldnotes: interview with Kerry (23/10/17)**

158 Kerry talked in great detail about the rules that she broke at secondary school especially

159 those pertaining to her appearance which is clearly important to her. She felt that the rules

160 were unnecessarily inflexible and did not take into account her specific medical condition

161 (such as her skin) and specific fabric for trousers despite buying them from the 'Back to

162 School' range. She is clear when she states that none of these rules had anything to do with

163 her learning and in fact constant sanctions and exclusions resulting from 'incorrect'

164 appearance themselves did affect her learning. She laughed a lot during the interview and

165 provided lots of detailed examples to illustrate just how 'ridiculous and lacking in common

166 sense' that she found the system. She also talked about how 'bored' she was in maths at

167 having to wait for others to 'catch up' so being bright in a subject was not rewarded or

168 challenged, just created less scope for her to learn. Despite this she stated that the people

169 who 'annoyed her' were the pupils rather than the staff, perhaps she felt that they were

170 different to her as they were perhaps more willing to conform. Her tipping point was very

171 subtle as it seems to be yet another example of a minor 'uniform' infringement; however,

172 this time it was personal and followed the death of her friend for whom she shaved off her

173 hair for charity. Despite the

174 fact boys were allowed to have hair like this she was sanctioned, which must have been

175 upsetting for her as well as revealing double standards regarding gender identity. Kerry still

176 has her hair shaved very close to her head and has dyed it a vivid red which is no issue at

177 post-16 as there is little in the way of a formal dress code. Kerry also talked a lot about her

178 cognitive development delay which she felt her secondary school did not even acknowledge.

179 Though the 14 to 16 college did accept and provide appropriate support there were issues

180 regarding exam administration which she blames the post-16 college for rather than the 14 to

181 16 college. This led her to experience some issues to attending her selected courses at post16

182 due to her grades being a little lower than expected, but she is now off monitoring and is free

183 to stay as she has clearly proved herself. Kerry, like Jamie, didn't know very much about the

184 14 to 16 but felt that it was a positive thing that everyone would be new and all would have

185 to make friends, and this put her off joining a different secondary school where everyone

186 would know each other. However, she didn't want to repeat this at post-16 and wanted to be

187 somewhere where she already had friends. Kerry has very much positive aspirations about

188 her studies and appears very determined and although she doesn't know what her future

189 plans will be she acknowledges the importance that her current studies have with regard to

190 her future.

191

192 **Fieldnotes: Interview with Liam (23/10/17)**

193 One similarity between Liam, Kerry and Jamie is that he really didn't know a great deal

194 about the 14 to 16 college having being triggered to consider it from seeing an advert on a

195 bus. This then set the wheels in motion and as with the others things happened very quickly

196 through a rapid interview and assessment process. Like the other two, Liam liked the fact

197   (and had considered it when rejecting other secondaries where everyone would already know

198   each other) that everyone at the college would be new and all in the same boat together. I

199   very much felt with Liam that he was a very determined character (like Jamie and Kerry) and

200   was totally dissatisfied with what was going on at his secondary school which was in special

201   measures when he left. The inconsistency of staff led to a lack of knowledge of the students,

202   progress made and staff-student relationships were not able to be developed. Liam even

203   commented on some staff not having subject knowledge. In addition he lost trust in the

204   management of the school as he felt that they were not being honest with the explanations

205   given to students, and Liam also had evidence of untruths to further compound and validate

206   this lack of trust. He said at the end of the interview that a more honest approach may have

207   made him reconsider leaving but the lack of consistency was in his eyes, not acceptable.

208   Liam feels like he made the right choice to go to the 14 to 16 and gives a sense of feeling

209   privileged compared to his peers who stayed at secondary and compares his grades with a

210   peer (Liam got an A and his friend got a D). He even (like Kerry) was accepting of course

211   changes prior to entry as it felt like the consistency of staff and the relationships developed

212   which feel more equal enabled Liam to gain the grades that he needed for post-16 courses

213   that he wanted to do. He also feels privileged compared to his secondary peers due to the

214   high level of support and input from staff with employability, CV writing, application

215   writing, use of 'college' resources which has helped with a smooth informed transition into

216   post-16. He very much is driven by his own aspirations and future aspirations and his

217   choices have been made to ensure the maximum success for this; he feels that some of these

218   were brave but have paid off in the end. There is very much a sense of self-determination

219   and agency with Liam with peers and family members playing no role in his choices.

220

221   **Focus group (comparison with pupils who had not gone to the 14 to 16 college) (6/11/17)**

222

223   This was an interesting group as it consisted of two girls who were good friends who had

224   gone to the same school and were now even doing the same courses at college. Their

225   experience was very different to the third member Bob, who had additional needs and who

226   struggled with his transition. However, there were some areas that all three did agree on and

227   discuss such as the relationships of staff and pupils. All agreed that the system and the rules

228   were not conducive to the development of relationships in a secondary school between staff

229   and pupils and in addition they noted that the having to 'work in silence' rule also prevented

230 any kind of collaborative learning with peers. I was surprised that with a total of 10 pupils I
231 had spoken to that all (from a total of 8 different secondary schools across two counties)
232 were talking about 'working in silence'. As a teacher myself in the secondary sector (having
233 left summer 2015) this to me seems to be a real shift that must be a recent phenomenon as I
234 certainly was never told as a teacher to make students work in silence and this does not relate
235 to any type of pedagogy at all or evidence-based learning. They talked about 'rules' and
236 rigid adherence to them in the same way that the pupils who left to go to the 14 to 16 college
237 did, along with sanctions especially with regard to inflexibility of dress codes which at times
238 made pupils physically uncomfortable. One example of this is making pupils ask permission
239 to take off blazers in the middle of summer which Bob certainly felt was infringing his
240 human rights and had nothing to do with learning. These students were very clear that large
241 classes, rigid rules and working in silence were not conducive to learning or the development
242 of staff-pupil relationships. One example of this given was that this meant that you were less
243 likely to ask a teacher for help as you didn't really know them well enough to know how
244 they would respond or even provide any help. This really did feel like the staff members
245 were distanced from their pupils – this is a consistent theme and is certainly presented as a
246 problem with secondary teaching by all 10 students I have spoken to. Bob is interesting as
247 he had Aspergers and felt that at his secondary school that he had some very robust
248 consistent support put into place which he felt comfortable with. He felt quite stressed with
249 all of the changes during his transition and did not feel prepared at all and is only now (7
250 weeks into term) finding his feet after a few course changes. Some of these areas include life
251 skills, such as catching buses and using timetables which is new for him at college. He
252 initially blamed college staff for not catering for him in the same way as school but did
253 through questioning and reflecting determine that actually perhaps his transition should have
254 started earlier and that it would have been better to get to know key staff at college before
255 arriving rather than just looking around the facilities. Relationships are key to all of the
256 processes and their successes. In terms of preparation for post-16 all three felt as though
257 staff at secondary rely on external speakers coming in or a particular member of staff for
258 whom this was a designated role. Academic subjects and preparing for future careers and
259 adulthood and transition to appropriate post-16 courses feels like it is not integrated into the
260 secondary curriculum at all. With the recent move to compulsory education to age 19 this
261 feels as though secondaries have not adapted to account for this. The fact that they are exam
262 grade focused and measured on these for league tables is unlikely to change this as schools

263   have their priority dictated by these national measures and policies. In contrast, the 14 to 16

264   college (and all other college affiliated alternative provisions) are measured on progress in

265   the same way that colleges are and are therefore unfettered by the system and able to ensure

266   a focus on employment and adulthood. Perhaps secondaries have become 'not fit for

267   purpose'?

268

269   **Interview with Alice (pupil who considered the 14 to 16 college but ended up being**

270   **home-schooled for her GCSEs) (24/11/17)**

271

272   Alice was an interesting interview with a number of interesting threads that emerged. She

273   left secondary school due to enduring bullying for a year before she reached her 'tipping

274   point' where it was now affecting her mental health and the school consistently failed to act,

275   despite

276   Alice's parents becoming involved. The same themes arose again regarding lack of control

277   of staff over classes and lack of faith in the abilities of teachers to act in her best interests – in

278   her words 'they were not interested'. This is incredible and I now wonder if as a secondary

279   teacher, I missed any pupils that were having a miserable time being bullied. This case was

280   quite personal as I was bullied for three years at the same school at Alice and was miserable

281   and it did impact upon my mental health. I ended up taking matters into my own hands by

282   fighting back the bullies as staff were unwilling to intervene even with parental involvement.

283   Alice did consider moving to the 14 to 16 college and did go for an interview and a tour but

284   at this stage her anxiety levels were too high for her to consider entry. This is a shame and I

285   wonder if something could be done regarding the quite rapid transition that pupils experience

286   on arrival to the college which pupils have described as 'in at the deep end' which might help

287   those like Alice. She really feels that despite her maturity and dedication to her studies at

288   home that she did miss out on the social aspect and she has more than made up for this now

289   at college. She has made friends already and is enjoying being treated as an equal and an

290   adult by staff and being with students who she describes as 'more mature' than her peers at

291   secondary. Perhaps there is a case for secondary staff becoming more like college staff in

292   terms of relationships and reducing the power differential which does act as a barrier to

293   learning as well as to the sense of community. Alice's transition and preparation for college

294   has been affected as she was only left to research post-16 options herself online and has

295   changed provider and course already before now settling. There is a sense that this could

296 have been avoided if she had been in attendance at an educational provision and received

297 transition planning as part of an integrated programme. I do wonder if other students that end

298 up being home-schooled due to the systems and lack of relationships (peer and/or staff) and

299 support of secondary schools are able to manage to achieve what Alice has done. She has

300 managed to overcome her anxiety and has done well in her examinations which I believe is

301 in part due to her maturity and self-motivation to achieve and overcome adversity. I do not

302 believe that all students would be able to do what Alice has done and I wonder how many

303 students have become NEETs who have found themselves effectively excluded from a

304 system that is unbending, impersonal and does not work to develop the 'whole child' being

305 wholly focused upon grades and rule enforcement.

306

307

308 **Interview with Liam** (15/12/17) – discussion of concepts and emerging theory (theoretical

309 sampling)

310 Liam agreed with the problem section of my conceptual diagram though he said that it wasn't

311 the rigidity of the systems that were an issue for him but the lack of consistency and lack of

312 trust in senior management (so this needs to be recoded in order to capture this as some of

313 the other pupils have a similar issue re bullying). However, Liam did agree that the outcome

314 for pupils was the same and when he saw the word 'dehumanisation' he smiled and knew

315 exactly what it meant and stated 'I was just a number'. For the concept of inbetween school

316 and college he stated that the 14 to 16 college was like both but different at the same time.

317 This he viewed as a positive and links again with the feeling of 'privilege' – which Liam

318 agrees was the case. He said that he 'really loved it there and that the staff were great'. I

319 asked him about why students had been so forgiving and accommodating despite a number

320 including himself not being able to do the original courses that they had selected. He stated

321 that it had initially annoyed him but he had really liked the teachers and he felt 'privileged'

322 again to be studying subjects and courses he hadn't done before such as sport and

323 engineering that he would have had no opportunity to do at secondary school. He knew that

324 relationships and the sense of the community was more important than the course content

325 and this helped him achieve good grades which have enabled him to access level 3 courses at

326 college. He reflected upon his journey from leaving secondary school at the end of year 9

327 and said that he had a greatly increased sense of confidence and ability to plan and make his

328 own decisions (a continued sense of agency and self determination). He talked about what a

329 great headteacher had been at the college and when I asked what he would have done had the

330 14 to 16 college not existed. He said he didn't know but would have probably 'had to put up

331 with secondary school' but would probably not have achieved grades that would have

332 allowed him to study the courses he is now doing which will enable him to go onto his

333 selected university course in the near future.

334

Discussion with College Y Student Support Manager (SSM) (15/12/17) - discussion of concepts and emerging theory

337 SSM was interested in the findings and emerging theory which had moved from the original

338 focus of transition into post-16 which was not the identified 'problem' raised during

339 interviews with the participants. Post-16 transition was in fact viewed as being relatively

340 problem-free and smooth and well-planned especially by ex-14 to 16 college pupils as they

341 had been effectively engaged in transition from entering the 14 to 16 college. I discussed the

342 specific positives raised by participants from interviews as well as some of the minor

343 negatives which SSM did state could easily be rectified. SSM was interested in the refocus

344 upon secondary schools and systems which pupils had rejected and how students who had

345 transitioned to a 'new college' at that age would be prepared for a similar transition at post-

346 16 – development of experience and knowledge contributing to agency and self-

347 determination. We did discuss how the new move towards compulsory up to 19 education

348 had not been in practice done particularly well with few secondary schools looking outwards

349 beyond GCSE examinations (on which they are graded/league tables etc). SSM used the

350 term 'best fit' for students and was pleased to hear that the 14 to 16 college takes a non-

351 biased view when advising pupils about future options and looks at what is best for them

352 which other educational providers do not (this has been both my experience as a teacher,

353 SSM's (having said before she cannot go into specific schools to meet students as they wish

354 to promote their own post-16 provision) and the participants themselves. She talked about

355 the main priority of College Y as being the wellbeing of students and providing them with

356 the best experience which will in turn help them to achieve the best grades in the most

357 suitable courses (she feels that most post-16 providers have this priority), though post-16

358 providers are measured differently to secondary schools – perhaps this accounts for some of

359 the discrepancy. She talked about how it was clear from her experience at secondary senco

360 forums that some secondary sencos were not aware of the full range of options for post-16

361 students in the area or what each college was able to provide.

362

Meeting with Head of 14 to 16 College (16/01/18) discussion of concepts and emerging theory

We discussed some of the statistics and features of the college which are not available on Ofsted or any other site including the college website. During the year 2016-2017 (the last year in which the participants were at the college in year 11), there were 64% female students and 36% boys. This was interesting and I wonder why, as this is not something that could be explained specifically from the interview data, though I wonder if the opposite trend in the composition of

PRU students may be a factor. Class sizes tend to be 18 to 20 in size with groups who need more specific support being between 7 to 15 in number. The progress of students is measured in the same way as secondary schools. In terms of permanent exclusions there were two in the last academic year (1 the year before) but 9 fixed term exclusions (with 6 the year before). A lot of work seems be done with pupils in terms of addressing behaviours to prevent permanent exclusions occurring. We discussed the issue of transition into the college being described as 'very rapid' by ex-students. The Head said that there is little that can be done with this due to the nature of the additional transition. Schools are unwilling to let students attend open or taster days at the college and so these have to be run in the evenings. I think that this is a shame as surely it is in the schools interest to help a pupils to make an effective transition into a new setting. The message given to students on open evenings is that they are all in 'the same boat' – this came out strongly as a key theme in the data. There is also an induction week prior to starting at the college in the new academic year but the transition will still be rapid. The head stated that she believes that underlying issue is wider in that she does not feel that students are prepared for the transition from key stage 3 to key stage 4 anyway – this is interesting and does seem to be a theme that was touched upon by the focus group of students who remained at secondary school for GCSEs. Other data – 57.2% FSM, average for the city is 44.8% and the surrounding rural county 21.67%. SEN is 40% (compared to 16.7% in the city and 12.9% in surrounding rural LEA). Clearly this college is attended by some of the most vulnerable students in the area with the most needs. We discussed the issue that some participants had with last minute course changes – this was acknowledged as sometimes happening as it can depend on overall numbers in a small college. The college does not offer triple science but it is made clear to students during their interview exactly what the college can and cannot offer. It is often the

395 case that it may be felt that the curriculum is not appropriate to some students and they may

396 be told that it may be more beneficial for them to remain in mainstream secondary. This is

397 interesting and the college seem to be more interesting in ensuring that they are able to meet

398 students needs within their limitations. Many students have applied to join the college for

399 year 11 (halfway through GCSEs – 15 in Sepember but the head stated that many of these

400 were in 'dire straights' and almost all of these have responded and are now thriving despite it

401 only being for a short period of time. When I asked the head what she felt the college was all

402 about she said 'it is for individuals who want an individual response and want good teaching

403 and learning and support through well-being issues', which may be either a low to high level.

404 She emphasised 'trust and care' as being key to working with the pupils. Many of the pupils

405 want and need to be able to express and be accepted as an individual, many are unhappy and

406 many need to be listened to. This very much supports what the students themselves had told

407 me during their interviews and is also reflected in the Ofsted report as well.

408

Appendix 12a: Interview transcript (Holly) (16/10/2017)

JH: Can you tell me from your perspective, what can you tell me about the choices that you have made so far about your own education?

Holly: Er I am not sure really

JH: OK so all the choices that you've made on your educational journey, what sticks in your mind about choices that you have made and how they've turned out?

Holly: I think that coming to College Y was a really good move for me, I really enjoy it here.

JH: Why did you choose to move from your secondary school to the 14 to 16 College?

Holly: Well I had stopped going to school and ended up being home-schooled through a company but I was really lonely at home. After a couple of months, I asked to go back to Secondary School F and they said they didn't have any room for me any more. So I went to School I when one of the friends I had made at Secondary School F told me about it.

JH: So how did you end up dropping out of Secondary School F and being home-schooled?

Holly: Well I had a lot of stuff going on at home and it was difficult and I felt too anxious to go to school and the teachers didn't really try and help me. I didn't enjoy it at home and I was quite upset that Secondary School F wouldn't let me go back, it's like they had forgotten about me.

JH: So how did you end up at the 14 to 16 college?

Holly: Well when School I had closed I had direct entry into 14 to 16, everyone did if they wanted to.

JH: So how was your experience at the 14 to 16 college?

Holly: Overall it was really good. It was like school in some ways, like doing maths and English but I really liked how the teachers got to know you and they were easy to talk to and if you couldn't hand work in or if you had any problems they listened. At school the teachers didn't really get to know you but I think that was partly cos the classes were so big but at 14 to 16 they were a lot smaller, my biggest class had 18 in it which was much better.

27 JH: So how did the 14 to 16 college prepare you for life afterwards, for going to college or

28 work?

29 Holly: They had us do vocational studies at College X on Thursdays to give us a college

30 experience while being at school. This gave me an opportunity to get a qualification while

31 being at school. The school also talked to us about what is expected at college when we leave

32 such as, meeting deadlines and getting to lessons on time.

33 JH: So as a result of the preparation at the 14 to 16 college, what options did you consider for

34 college courses or work?

35 Holly: I considered going to college and applying for an apprenticeship, I decided what I

36 wanted to do in the summer holidays leading up to college starting. I decided I didn't want to

37 do an apprenticeship because I knew I wanted to go to University.

38 JH: So what exactly influenced your decision to come to College Y rather than one of the

39 others?

40 Holly: When we were applying for Colleges I actually researched the colleges I wanted to go

41 to which were, College Y and College Y. I saw that College Y has a 99% pass rate all across

42 and knew that I would get a good education while attending here. I had already been doing a

43 vocational course at College X and wanted a change, I didn't want to go there for another

44 year and College Z was too far away for me to go to. In the end I decided College Y was the

45 best choice because of the pass rate and that it was close to where I live.

46 JH: So what are you studying at College Y?

47 Holly: So this is my second year here now and I am studying Health and Social Care Level 3.

48 Last year I did Health and Social level 2. I really like the Health and Social tutors and I have

49 the same tutors that I had last year which really helps.

50 JH: Is there any information that you feel that would be useful to enable students to make

51 choices about post-16 education whilst at school or college?

52 Holly: More information about University's such as going to open days so students can get

53 information they need. If it's not possible to go to open days I think it would be a good idea

54 to at least get an email so students can email the University's about their enquiries.

55 JH: So if you could go back in time and change any of the decisions that you made, is there
56 anything you would do differently?

57 Holly: I would ask more questions; there were things I had to find out myself that I think
58 should have been made available to us while being at school. I didn't ask if I would be able
59 to re-do my GCSE's if I didn't pass and I had to do that research myself and I understand
60 that there is an expectation that you need to pass to make sure that doesn't happen but I think
61 it should be told to students so they don't stress themselves out thinking they can't get into
62 colleges.

63 JH: Is there anything else you would like to tell me that you think is important or any questions
64 that you would like to ask?

65 Holly: No.

66 JH: Many thanks for agreeing to participate in this interview.

67

Appendix 12b: Interview transcript 2 (Lara) (16/10/2017)

JH: Can you tell me from your perspective, what can you tell me about the choices that you have made so far about your own education?

Lara: Er.. I am not sure..

JH: OK so all the choices that you've made on your educational journey, what sticks in your mind about choices that you have made and how they've turned out?

Lara: Erm, I think that coming to X College was a good one, as it suits me well.

JH: Why did you choose to move from your secondary school to the 14 to 16 College?

Lara: I had problems at my previous school with other students; therefore I felt I needed a fresh start in a new environment.

JH: So what sort of problems were you having? Can you tell me a little more about that?

Lara: Well I just got bullied quite a lot and I ended up feeling really alone and that I didn't want to go to school anymore. The teachers didn't really want to help and my parents tried to talk to them but like they said they would do stuff but they never did..

JH: So tell me what it was like at the 14 to 16 college?

Lara: I liked the fact you're allowed to be an individual at 14-16 college, no one judges you or puts you down for the way you choose to look, and tutors also encourage you to be individual by allowing body modifications. Furthermore I moved to 14-16 college because I felt the way the time table is structured supports you in progressing vastly in vocational and specialist subject areas, I preferred to spend 3 hours twice a week to study one subject rather than having the hours split up between the week as it's easier to keep focused and get into. Finally once I had my interview I knew it was the right place for me to be, the tutors seemed really kind and like they cared deeply about the wellbeing and success of students, I also took a liking to how small the college was it meant there was less students which made me feel more comfortable and safe when attending.

JH: How do you feel that the 14 to 16 college prepared you for post-16 study or work?

27   Lara: We had two careers events where we could talk to apprenticeship company's and staff

28   from colleges to help us make a decision on where we wanted to go. Also at one of the

29   careers events we had a presentation from each of the colleges letting us know what the

30   college was about and the kind of students that place is right for.

31   We also had one or two careers meeting where we spoke to a woman about our interest and

32   aspirations and she would recommend what we could do, or she would let us know if what

33   we had in mind was a good idea or not.

34   JH: Did you feel that this was all useful now that you look back?

35   Lara: Yeah, cos I don't think I would have got any of that at secondary school and I think it

36   has made it easier studying here.

37   JH: Can you explain what was the most useful thing the 14 to 16 college did that helped with

38   your decision-making for college?

39   Lara: The careers event was the most useful to me as an individual as I got to talk to a range

40   of people from all different areas, rather than deciding where I wanted to go based off what I

41   already knew, I got to learn new things to help me know for sure what I truly wanted to do. I

42   also got to talk to people who had experienced these things themselves so they would be able

43   to tell exactly what it's like to study or work in that area.

44   JH: As a result of the careers events, what were the options that you considered for post-16

45   courses?

46   Lara: I was stuck between Z College and level 3 Animal management or Y college and level

47   3 Health and social care. The courses at X College I considered were a Level 3 in

48   Engineering or Level 3 Next-Gen Computing. I also thought about an apprenticeship in

49   electrical installation or plumbing.

50   JH: So which course did you end up choosing and why?

51   Lara: I ended up choosing Level 3 Next-Gen Computing as I feel it was the one that suited me

52   most and I think it will give me some good career options.

53   JH: So what was the main influence that led to you choosing to study here at X College?

54   Lara: I felt I should stay somewhere where I am used to being, where I am close to the 14 to

55   16 in case I am ever in need of extra support or someone to go to. I know the teachers well

56   and often see them around the site, they always talk to me.

57   JH: So how are you finding life at X College?

58   Lara: I am enjoying it and it is nice being so close to the 14 to 16 college. My tutors are

59   really helpful and I am enjoying my course. The only negative thing I have to say about X

60   College is I feel teachers need to be a little less oblivious to students who are having a hard

61   time or students who are getting bullied, as I saw a couple of students wasn't coping well and

62   I don't believe they got all the support they could. With the bullying I feel that went on a fair

63   bit and teachers didn't really pick up on it, or tried to ignore it.

64   JH: So have you been bullied yourself at X College?

65   Lara: No but cos I was bullied at my secondary school I know how bad it can be and I don't

66   like to see others experiencing it when teachers should be helping.

67   JH: So if you could go back in time and change any of the decisions that you made, is there

68   anything you would do differently?

69   Lara: I wouldn't change anything as I'm happy with the way everything turned out and I know

70   I made the right decision moving to 14-16 then going onto the course I have.

71   JH: Is there anything else you would like to tell me that you think is important or any questions

72   that you would like to ask?

73   Lara: No I don't think so.

74   JH: Many thanks for agreeing to participate in this interview.

Appendix 12c: Interview transcript (Jamie) (20/10/17)

2 JH: Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed Jamie.

3 Jamie: No problem

4 JH: So we are going to start off with quite a broad question so don't worry if you can't
5 answer it because we are going to come back to it at the end. So the first question is, I want
6 you to think about all the choices that you've made so far about your education all the way
7 through school. Can you tell me something about those choices?

8 Jamie: Erm, well when you are starting at school you don't really know that you've got any
9 choices, you just sort of like do what everybody else is doing which is sort of why I went to
10 Secondary School E and it was only when it wasn't working out for me there, you know
11 when it was a bit rubbish that I realised that I had some choices and that's when I was able to
12 make them but I didn't really want to make them they were sort of made for me almost.

13 JH: When you say 'they were almost made for me almost', what do you mean by that Jamie?

14 Jamie: Well at Secondary School E it just wasn't (sighs) it wasn't really good for me there
15 and I don't think I'd have done much if I'd stayed there cos of what was going on and I was
16 having a pretty bad time there. And it wasn't really the right school for me.

17 JH: OK we can come back to that a bit later as we are going to explore your educational
18 journey as we go through. So what I am going to ask you to do now, I want you to think
19 about the factors that have affected you. So on the left of the sheet you've got Not important
20 and on the right you have very important, so there are no numbers on it you just need to draw
21 a cross or a circle to indicate how influential you think each factor was for your
22 decisionmaking. So this first is looking at the things that influenced you when moving from
23 your secondary school to the 14 to 16 college. (Jamie completes). OK and if you could do
24 the same again and this is moving from the 14 to 16 college to post-16, if you could rate the
25 factors in terms of how much they influenced you in the same way please. (Jamie
26 completes). OK, so right thank you very much for doing that. So lets have a look at the first
27 one erm, right so you've got friends and peers so they didn't really have much of an effect on
28 you moving to the 14 to 16 college. Could you comment on that?

29   Jamie: Yeah, I mean (pause) I didn't really know anybody at the 14 to 16 college. I had

30   friends who had gone to School J and that was sort of a bit of an option. I just went to the

31   college and met people there and thought yeah.

32   JH: OK, and you have rated other people who aren't your friends as quite influential such as

33   family members and teachers. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

34   Jamie: Well obviously like my mum she wants what's best for me and I'm not in like the all

35   the writing and that type of thing so from what I saw at the 14 to 16 when we went there, you

36   do do it but it's not like you are going from one classroom to another classroom to another

37   classroom. There's a lot of like a lot of work you know bricklaying that I wanted to do and I

38   was able to bricklaying.

39   JH: So the courses and curriculum offered you have rated as very important…

40   Jamie: Yeah, cos being in a classroom you just feel like everyone's on top of you and any

41   time you make a mistake the teachers are on your case straight away (at secondary school)

42   you know you can't say anything, you can't do anything. You just felt like you wasn't

43   comfortable but been able to something that I enjoy and wanted to do you know it was good.

44   JH: So you have rated future career plans as very influential, can you tall me a bit more about

45   that?

46   Jamie: Well I started off doing a couple of hours bricklaying at the 14 to 16 but the teachers

47   were really good they managed to get me sort of like moved up and before I moved to

48   college I was doing up to 13 hours a week bricklaying. And you know it's what I really want

49   to do and I really enjoy it. It makes me not mind doing the other lessons cos I know I've got

50   that to go to, it's not all going to be in a classroom.

51   JH: And you have got here that the resources and facilities were important too…

52   Jamie: Yeah cos you've got to be able to actually do it you know you can't sit in a classroom

53   and say this is how you build this sort of a wall and this is how you do this type of brickwork

54   then you are actually going and doing it. If you haven't got the rooms and the equipment and

55   everything you can't do it so they're really important.

56 JH: So obviously it wasn't working out for you at Secondary School E so what was the sort

57 of turning point that prompted you to look elsewhere? What was going on at that school for

58 you?

59 Jamie: Well I was sort of obviously year 9 and it had been going on since year 7. You'd sort

60 of like get a bit of a reputation and the teachers don't give you a break, you know if you do

61 any little thing wrong, things that other kids might do and just get a little bit of a warning you

62 are getting a C1, then a C2, then a C3 or some of that rubbish and it just wasn't fair that I'd

63 be getting it for that cos I've got this reputation. And it makes you more angry and you get

64 really annoyed with them and then you get your next level so you're get even more angry

65 and then you end up getting thrown out or get put in isolation or you get excluded or

66 summat. It was really getting to me and it was getting to my mum as well.

67 JH: So this was happening a lot for you at school that you were getting a lot of sanctions that

68 you feel were unfair?

69 Jamie: Yeah, not all of them, but I just don't think they were (pause) er managing it right.

70 They weren't sort of … they knew what I was like and they knew that if they just left me

71 alone I'd calm down and I'd come back but they had to sort of like 'no these are the rules

72 and this is what you've gotta do'. There was no willing to let you do what was best for you

73 so you know it was like this is what you've gotta do and I was like 'no, I need to calm down'

74 and they were like 'no you can't you've got to come and do this' which makes you even

75 more angry. It gets you even more upset. So that was bad.

76 JH: So how is behaviour managed differently at the 14 to 16 college?

77 Jamie: Well they don't really have the same rules, they talk to you like you're a bit more of

78 an adult and explain things to you (pause) and you just think well you start to listen more

79 then and you know you're not getting these sanctions for stupid little things and they let you

80 calm down, but you don't really get to the position where you have to calm down because

81 you're being treated a bit better and you're spending a lot of time doing things that you want

82 to do. I never got any detentions or exclusions at the 14 to 16 and I was getting them all the

83 time at Secondary School E.

84 JH: So in terms of how you were prepared for post-16, what sort of things were done to help

85 you with this at the 14 to 16 college?

86 Jamie: Well I was really lucky cos there was this teacher who got me doing additional work

87 at the college so I ended up spending more time doing the bricklaying so that really got me

88 ready for going there and concentrating on that cos I already knew a lot of the tutors and I

89 knew where everything was so you were just a lot more relaxed and comfortable going there.

90 You already know the area, it's not like it was a big change cos I was used to going to that

91 building and seeing those people.

92 JH: So lets have a look at the factors you identified that influenced your decisions for post-16

93 education on the second sheet that you filled in. So in coming to College X, your friends and

94 peers have become more influential than they were before so can you tell me something

95 about that?

96 Jamie: Yeah cos you're sort of (pause) it's not like when I was at school where you were like

97 you might be in different classrooms with different people all the time, you know your

98 friends a lot better. I wouldn't say like they were friend friends cos you don't really see them

99 on a night but you know you're doing the same thing with them so you're comfortable with

100 them and you all know each other.

101 JH: So family members and teachers you have rated as having more of an influence now, could

102 you tell me a bit about that?

103 Jamie: Yeah well mum was like you know you're really enjoying what you're doing and you

104 know you're getting good at it so why would I want to move from there, And you know the

105 teachers I've got I get on well with, I listen to them. You know they like treat me a bit more

106 like an adult and listen to me and they teach me new things.

107 JH: So if you had stayed at Secondary School E, how do you think that would have ended

108 up?

109 Jamie: Oh I would have probably have ended up getting excluded or something. I might have

110 ended up doing this course at College X but I wouldn't know as much as I do about it but I

111 don't know if I would be doing it.

112 JH: What course are you doing at College X?

113 Jamie: I'm doing a level 2 in brickwork.

114   JH: So you have indicated that courses, future career plans and resources were very influential

115   on your choices at post-16. Can you tell me a bit more…

116   Jamie: yeah, I really enjoyed it when I got to extra hours and one of my tutors is looking at

117   sorting out an apprenticeship for me as well which is really really good erm and it's all

118   through doing bricklaying which I really enjoy,

119   JH: So is that you're future career plan that you want to go into the construction industry?

120   Jamie: Yeah, I've got a friend at School J who has been doing joinery and at some point in the

121   future we'd like to set up our own business together as like a building firm.

122   JH: So you have indicated that size of college didn't really matter..

123   Jamie: No because it didn't matter to me how big the college was as long as the things that I

124   want to do are there.

125   JH: That's interesting because you indicated that this was an important factor influencing you

126   when you moved to the 14 to 16 college….

127   Jamie: Yeah, cos there were so many people at School E you didn't really matter whereas

128   that was different at the 14 to 16 college, it felt like I did matter but now the size of the

129   college doesn't really matter cos like the course you're on is like a college inside the college

130   if you know what I mean, it still feels quite small.

131   JH: Thanks for that, I have a few other specific questions, some of which you've answered

132   already. So we've talked about why you wanted to leave School E which mainly seemed to

133   be the behaviour management system, would you agree with that?

134   Jamie: Yeah

135   JH: And maybe some of the relationships with teachers?

136   Jamie: Yeah, they weren't very good but I, well it wasn't just them but like they were just

137   inflexible they wouldn't change what they were doing.

138   JH: So did you look at other alternatives before you went to the 14 to 16 college?

139   Jamie: No not really, I knew a friend who was going to School H but I didn't really fancy that

140   and I really didn't want to the PRU so I really liked the look of it as soon as I went in there.

141   JH: So you have mentioned the PRU, was that an option?

142   Jamie: I think it would have been more than an option if I'd kept at Secondary School E.
143   I think I would have been sent there. I didn't want to go there, I didn't want to be labelled as
144   this bad lad and going to places like that cos I don't think that I am although a teacher did tell
145   me that I was once er I wanted to actually get out and do something that I enjoyed that I was
146   going to be good at. And I wanted a fresh start really because the teachers at 14 to 16 didn't
147   know me so I don't think they was going to erm treat me differently to others. I felt like I
148   had to look around and find somewhere I wanted to go to before the school sent me to the
149   PRU. A teacher did suggest the 14 to 16 college as an option and that led to me going to visit
150   and applying for a place.

151   JH: So tell me about the teaching and the relationships with staff at the 14 to 16 college, how
152   was that different or similar?

153   Jamie: Well at Secondary School E you see loads of members of staff each day so you don't
154   really get to know them and they don't get to know you they are just following the rules.
155   Whereas at the 14 to 16 you were seeing the same people all of the time so you get to know
156   them and they get to know you. So like if you're having a bad day they know to leave you
157   alone and when sort of to talk to you and everything so you are just you get a proper sort of
158   how to deal with each other.

159   JH: So you have gone to College X, did you consider any other options?

160   Jamie: Erm, I thought maybe about an apprenticeship but I'm learning everything I need to
161   learn there and I can get an apprenticeship after I finish there. And I will be ahead of a lot of
162   the other apprentices cos they will be starting from scratch and I will already know how to do
163   a lot of it.

164   JH: So what was the process like moving to the 14 to 16?

165   Jamie: I just went and applied online which my teachers helped me with. Then I went for an
166   interview and had a look round with my parents, and did my maths and English assessment
167   at the same time and they told me that I had got a place.

168   JH: OK, so is there anything else that you want to add or to ask me?

169   Jamie: No no I think that's everything.

170   JH: Well thank you very much for talking to me today and good luck with your studies.

171

172

Appendix 12d: Interview transcript (Kerry) (23/10/17)

2 JH: So the first question is quite broad so if you don't understand it then we can go back to it

3 at the end. So thinking about all of the choices that you have made about your education

4 through your life so far, how do you feel about them, the choices that you have made?

5 Kerry: They were all right, I can't go back and change any of it so I might as well just get in

6 with it.

7 JH: If you could do that would you?

8 Kerry: Erm, based on grades, yeah, but based on the help I got no, definitely not.

9 JH: So it seems like a balance of grades versus support. So is it right to say that you are pretty

10 pleased with your choices?

11 Kerry: Yeah

12 JH: So what I am going to I ask you to do and I will read it out for you as I am sorry but the

13 paper is not pink, so this one is about factors that influenced you going from School B going

14 to the 14 to 16 college. (shows Kerry the handout) So there are no numbers you are just

15 grading the degree between the two extremes of Not important at all, and very important.

16 (JH reads out each whilst Kerry then indicates degree of importance for each factor)

17 JH: So for friends, we have got no influence at all, is that because you said you were the only

18 one from School B?

19 Kerry: Yeah, no-one I knew went to college so it was just me (laughs). I let everyone know

20 but I was still on the register for a year (laughs). I told them that I was leaving but I was

21 still on the register and they made me choose options so I picked the options that I knew

22 were really full (laughs). It's not like I didn't tell them I was leaving. JH: So family and

23 friends, you haven't really rated that as important…

24 Kerry: No it's not their life.

25 JH: So you have rated teachers as being quite influential, can you tell me more about that?

26 Kerry: Erm there were like a couple of teachers that I liked at School B but I didn't learn

27 anything much in classes so I didn't see the point in turning up to a load of lessons where I

28   am not learning very much. Like in maths I just understood it all, like I did understand

29   everything but they wouldn't challenge me, they just made me sit there and I would have to

30   wait for everyone else to catch up.

31   JH: So you were left with nothing to do?

32   Kerry: I wasn't allowed to leave so I was just sat there like at the back of the room thinking

33   what do I do now.

34   JH: Location you haven't felt is important which is interesting when you consider the distances

35   you have travelled in your moves.

36   Kerry: Well I mean it's cos I knew I had to move schools and the only schools that I could

37   move to where in the city so I didn't really care where in the city.

38   JH: So for the courses, you have rated that as the most important factor, can you tell me about

39   that?

40   Kerry: Well I just wanted to do the courses that I wanted to do.

41   JH: OK, so you have size as being quite an important factor too, tell me about this one.

42   Kerry: Well there were loads of people in my class at School B like 30, which isn't much but

43   it is for me as I get quite overwhelmed easily. And erm I wasn't really getting any support I

44   needed like obviously I have my cognitive development issues and need my overlay and

45   everything and they refused and told me I was fine. I thought if I move to a smaller place

46   then I will get more support. At the 14 to 16 there were like 11 people in my class and the

47   classrooms were about the same size so it was like much better.

48   JH: For future career plans, you have said that you don't have any at all, but you have put it

49   has been fairly important..

50   Kerry: Yeah well it might be important in the future at some point.

51   JH: and the resources you have rated as having some importance?

52   Kerry: Well obviously the classrooms were better and they had places where you could be

53   screened for dyslexia and stuff and that was important and they had a place I could go if I

54   had panic attacks and there were counsellors and a nurse who came every Tuesday.

55 JH: So I would like you to do the same again, but this time I would like you to do it for

56 moving from the 14 to 16 college to here (reads out options slowly whilst Kerry completes

57 the rating sheet). OK so friends and peers have increased in importance, can you tell me

58 about that?

59 Kerry: Well my friends from 14 to 16 and my friends from School B and I wanted to go

60 somewhere where some of them were going. I didn't really want to be on my own again.

61 JH: Family members have become more important too…

62 Kerry: Yeah well (pause). I didn't want to stay at College X as I knew they didn't do A

63 levels and my dad wants me to do academic routes too and erm his friend that he used to

64 work with said that College Y was a pretty good college so I thought I would have a look.

65 JH: Teachers are still a little important. Did you know anything about them before you came

66 here?

67 Kerry: No I just talked to the teachers at the 14 to 16 about where I should go and they were

68 like try here. They all have good knowledge about all of the colleges and they did stuff in

69 assemblies and had careers people in and they didn't seem to coerce you to stay with them.

70 They seemed to be interested in what was the best for the students.

71 JH: So location you have in the same place as before…

72 Kerry: yeah cos I was like in the centre of the city before and they gave me a bus pass that

73 would get me anywhere and on weekends too for £2 and erm, so it was easy and I only had

74 to take two buses whereas here I have to take three buses and it's not that frequent and it

75 costs more and they are less frequent.

76 JH: So college resources you have rated highly again..

77 Kerry: Yeah they have areas that can help you for dyslexia and my cognitive issues and I

78 have been offered help for if I can't understand things in class and they were like you can do

79 a once a week session or whenever you need it I can go to get help.

80 JH: So leading on from that, thinking about School B was there anything else about it other

81 than what you have already mentioned that made you decide to leave?

82   Kerry: (laughs) I didn't like the people they annoyed me. Mainly the students. The school

83   was too strict, my friend died a couple of years ago and I wanted to shave my hair off to raise

84   money for charity and erm, they told me that I couldn't cos it didn't fit in with their

85   guidelines even though there were guys with shaved hair but I'm not allowed it cos I am a

86   girl, but I did it anyway. They didn't kick me out but they were too strict. There was one

87   time I got into trouble cos I got my school trousers from Asda cos they are like really comfy

88   and there are winter ones so they were thick and one of the teachers felt my leg and said

89   that's the wrong material (laughs). I was like these are school trousers from Asda, they were

90   from the back to school range, how are they not appropriate and the wrong material, they are

91   school trousers. You had to wear long sleeve shirts and I had a skin condition on my arms up

92   to my elbows and my mum wrote me a note and I wore three quarter length shirts (shows on

93   arm) and they tried to send me out of class once when I was in drama cos I was wearing the

94   wrong uniform even though I had a note and I had a rash on my arms. And you had to wear

95   black shoes and I wore black boots and I got into trouble as my trousers were inside the

96   boots instead of outside them and that doesn't make any difference to me, it's not like I

97   purposely tucked them in.

98   JH: Did any of these things affect your learning?

99   Kerry: Well yes, cos I got took out of class for them, but the things themselves didn't. I am

100   naturally ginger and I died my hair bright orange and I got took out of class for that as well.

101   Apparently that was not a natural colour but there were girls with like red or pink hair and

102   that was OK. I only got detentions for the way I looked not for any of my behaviour. I even

103   got a detention once for taking my blazer off when I was too hot one day. The thing that

104   made me move in the end though was the shaved hair as it was straight after my friend had

105   died.

106   JH: So how did you come to choose the 14 to 16 college?

107   Kerry: I saw a post on Facebook and I thought I would have a look. It's funny cos it wasn't

108   even positive, it was about a student who was failing their maths (laughs). I had a look at the

109   website and it was fine. I did visit with my dad and I had my interview at the college on the

110   same day after I had heard online. It was much better than Secondary School B. I really

111   liked the fact that everyone else who was starting there was new as well so I wouldn't be the

112   only one. If I went to another secondary school, everyone would know about each other

113   already.

114   JH: So you said before that when you got to the 14 to 16 college you were not able to do the

115   course you wanted which was triple science, did you know that before you went there?

116   Kerry: No they told me that I could do it. I was going to do it at School B.

117   JH: So when did you find out when you weren't doing triple science?

118   Kerry: It was on the first day when I got my timetable and I was looking for it and it wasn't

119   there. It was dropped cos only four people wanted to do it but they didn't let us know.

120   JH: So what did you do instead?

121   Kerry: History

122   JH: So how did you feel about that?

123   Kerry: I don't like history. I purposely failed it. Everything else was alright there though, I

124   just wished they had given me more warning but I heard they did it again this year, they

125   dropped Health and Social and reintroduced Hair and Beauty. I did computing and they have

126   changed that now to vocational so they have to do it rather than choose it. We used to have

127   three hours on a Tuesday and three hours on a Thursday vocational so they now have a three

128   hour chunk of computing for two years when they had picked Health and Social. But once

129   you are in year 11 you cannot change to other schools cos they have different exam boards

130   so it's too late even if you could change. So if you are going to leave you have to leave

131   before Christmas. One person got kicked out for bad behaviour but that was for being drunk

132   on a day when he wasn't even there.

133   JH: So was behaviour dealt with in the same way at the 14 to 16 as it was at School B?

134   Kerry: At School B, they would say don't do it again or we will kick you out whereas at 14 to

135   16 college they would try to get to the root of it so they didn't say stuff like that. They used

136   to have like little meetings and stuff and they had a behaviour card for two weeks and

137   teachers would have to sign it if they did the stuff that was agreed and that would have to be

138   ticked each lesson. If you did ok you would come off it, otherwise they would meet with

139   your parents. There were a lot of chances and it was quite hard to get kicked out, it was a lot

140   better way of dealing with behaviour. Maths was great as it was really hands on, like we

141   would use Velcro balls and targets to learn fractions and stuff, I was never bored.

142   JH: So you had good relationships with the staff at 14 to 16?

143   Kerry: Yes, cos there weren't that many and I knew them all. I got on with all of the teachers

144   but one because I think it's because she was new and I didn't really know her. I think it

145   helped that the classes were small, I don't think we could have played with Velcro balls in a

146   class of 30 as there would be too many people messing about.

147   JH: How did you find out about College Y then and make the decision to come here?

148   Kerry: My friend lives close by and she was like you should go there. I started by doing one

149   of those meeting things that you do downstairs and I got a certificate for it but I have lost it

150   now.

151   JH: So was that your interview then?

152   Kerry: No that was based on what I wanted to do then but I'm not doing that now. That

153   happened in year 11. I had another interview after I had my results back which was the 30th I

154   think. That interview seemed to take forever, but that's cos my grades weren't so great but

155   that's cos I was given the wrong stuff. I was supposed to do everything on computers and

156   they gave me all hand-written exams. They also gave me the wrong exam, they gave me the

157   one for the over 16's which is it's obviously different. So in maths, cos it was in the maths

158   exam that they gave me the wrong one, and in maths you don't get the formula page at the

159   beginning and on this paper there was a formula page. When I looked at the front everything

160   looked pretty much the same but I got an extra 15 minutes and I thought they don't do this.

161   For dyslexia if they do something different they put it on the board. So I was really confused.

162   I told my teacher who was my invigilator, not my maths teacher it was the science teacher

163   and he was like oh alright. He spoke to the external invigilator and she was like no, no, she is

164   lying and she just left me to it so I did the exam for half an hour. And then my other science

165   teacher came in and I was like I haven't seen this question before and he said is this someone

166   else's paper and I said yes this isn't the right exam. I told someone at the beginning. So I

167   had to re-do the right exam straight after that. They did it to me and one other girl cos we

168   both needed different coloured paper and they didn't have any to print on in the 14 to 16

169   building, you have to use the main building, and the main building got it wrong. So I ended

170   up spending two and a half hours in an exam. So that went wrong obviously and I had no

171   computer to do it on and that affected my grades.

172   JH: So did you explain that to College Y during your interview?

173   Kerry: Yes, I was meant to get 5's in everything, that was the minimum and I got 4's in

174   everything which is still a C, so I had to explain that to them and there was a massive

175   discussion. They put me on a three week monitoring thing to see if that was the case or if it

176   was just me. After three weeks they told me that I could stay and here I am.

177   JH: So the courses you are doing now, you are doing business, sociology and psychology is

178   that right? (Kerry nods). And are they the ones that you wanted to do?

179   Kerry: Yes and it's going OK so far. The classes are a little bigger than those at 14 to 16 but

180   the classrooms are bigger so it's not too bad. And there is somewhere I can go if I have a

181   panic attack which is brilliant.

182   JH: Have you had many of those since you've been here?

183   Kerry: No I haven't had any, they have sort of stopped since May.

184   JH: So did you consider College I or a sixth form for A levels at all?

185   Kerry: Yeah, I applied to College I but I don't like it, I don't like College I, the people and

186   the place. The grounds are pretty but I would be very out of place there. And there are so

187   many rooms, you can get lost.

188   JH: So back to that original question then about your choices, would you have changed any of

189   the choices that you have changed.

190   Kerry: No I am happy with them.

191   JH: So is there anything that you wish to add or ask me?

192   Kerry: No

193   JH: OK, well thank you very much for talking to me and I wish you all the best with your

194   studies.

195

Appendix 12e: Interview transcript (Liam) (23/10/2017)

2 JH: Can you tell me from your perspective, what can you tell me about the choices that you

3 have made so far about your own education?

4 Liam: Er.. what do you mean?

5 JH: OK so all the choices that you've made on your educational journey, what sticks in your

6 mind about choices that you have made and how they've turned out?

7 Liam: Erm, I don't know

8 JH: Are there any that you think stand out as being really good choices, or any that you think

9 well they weren't quite so good choices?

10 Liam: Erm I think coming here was a better choice over College X er but I think going to

11 College (14 to 16) was better than School A just cos there's more consistency with teaching

12 and there's less teachers as well so you have always got like the same person teaching you so

13 they know where you are.

14 JH: Did you know all of the teachers at 14 to 16?

15 Liam: Yeah and at School A I hardly knew any of them apart really from the ones who taught

16 me but then they kept changing.

17 JH: OK, we will explore some of those things a bit later, so what I would like you to do now

18 is, and I will give you a pen, we'll explore that a bit more as it is quite a broad question, so

19 this is to help you to think about the factors that influenced you and you need to rate how

20 influential they were so at this end they are not important and at the other end they are very

21 important and there are no numbers it is just a scale. So this first one is looking at factors

22 that influenced you moving from School A to the 14 to 16 college, and other adults is a star

23 and you just put their role at the bottom, you don't need to add their names. Do you

24 understand what I want you to do?

25 Liam: Yes (silence whilst he completes the form). Hmm, what do you mean by other adults?

26 JH: So it might be other staff in the college, it might be teaching assistants, it might be er

27 management staff or careers advisers or staff from the other college that came in, it might be

28 friends' parents. You don't have to fill it in if there is no one. So let's have a look at what

29   you have done. So family member's is the lowest, did they not try and have an influence

30   over you at all to move to the 14 to 16 college?

31   Liam: No they let me make my own decision without interfering.

32   JH: So future career plans, course and curriculum and college resources are rated quite high.

33   How was course or curriculum important to you?

34   Liam: Because even though I didn't get the options that I wanted at 14 to 16, I think that it

35   being more varied and I had the opportunity to do computer science as well er and double

36   science which I wouldn't have done at School A er I don't know.

37   JH: So you were only offered single science at School A? Was that the same for everybody?

38   Liam: I think so, I don't know.

39   JH: I know that you said in the focus group that when you got to the 14 to 16 college not

40   doing the courses you want to but you didn't know that before you went did you? We will

41   look at that later? So your future career plans, how does that link in to influencing your

42   decision?

43   Liam: Sort of links in because of all of the employability courses that they teach and writing

44   your CV and applying for jobs and stuff, they help you with all of that and you didn't get any

45   support with any of that in School A.

46   JH: And did you know before you went that you would be doing that?

47   Liam: Yeah

48   JH: And the resources...?

49   Liam: Yeah so with it being a college, they have better resources for learning than what

50   School A had er so like in science we could go into the main tower block and use all of their

51   resources to do experiments and some stuff I wouldn't be able to do in a normal school.

52   JH: So the fact it's on the same site as the FE college means that you are able to access all of

53   those resources too?

54   Liam: They were all of the level 3 facilities yeah that we could use too.

55 JH: Location you have rated slap bang in the middle...

56 Liam: It doesn't bother me really because you get a bus pass from college and with it being in
57 the (city) centre it's easy to get to where I live.

58 JH: And you have rated teachers as a little bit important...

59 Liam: Er, it's like I knew all of my teachers at School A and when I went to the (14 to 16)
60 college I didn't know any of them so they obviously had no idea what progress I was making
61 and School A didn't like pass over any of my grades or anything apart from my SATS ones.
62 There was no real transfer of information like progress grades or anything.

63 JH: So friends and peers is ....

64 Liam: ....no I was not really that bothered.

65 JH: Did you not have a strong friendship group at School A?

66 Liam: Yeah I did but it didn't really bother me cos I still see them now anyways. They don't
67 all live near me they live like on the estate but we still keep in touch.

68 JH: Right thanks for that. Could you do the same again but this time it's coming from the 14
69 to 16 college to here.

70 Liam: Yeah OK (quiet whilst he completes the scales)

71 JH: OK that was quick. OK so location of college not really important at all?

72 Liam: No because there is a college bus so it doesn't really matter and I am in the city
73 anyway.

74 JH: And again your family have little influence at all?

75 Liam: No they just really trust that I know what I want and know what I want to do.

76 JH: What do you want to do?

77 Liam: Go to uni and study leisure and logistics management ideally at X university.

78 JH: And size isn't important?

79 Liam: No not really as long as it's got the courses that I really want to do so I can do what I
80 want to do next.

81 JH: Would you agree that that seems to have been a theme since you were 14?

82 Liam: Yes

83 JH: So you have rated quality of teaching and courses as high, how are they important to
84 you?

85 Liam: They are very important, I have known for a while since I was about 12 or 13 what I
86 wanted to do not long before I decided to change schools.

87 JH: Do you feel that going to the 14 to 16 college, that you knew little about, was a quite a
88 brave decision?

89 Liam: Yeah,

90 JH: If it hadn't worked out what would the options have been?

91 Liam: I would have gone back to School A, I wouldn't have gone anywhere else as I don't
92 think I would have wanted to go to another school because at the 14 to 16 everyone was new
93 and I liked that but if you go to another school you are going to be put into a class with a
94 load of people you don't know but who all know each other.

95 JH: So course and curriculum you have indicated is important there...

96 Liam: Well this college offered a course that I wanted to do JH:

97 Did you look at any other colleges apart from this one?

98 Liam: Well I did look at College X but I didn't want to go there erm.. and I looked at College
99 I but I just ended up coming here, cos College I only do A levels as well

100 JH: So because you wanted to do something practical you left with coming either here or
101 College X or College Z (though this is out of area). So peers is kind of in the middle.

102 Liam: Yeah I am not really that bothered.

103 JH: So you were at School A, you mentioned that it was in Special Measures. What was the
104 trigger or what was it about that school that made you think basically I am going to add an

105 additional transition which is quite a big thing to go through. What was it that made you

106 think, 'you know what I am going to do that'?

107 Liam: Just constantly having supply teachers nearly every lesson and then with the supply

108 teachers they don't have any idea of the subject, they don't have any idea who you are or sort

109 of what your grades are or what work you need to be doing or what you have done

110 previously er you've got the same teacher all the time, they know you and the know what

111 progress you've made and they know how to help you as well er but then I don't know er...

112 JH: Did you have different supply teachers every day or did you sometimes have some stay

113 for a while?

114 Liam: You would sometimes have one who would be there for a week or two but they didn't

115 know how to handle the class very well either. There was a lot of bad behaviour so even if

116 you wanted to learn it was really difficult.

117 JH: So maybe when you said there wasn't much information going to the 14 to 16 about you,

118 could that be because this information wasn't available to send?

119 Liam: Maybe I mean we had, if I went back to School A now there wouldn't be any teachers

120 there that I knew they are all new, and the annoying thing was one week you would have

121 your teacher who you had had for the past three years and the next week they had gone and

122 you would have no explanation from any of the higher up staff, they would just say 'oh they

123 are on sick' but if that many teachers were, and I don't believe that that many teachers were

124 all be going on sick but they would never come back. I would rather know if I am going to

125 have a supply teacher for several months rather than being told they are on sick and they will

126 be back in a few weeks and then they don't come back. I just didn't trust what anyone was

127 telling us and I reached a point where I felt I had to leave and go somewhere else, anywhere..

128 JH: So you suspected that there were other things that were going on?

129 Liam: Yes I think that students should know what was going on rather than fobbing us off.

130 It's like a lot of them like one of my PE teachers I saw him, he teaches at a primary school

131 now and there are a few others that I know are working at other schools who I have sort of

132 come across in public. Some really good teachers left... they might have got the sack I don't

133 know, I think they just wanted to get rid of anyone but we won't ever know. But the issue is I

134 don't think they should have got rid of staff if they didn't have replacements who weren't a

135 different teacher every day. It's not fair on the students.

136 JH: So you felt that you knew what you wanted to do but if you stayed at School A it might

137 not happen?

138 Liam: Yeah and I was doing business and me and this other lad were the best performing

139 students in the class and we had targets of A and obviously I left and this lad only ended up

140 getting a D in business, I think he is now at College L but I don't really know.

141 JH: So when you hear about things like that, how does that make you feel?

142 Liam: I don't know I do sometimes, and I know it's bad but I laugh to myself and think you

143 know what's gone on for that to happen for someone to drop so low.

144 JH: So do you feel like you have dodged a bullet?

145 Liam: (laughs) Yeah definitely

146 JH: So what did you know about the 14 to 16 college before you applied?

147 Liam: Not a lot

148 JH: How did you hear about it?

149 Liam: I saw it advertised on the side of a bus and I was fed up, so I went online and I like

150 downloaded an application, filled it in sent it off and got an interview, er but it was alright I

151 liked it from when I first went there.

152 JH: So you had the interview at the college itself?

153 Liam: Yeah I did some reading up online about it and thought this would be better than

154 where I was. I looked at other schools but I thought I would rather go to a place where

155 everyone is in the same boat.

156 JH: So what other schools did you consider?

157 Liam: Er School K mainly because it is close to where I live it's only a 10 minute walk and

158 that was about it really. I didn't know anybody there and I don't know anybody now who

159 goes there. The thing is I live close by as well but I don't know many people around there.

160   JH: Have you always lived there?

161   Liam: No I used to live at the other side of the city near my primary, in fact I used to live

162   right next door to it. Most of my friends live over in that area and I still have quite a few

163   which are all really close to this college. From home it's only one bus to get here.

164   JH: So you applied online to the 14 to 16 college, and then what happened next, describe the

165   process.

166   Liam: Erm you get a phone call next I think anyways inviting you to an interview er and you

167   have like an assessment on a computer as well, it's just like an initial assessment which

168   assesses you on English and Maths er but in like more practical scenarios and it starts at

169   Level 1 then gradually goes up and whatever the sort of level you get up to that's where you

170   are graded. And that decides what classes you go in as they don't get a great deal of

171   information from schools.

172   JH: So you sat and did the assessment online so then what happened?

173   Liam: Erm I had an interview after the assessment, I think it was on the same day. Erm I

174   think I was interviewed by Andy or Adrian who were teachers. Then they said 'oh well we

175   will get back to you' and then they rung me up and told me that I couldn't do the options that

176   I picked about a month or two before I started right at the end of the school year so they like

177   confirmed the place but I couldn't like do the options that I picked er so I ended up having to

178   pick two others.

179   JH: How did that feel?

180   Liam: Erm a bit annoying but I wasn't bothered as it was two different things that I had never

181   done before. I just thought I would give it a go and I got a Level 2 Merit in Engineering and

182   a Pass in Sport.

183   JH: So did you end up enjoying the two courses that you had never picked in the first place?

184   Liam: Yeah it was alright and the teachers were alright as well especially as we had the same

185   teachers in the courses all the way through the two teachers throughout the two years. We

186   got to know the staff really really well there.

187   JH: Do they use first names there?

188   Liam: Yeah I quite like it, it's the same here, even though we had to wear a uniform which

189   was just a t-shirt and a hoody, but it's not a shock when you come here and you call the staff

190   by their first names, I quite like it.

191   JH: Did you not worry that despite having specific plans for university and your future that

192   doing something different for two years might take you off course a bit?

193   Liam: No, cos I knew that as long as I got my English and my maths that I could do business

194   here so it was all about my grades.

195   JH: So you had more consistency with staff but how would you describe those relationships?

196   Liam: They were quite informal especially with the non-teaching staff but you could sort of

197   come of go in especially the non-teaching staff, and talk to them like they are your mates sort

198   of thing and it was really nice, everyone was really nice there and yeah. If I had a problem or

199   anything I felt I could literally sit down and talk to any of them about anything. It's not like

200   in a school where you might only see a teacher maybe once or twice a week.

201   JH: So how did the school rules compare to School A or how they managed behaviour?

202   Liam: To be fair to be honest at the college there wasn't that many behavioural issues and

203   they tried to put in sort of like a three-stage system but it never worked because there wasn't

204   sort of enough issues for it to work. Er whereas at School A they had a three-stage system

205   where you got a yellow card and then staff would come around and collect you erm it

206   worked there but there was obviously a lot more students so there was obviously a lot more

207   that can go wrong. So like at the (14 to 16) college we had the system there but there was no

208   point in using it because most of the issues were just small issues that could be sorted out in

209   an instant sort of thing cos you knew all of the staff and there were only twelve people in a

210   class sort of thing. In one of my classes there were 15 of us so there were much smaller

211   groups there which is probably one of the reason why I went there.

212   JH: Why do you think that smaller groups make it better to learn?

213   Liam: Because you can have more one-to-one with a teacher rather than the teacher just

214   standing at the front of the class and talking to everybody, there's always opportunities to sit

215   down and talk with a teacher.

216   JH: So you have come to this college and you have been here for six weeks ....

217   Liam: Yes though it feels like forever already like I am part of the furniture.

218   JH: So why have come here rather than College X or College I?

219   Liam: Well College I only do A levels and I wanted to do course work based subjects. I have

220   a few friends who go to College I and they say that you have got to be sort of on top of

221   everything there it's quite a pressuring environment. I think it's a lot more relaxed here, but

222   you still get the work done and they have got similar pass rates to College I.

223   JH: Did you consider an apprenticeship?

224   Liam: I could have done but I had a look but there weren't really any in the industry that I

225   wanted to go into, but there wasn't anything suited to me that I wanted to do and I already

226   work part time as it is. I used to work on sight-seeing buses but I have finished doing

227   marketing which I finished late last month. Now I work in MacDonalds on which is alright

228   and easy to be honest as long as you come in and do your work you are alright. But I also

229   work for Stage coach as well in the travel shop on a Saturday.

230   JH: So options were really down to here and College X at the end of the day, so why is it that

231   College X lost out?

232   Liam: Erm I would say part of it was to do with the Ofsted as they didn't get a very good

233   Ofsted and from what I can gather the best part of the college was the 14 to 16. Er but we

234   had an inspector in the college, I think they were only in for one lesson but they were really

235   impressed with the 14 to 16 er so yes that was probably the real reason. I just fancied a

236   change, I thought as I had been there for two years on the campus and I fancied somewhere

237   else to go.

238   JH: So did you read the Ofsted report for College Y?

239   Liam: No I just thought I would give it a go. I will give everything a go once.

240   JH: But you have picked your university and course already, do you know much about it?

241   Liam: Well I have had a look and I have looked into the course and that but I have been

242   meaning to book onto an open day but I just don't get chance cos I'm usually working. But I

243   need to cos there are not many unis that do the course that I want to do though. I think there

244   is only three universities as well but I think H will be more convenient so it's my number one

245   choice.

246   JH: So you had your interview for this college actually at the 14 to 16 college, how did that

247   come about?

248   Liam: They came to talk to us and then they said that they wanted to interview so I had one

249   there and then. I did do an assessment as well but it wasn't on that day. I think it was on a

250   taster day during the summer, well it was a week but er we weren't in all of the time as it

251   depended what courses we were on and how many courses we were doing.

252   JH: How useful did you find the taster days?

253   Liam: They were really good as it gave you an idea about the course and you met all of the

254   teachers who would be teaching you on the course and I have them now.

255   JH: So what was the next stage after the taster day?

256   Liam: It was the enrolment at the end of August, which I wish could have been done online

257   as you have to bring so many pieces of paper in and it takes a long term and then they give

258   you even more pieces of paper to fill in as well and you just think well why couldn't you just

259   have sent me them. I thought registration week was OK but when it was done it was done.

260   JH: So let's go back to that very first question when I asked you about the choices that you

261   have made so far about good choices and bad choices what do you think about the choices

262   we have discussed that you have made.

263   Liam: I don't think I've made any bad choices, if I could go back in time I don't think I

264   would change anything other than making School A be a bit more truthful then I maybe

265   would have stayed there if for example they had said you know you are going to have a

266   fulltime teacher in next week or whenever then I might, I would have probably stayed there

267   but it was the lack of consistency.

268   JH: It sounds like you have made some good choices and that you have made them by doing

269   a lot of research but they could have gone very wrong but they haven't. I don't think every

270   student thinks like that, do you ever have back up plans?

271   Liam: No I have never really needed one.

272   JH: Well that is really lucky and I hope that this continues and I wish you all the best, many

273   thanks for talking to me.

Appendix 13: Focus group – Control group (who did not transition to the 14
to 16 college)

3 JH: Can you tell me what courses you are doing at this college?

4 Bob: I am doing IT animation, law and English, a mixture of A levels and BTECs

5 Helen: I am doing Psychology, sociology and criminology – Criminology I think is a diploma,
6 the others are A levels

7 Harriet: I am doing the same courses as Helen.

8 JH: Thinking about Y College, you've been here for six or seven weeks now. So think about
9 here and your secondary school and how it is different between here and school.

10 Helen: I guess like I can say it's quite strict at school but here it's more chilled out...

11 Harriet: Yeah, you can do your own thing when you don't have lessons

12 Helen: Like you can go home and stuff so it's more relaxing I think.

13 Bob: For me it would be the opposite it's more stressful. I had a counsellor (at secondary
14 school), a one to one support and a designated place for me go if I ever ended up getting
15 angry. I, er, when I came here I didn't exactly have all of that same stuff and I was worried
16 about what I would do if I ever went on a rampage or if I wasn't able to cope, who would I
17 go to and what would I have and there was the fact that I didn't have a counsellor and my
18 two previous counsellors that I had had taken other jobs so for me it was quite stressful to
19 move, but now that I have got into college it seems more relaxed though there is still that
20 sense of stress because I don't exactly know the teachers and to er, the help I have got.

21 Helen: So do you feel like you haven't got as much support here?

22 Bob: No (long pause)

23 JH: So Helen and Harriet do you feel like you have as much support here as you had at
24 secondary school?

25 Harriet: Pretty much yeah

26 JH: So Bob you were worried about moving here for all of those reasons. What do you think

27 about the communication between school and college Y regarding your situation and the

28 sharing of information?

29 Bob: There was some information passed over cos of my disabilities, there was papers

30 passed and there was meetings about me but I think it was the fact that even though you can

31 have meeting after meeting after meeting it doesn't matter if you meet the person cos you

32 don't know what they're like.

33 JH: So how do you think that could have been done better?

34 Bob: For me personally it would have been better if I had meetings during my time at school

35 cos then I would actually be able to meet and get to know the people who I would be

36 counting on for support and I wouldn't have all of these doubts of what if they will support

37 me but not in the way that I am used to.

38 JH: So when did you know you were going to come to this college?

39 Bob: Erm for me it was during the middle of year 11 and I think I just had one meeting with

40 someone from college Y and that's all the meetings I had which isn't enough for someone

41 like me.

42 JH: Ok so we have talked about differences, if there anything you can say about the similarities

43 between here and your secondary schools?

44 Helen: It's similar cos you do still get like regular homework which is pretty much the same.

45 Harriet: Yeah though at schoo we didn't really get that much homework

46 Bob: Yeah, in year 11 we didn't even get any

47 Helen: No we didn't get much either...

48 Harriet: Yeah we got told to revise and that was it, even during the last half of year 10 we

49 just stopped getting it so like now we get homework for every subject every week now so it's

50 kind of like aaargh well OK.

51 JH: So when your secondary teachers told you to revise for homework, what did you do?

52 Harriet: I revised sometimes but it depended on what lesson it was for, like if I didn't like it I

53 probably wouldn't

54 Bob: I didn't revise, I was fine I got good grades, but I had good teachers who made me

55 understand so I didn't need to keep going over it. I thought that exams were already stressful

56 so I didn't need the added stress of homework and revision to go on top of the added stress

57 of GCSE's.

58 JH: And how did you find your exams?

59 Helen: Some of them were Ok but others were like hard like maths and that...

60 Harriet: Yeah, maths was definitely the most stressful.

61 JH: (notices Bob is shaking his head) So you are disagreeing with that?

62 Bob: Maths was the easiest, the most stressful one was graphics because I don't have good

63 hand to eye coordination and I was expected to do good drawings so... I ended up breaking

64 down twice, but I got good grades in all of my exams in the end.

65 JH: OK so Helen and Harriet, you both struggled with maths?

66 Together: Yeah

67 Helen: It was cos our teacher left like a month before so we got a different teacher and

68 whenever there is a different teacher no-one like does work they just mess around so like we

69 didn't learn that much.

70 Harriet: And obviously like I think each class has different ways of learning and that teacher

71 basically only had a month to kind of figure out how we were so it was quite hard.

72 Bob: Our way of learning was like, here is a paper, here is how you do it and make sure you

73 do it well. It worked extremely well.

74 Helen: I wouldn't like that, sometimes it would be Ok but I prefer people telling me like a

75 specific way to do it and like and actually going through the work...

76 Harriet: And going through it quite slowly.

77   Bob: I can just learn how to do it then I can just do it and if I need any help I just ask. I think

78   that a teacher should, it's easier to do the work when you have a teacher that acts more like a

79   person than a teacher.

80   JH: So what is the difference between a person and a teacher?

81   Bob: Well a teacher they are normally strict, they are always just about the lesson but when

82   they act like a person you can have a conversation with them, you can have jokes with them

83   and it is just a more calmer environment so it's easier to do work.

84   JH: So it sounds like to me, and tell me if I am wrong, it is more about the human connection?

85   Bob: It is cos if you're doing your work and you have a teacher who is strict and just acts like

86   a teacher that you have to abide by all the laws you have to do the rules you have to listen

87   constantly and not be allowed to talk with each other it's very stressful because then you

88   want to speak to people and you want to ask them how to do something or just talk to them

89   but you can't so then it makes you not able to do the work properly.   We only had one or

90   two teachers at Winifred that were strict the majority of the teachers was laid back.

91   JH: OK so what are your teachers like here?

92   Bob: I'm fine with them. I have a teacher that does understand what the disability I have so

93   he is able to help me out but he also does have a joke and I have a teacher that will just tell

94   stories about her past jobs and we know what to do and we do it and we have a teacher that

95   she trusts our class enough for her to just walk out and we will do the work and she is there

96   to help out and we can have a laugh.

97   Helen: Our teachers at school were quite strict.

98   Harriet: There was a few teachers that were like calm but then there was like them ones that

99   like we sometimes would give us like 5 minutes just to talk, but others were you had to sit

100   and work in silence for the full hour...

101   Helen: Yeah just sitting in silence. You get some questions to do and you just get on with it by

102   yourself. I didn't learn cos I like to ask questions and talk to others about it.

103   JH: So you have mentioned school rules, can you give me examples of ones that you felt didn't

104   work so well?

105 Bob: Chewing gum, I never really got that one, cos if you are chewing gum it stops you from

106 playing from things in your hands so it can distract your thinking and help you get on with

107 your work but whenever you chewed gum it was like straight away put it in the bin. Like

108 most people I knew they would put it in the bin afterwards and the only reason it wasn't

109 allowed is because people would stick it under the tables but if the rule was you can chew it

110 if you don't stick it underneath the table then it would be fine.

111 Helen: Sitting in silence whilst revising I didn't get that at all cos the people that like a lot of

112 people preferred like revising together so then they could share ideas.

113 Harriet: Like some students work better like that but at school some of the students didn't.

114 Bob: At school we had music on in the background and we could have conversations and do

115 whatever revision we wanted. In all of my English lessons we had some music on in the

116 background even the teacher hated doing the work in silence because it was just boring. I

117 did come across a teacher and he said that he knows that working er a week before our last

118 exams he said he knows we were going to go on our phones and it was fine as long as we

119 didn't go on Facebook or Instagram or anything like that, we can go on our phones look stuff

120 up and even listen to a bit of music if we have our earphones in cos he knows that we are

121 going to do it anyway so we might as well let us do it without social media.   But there was

122 hardly anyone there at this point.

123 JH: So how do you find your teachers at college?

124 Helen: Well they are a lot more calm and more like conversational like you can talk during

125 class and like I think it helps you learn better...

126 Harriet: They are a lot nicer than they were at college.

127 JH: So have any of you changed courses since coming here?

128 Bob: I have changed from history to law which was an issue for me cos I want to be a

129 history teacher and then I swapped from applied science to IT animation. I was speaking

130 with my history teacher and she thought it would be a better idea if I swapped because I

131 wasn't doing well at my work and it was less than expected and I wasn't able to cope so I

132 have gone over to law and it was the best option for me.

133   I've been doing law for two to three weeks and I am feeling fine with it but it's a bit

134   difficult catching up because of how long I have missed out but I have caught up now and all

135   I have now is one piece of work which should be in sometime this week then I've got caught

136   up.

137   JH: So how are you finding the class sizes compared to secondary school?

138   Helen: It's a lot better there's like twelve people in our class whereas at school it was like 30.

139   Bob: I only notice the difference in English, the rest is like 25, in English I have like 15 and

140   that's the smallest one. I think smaller groups can be a good thing.

141   Harriet: I think they are a lot better and there is more one to one help if you are in a smaller

142   group.

143   Bob: (laughs) Well it really depends on who is in the group.

144   Helen: I think that if like you are in a smaller group though it's like since there's not many of

145   you, you all kind of make friends and get to know each other...

146   Harriet: And there's like less distraction as like not many people will mess about like.

147   JH: What is the behaviour of students like at this college?

148   Helen: Don't really know, I haven't seen any yet...

149   Bob: Well you would think that by the time people get here they would stop messing about as

150   they will be focused on their future jobs and courses.

151   JH: So there is no bad behaviour at the college at all?

152   Bob: Well there is but not in lessons. Well I do imagine there would be bad behaviour but I

153   just don't think it would be in class because I think that people know that they need to get on

154   with the work. But at secondary you have to do subjects that you don't want to do so people

155   will mess about.

156   Helen: Yeah cos at school you might think I don't really want to do it so what's the point.

157   Bob: Yeah, I did French for five years and hated it and I cannot remember a single word of

158   French.

159   JH: OK so how would you change GCSEs then to improve things?

160   Bob: Oh I'd just completely remove them. (everyone laughs) I see it more as it matters more

161   about the work that you have worked up to not a memory test of what you can remember cos

162   people like me who was getting A stars throughout the whole coursework I have a horrible

163   memory so my grades in exams were always just because I couldn't remember.

164   JH: OK so you would scrap GCSEs as they are just a memory test.

165   Bob: Absolutely

166   JH: OK any other comments on GCSEs?

167   Helen: I would like make people do the ones that you need so like English, maths and science

168   but like with history, MFL and that like maybe like get people to choose...

169   Harriet: Yeah have more choice.

170   JH: So why have you prioritised English, maths and science? Do you think that everyone wants

171   to do those?

172   Bob: They are core subjects...

173   Helen: Cos they are more important...

174   Bob: And cos science is about everything around us. Er except physics I cannot find an

175   excuse for that, power plants and telescopes that wasn't really much use (all laugh). The

176   teacher was great though, he was little and his name was Little (all laugh). Maths is great

177   because it's the only subject where you can go from A to B without having to explain

178   everything, it's just step by step.

179   JH: OK so tell me about transport, how has that changed if it has changed at all?

180   Helen: (sighs) I have to get two buses and it's horrible. I walked to school cos it was only

181   like a five minute walk whereas here it's like a 40 minute bus journey here and like going

182   home it's like an hour and 20 minutes. It's very different for me.

183   Bob: Throughout all of my high school life because of the amount of money that I come with

184   cos of my disability I got a taxi to home and to school, I was never used to taking the bus so

185   when it came to the point that I needed to take the bus it was very different and strange. I

186 didn't even know I had to put my arm out to get the bus. I barely ever got the bus. I'm
187 finding it OK now but it's the fact that it's still a bit weird cos with the bus I have to be there
188 at specific times and there's a chance I can miss it and a chance that it's late and I might
189 think

190 I've missed it but with a taxi it's always there on time and there is no chance of you missing
191 it. It was hard getting used to it. I could have done with some help knowing what to do with a
192 bus. That was the thing I never went into town by myself because I only went into town with
193 my mother cos there's nothing much I can do around here or to get money so whenever I
194 went to town with my mother I had my earphones in and my face was on my phone because
195 I just wanted to get there quickly so I didn't take any notice of what I needed to do. It does
196 make it easier with a bus pass knowing that I don't have to constantly look for money.

197 Helen: The bus journey can be quite tiring sometimes as you have to set off about half seven
198 whereas before it was after 8.

199 Bob: Well I was on a mini-bus and I had to wake up by 7 and we had to pick up five other
200 people after me but I wasn't happy because when you put someone with my type of
201 disability in the bus with year 7 well I constantly complained. I did get strangled once in the
202 mini-bus but then you know the kid wasn't counting on the fact I didn't use my fist cos in
203 primary I used it far too much so I used words and I eventually convinced him to leave and
204 never come back on the mini-bus.

205 JH: OK so let's talk about what your secondary schools did to prepare you to come to college.

206 Bob: I remember my English teacher being like I am not going to remember any of you
207 because you are like a conveyer belt and I've been doing this for too long so I'm not going to
208 remember any of you but college will be fine. I remember my maths teacher basically just
209 telling us oh yeah you'll be alright and then you had the assemblies which made you think
210 they lied. With the assemblies you'd go in and everyone would sit down there would be all
211 of year 11 and you'd get the 'Hello Year 11' and you'd get this is how long you've got left in
212 this school so make it count and then they say pick multiple different options cos you might
213 not get into the one you want, you have to start getting prepared, you have to start thinking
214 about what you want to do, you have to start thinking about courses and it's like well I've
215 barely done my GCSE's and now you're putting all this on top of me.

216   JH: So the assemblies made it stressful, what were your experiences at school?

217   Helen: Erm there was like great support with the, er what was she called? Er...

218   Harriet: Oh yeah, she helped people with work experience, she was like a career adviser sort
219   of thing. She was really helpful but like teachers didn't really do much and we had a few like
220   assemblies and that was it. They were a bit stressful cos you had like the colleges in to do
221   assemblies. They came in and they'd be like you need to decide which one that you've got to
222   go to and...

223   Helen: We also had a lesson where er it was like philosophy or something and like some
224   colleges came in then so it was a bit pointless cos they came in twice.

225   Bob: I never had that, they only came in for like one assembly but then for the lessons we
226   didn't we couldn't the courses I got from a lesson preparing me was in philosophy and ethics
227   basically just talking about how to apply like to colleges...

228   Helen: Yeah we had something like that in ICT there was a website and they made us sign up
229   to colleges but they didn't really explain it they just gave us a booklet...

230   Bob: Log on move on, we had a person called Peter who was really helpful that was his job
231   to help kids move to college and he made it a lot easier for everybody. He wasn't a careers
232   adviser though I think he was just there to help, I can't remember what he was but he was
233   always around and if you had any issues about college or school you went straight to him
234   and it would get sorted. It was better than assemblies cos if it's informal it really helps you
235   but if it's formal then you know you have to go through a strict rules so like you can't say
236   what you want because those rules get in the way.

237   JH: So what I seem to be hearing here is that the more formal something is the worse it is
238   whether it be lessons or careers advice, is that correct?

239   Helen: Definitely

240   Bob: Yes, cos like when you're in school, if it's formal even like the dress code it was
241   horrible because it would reach summer and it would be boiling hot and you have to wear
242   silk or a cotton shirt. You had to ask to have your blazer off and always had to have your tie
243   on so it was every button done up to your neck and it was just horrible. You weren't allowed
244   to have shorts. You had to have your normal trousers. You weren't allowed to have your

245   sleeves rolled up. Er I mean there were basically a load of teachers that said 'screw the rules,

246   it's boiling do what you want'. Even opening a window made no difference.

247   JH: So what do you think that dress codes are for at secondary school?

248   Bob: So no-one gets bullied for dressing how they want but then you have that one day

249   where everyone can dress the way they want and no-one gets bullied. It's just confusing cos

250   the people who want to dress the way they want they talk like if you have someone who

251   wants to dress up in all black you'll see that they might have black make up on or have black

252   hair and the people who want to dress real casual they don't care about what their hair looks

253   like and all of that. There's no point to having a dress code because if someone gets bullied

254   it's not cos of what they wear it cos of what they're like. Even on days where there was no

255   dress code it was a lot calmer. I had a friend who dyed her hair cos she wanted to express

256   herself but she ended up in a classroom by herself just cos she wanted to dye her hair. There

257   was no reason for that.

258   JH: So how is it now at college that you can wear whatever you want?

259   Bob: It's a lot better cos you are not having to constantly think oh I have to wash or have a

260   spare of the exact same clothes and it's more comfortable cos if you like come in wearing the

261   normal stuff that you have to wear day in day out you just get bored of it.

262   Helen: It's a lot nicer and I feel like you can wear what you want but at school you were really

263   uncomfortable, whereas now it's more relaxed and more confident.

264   JH: So is there anything that stood out in your mind from school as being really helpful for

265   coming to college Y looking back?

266   Helen: We had these like welcome days in like Year 10 where we got to go to like three

267   different colleges which helped.

268   Bob: I didn't find the welcome day that helpful because even then you're there for the full

269   day no matter what. You can't go home when you want. It's basically school in a different

270   building so for me it wasn't that helpful. It gave you a taste of what the courses were like

271   but even then there was one for X College when I went there and it was everyone had to

272   follow each other and you had to stick together. Once you were in the lesson you just had to

273   do the work then you waited for it to be over. It really wasn't any different from school. If

274   there was an open day I think it would be best to do it during a week holiday so it doesn't get

275   in the way of your lessons and you are able to go home when you want. When we came here

276   we went straight into one room and got spoken to and told where we were going to going

277   then we went there, then went for lunch, then went to the next place we had to go to.

278   JH: So you didn't find it helpful Bob, so Helen you said you went to three colleges, how did

279   you find it?

280   Helen: I liked it – (speaks to Harriet) you know the taster days that we got to do...

281   Harriet: Yeah in year 11 we did taster days. You got like a timetable and you could go home

282   if you had no other lessons.

283   Helen: It was really like a practice college day.

284   Bob: We didn't get that, we got go to College for a day...

285   JH: So did you just do the open days and not the taster days Bob?

286   Bob: Yeah

287   Helen: And like on the taster days like everyone who was wanting to go to this college like

288   would get the chance to come on that day. They were really helpful..

289   Harriet: Yeah, we didn't get to choose, like here we obviously got to choose sociology,

290   psychology and criminology to like try out whereas at the other college they gave you

291   lessons to try out so I think that's why I kind of like didn't end up going there.

292   Bob: What I didn't like as well was that the options for the lessons was incredibly small, you

293   could either do English, maths, childcare, dance, music or IT. That was pretty much the

294   options for us. Like for science we didn't know exactly what type of options there were.

295   What if I wanted sociology or criminology? But we barely got any of those options.

296   JH: So how did you go about deciding which courses to choose?

297   Bob: I just thought about what it could get me in the future, I love writing and I have a good

298   imagination and so I wanted to do English in case I wanted to be an author. History because I

299   want to become a history teacher and applied science because I had to pick another one so I

300   picked that.

301   JH: So how has changing courses affected that?

302 Bob: Well history teaching is no longer an option now, I can't teach history if I don't do it at

303 college. I wouldn't want to go to university to do history without the A level as it would be

304 too much for me to catch up on. I need to get used to it so I am able to get into a routine. So

305 it's got rid of that but Law is enjoyable and I like it.

306 JH: So how did you two pick the same courses, was that deliberate?

307 Helen: No (laughs) we both did sociology at GCSE and we got to pick that and we quite

308 enjoyed it so we knew we wanted to pick that.

309 Harriet: I chose criminology because I'm into like crime documentaries and shows and that.

310 Helen: I only picked criminology cos the careers adviser said it would be the best one to

311 pick. I knew I wanted to do sociology and psychology and I needed a third course. She said

312 it would be a good idea as the three subjects overlap.

313 JH: If you could change anything about how you were prepared to come here, what would it

314 be and why?

315 Bob: More meetings and more realistic college-like taster days that are more informal and

316 possibly spend a week there to get used to it. You could have a week where you can find out

317 about all of the options available or just have the few that people know that they want to do.

318 It would make it a lot easier for people who can't decide what they want to do. It would be a

319 lot easier for people like me who don't know what it's like so they'd be less paranoid and it

320 would be easier on their life.

321 JH: Why did you pick college Y though?

322 Bob: Mainly cos of A levels. That's my whole reasoning for coming here. I didn't want to

323 go to X College cos my brother definitely definitely advised to not go there because he knew

324 that I would not last an hour. My brother went to X College and got into many many fights

325 and he knew that he has more patience than me so I wouldn't last. My mum's said I couldn't

326 go to the other college because she said 'what if you get angry? What if you go on a

327 rampage? We won't be able to reach you in time'. The whole reason I didn't go to there was

328 just to shut her up.

329 JH: So is it fair to say that your family members have had a big influence on your choice?

330   Bob: My family have too many influences on me. I am definitely going to a University

331   outside of this city, whichever one is best for teaching and I can get away from my family

332   members who are all here.

333   JH: So Helen and Harriet, is there anything that you would have done differently in terms of

334   choices that you chose?

335   Helen: Nothing

336   Harriet: I don't really know probably nothing.

337   Bob: What about those children that get scared easily of what can happen or those students

338   who have a disability or find change for them is a nightmare? What would you change in

339   your school for them children?

340   Helen: Probably have more support for them from subject teachers.

341   Harriet: Yeah.

342   JH: So for you two the transition has gone really well, is there anything that you were anxious

343   about before coming here?

344   Helen: Making friends...

345   Harriet: Yeah me too but it's gone really well, before I came here I was really certain that I

346   wasn't going to have any friends, but I have made quite a few.

347   Bob: There is only one reason I made a friend and that is cos we were both stuck on a bus

348   riding on a trip for 5 hours we didn't have a choice, we were going to a different city and

349   there was horrible traffic. I was socially awkward, he was extremely socially awkward so we

350   was both extremely socially awkward. We didn't have a choice we had to become friends.

351   We are still friends now and his friendship group is now my friendship group.

352   JH: So you have all made friends now but you were all worried before you came here. Is there

353   anything your schools could have done to help you with that?

354   Helen: (laughs) no they can't make friends for you.

355   Bob: Even if they put people from two or three schools all in the same college you're not

356   going to make friends, you would stick with the friends that you know. No one in secondary

357   school wants to go and make new friends.

358   JH: Is there anything that you want to ask me or tell me before we finish?

359   (all shake head)